

# COMM 349: Small Group Communication

## Fall 2019 ONLINE

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### DR. JENNIFER MIZE SMITH

Office: 102 Fine Arts Center

Phone: 270-745-3296

E-Mail: [jennifer.mize.smith@wku.edu](mailto:jennifer.mize.smith@wku.edu)

Office Hours: T/R 11:00 am – 12:30 pm  
W 10:00 am – 12:00 pm ONLINE  
And by appointment

### Course Description

*"Whereas individual achievement was once the hallmark of personal success, we now live in an era in which success often depends on your ability to work in groups." (Engleberg & Wynn, 2007)*

Small group communication is generally defined as the interaction of three or more people working together to achieve a common goal. The purpose of a group decision making course is to study the group process including group dynamics, interaction, and communication in small group situations. This course focuses on secondary groups such as committees, task forces, quality circles, work groups, activity groups, boards, and teams. Specifically, this course provides both information and application of group problem solving theories and processes. Students will examine systems on two levels: 1) applying systems theory to understand groups as human systems in which individual members are integral, interacting, and interdependent components, and 2) developing effective group skills to identify, analyze, understand, and address problems in larger systems found in local and global contexts. While examining various group/system processes, students will have the opportunity to learn and practice a variety of skills including research, organization, creative thinking, critical thinking, leadership, problem solving/decision making, analysis of group processes, and conflict management.

Course readings, discussions, and assignments are designed to enhance students' overall competency when participating in small group and team communication. Students will engage in a number of group activities including a group problem solving project. The knowledge gained about groups and multiple group experiences is intended to help students become both more comfortable and more competent participants in a variety of small group contexts.

### Prerequisite

Beginning Fall 2014 for Colonnade Program students, you must have completed 21 hours of Foundations and Explorations Courses OR have attained junior status.

### Colonnade Program

COMM 349 fulfills 3 of the required 9 hours of course credit from the Connections category of WKU's Colonnade (General Education) Program, specifically in the Systems area.

### Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

#### *Colonnade Learning Objectives*

- Analyze how systems evolve and identify components within their internal and external environments.
- Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems.
- Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself.

#### *Additional Learning Objectives*

- Explain the importance of groups socially and functionally in society in general and in organizations in particular.
- Identify the components of systems theory as applied to the small group communication context.
- Recognize the communication principles that are essential for properly functioning small group systems.

- Describe the processes involved in the formation of a group.
- Analyze a problem as a group, including define the problem, describe the various causes and components of the problem, establish criteria for a possible solution, generate numerous possible solutions, evaluate the possible solutions, choose and defend a solution that meets the criteria, assess the possible obstacles to implementing the chosen solution, and describe the implementation plan for the chosen solution.
- Analyze possible conflicts, recognize the conflict styles involved, and describe an appropriate method for resolving specific conflicts.
- Function as a leader of a small group, recognizing the various leader roles taken by different members of the group system at different times, and choose the appropriate leadership style required by specific group circumstances.

### **Required Course Materials**

- Textbook:  
Adams, K., & Galanes, G. J. (2018). *Communicating in groups: Applications and skills* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. (ISBN 9781259870224)
- An active email account registered on TopNet and accessed through Blackboard
- Computer with dependable Internet connection and audio/video capabilities

### **Required Skills for Online Course**

1. Ability to navigate Blackboard, including reading and posting messages to the discussion boards.
2. Ability to navigate MediaSite to access audio lectures and PowerPoint slides.
3. Ability to navigate Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to conduct and record group sessions (meetings)
4. Ability to navigate the Web (use a browser) and handle multiple open windows
5. Ability to browse Web pages
6. Ability to open and navigate PDF files using Adobe Acrobat
7. Knowledge of how to create, send, open, close, and save files and attachments with Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint
8. Basic word processing skills

### **Technical Assistance**

If you are experiencing technical difficulties with Blackboard, call WKU's IT Help Desk (270-745-7000) IMMEDIATELY. You may also visit the online IT [Help Desk](#). If the issue is not resolved and may affect your ability to complete an assignment, email me immediately to explain your situation. For help on how to navigate Tegrity Campus and open, download, or print video files, visit [TS Online](#).

### **Teaching Philosophy**

I believe that a teacher's responsibility is not to prepare the path for the child, but to prepare the child for the path. Today's students will embark on numerous life and career paths, none of which can be mapped or predicted in a world where perhaps the only constant is change. Success that was once ensured by the mastery of a set body of knowledge now rests upon one's ability to continuously learn and relearn the skills required for increasingly diverse, changing, and challenging environments. As such, my goal as a teacher is not merely to impart content knowledge, but to construct an engaging learning environment in which students can enhance their critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and presentational skills.

## POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

### Online Course Participation

While some students may expect an online course to be “easier,” IT IS NOT. An online course requires students to practice a high level of maturity, responsibility, and self-motivation to stay on schedule and to work both independently and with peers to complete assigned tasks. Your active participation is absolutely necessary to successfully accomplish the goals in this course. Please take care to allot the appropriate amount of time in your schedule. In other words, this is still a 3-hour course and should be treated as such. I would suggest setting aside an hour 2-3 times per week to check Blackboard, post to discussion boards, and review lecture materials. **Build that time into your weekly schedule just as if you were attending a face-to-face class.**

### Online Attendance of Group Meetings

In order for you to get the most out of your group experience and for you to be a contributing group member, you must attend and participate in all virtual group meetings. COMM 349 will utilize Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, accessible from our course Blackboard site, to facilitate your virtual group meetings. Your virtual group meetings will be synchronous, meaning ALL GROUP MEMBERS should plan to be online **AT THE SAME TIME**, just as if you were attending a face-to-face meeting. Blackboard Collaborate Ultra allows you to “meet” in real time using audio and/or video. If you are having technical difficulties with your Internet connection, you may also use your phone to dial in to the meeting and still participate. You may also communicate with you group members using other means as needed (e.g., group chat, email, Blackboard group email, etc.), but you are required to **conduct and record at least FIVE virtual meetings** using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra.

In our online environment, you have “attended” the meeting if you have logged into the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Session and stayed logged in for the entire Session (Meeting). **If a student misses THREE OR MORE of his/her team’s meetings, he/she will be considered “fired” from the group and will receive a failing grade for the course.** To avoid any misunderstandings about meetings, students must provide their group members with multiple ways in which they can be reached (e.g., email, voice mail, phone). If a member must miss a meeting, s/he should inform other members of the group, provide a reason for his/her absence, and provide any materials for which the member is responsible for that meeting.

Group member attendance will be documented in Blackboard reports of the recorded Sessions and should also be documented in the group’s meeting Agendas/Minutes.

### Written Assignment Guidelines

All assignments must be typewritten and submitted through Blackboard using the Assignments page and Safe Assign when instructed. **Do not send your assignments to my email address.** For assistance with how to turn in an assignment in Blackboard, view the [IT video tutorial](#). Directions for how to name each assignment when saving and submitting will be provided with assignment instructions.

Written work should be in a standard Microsoft Word format including 12 point font, double spacing, and 1 inch margins. In the case of multiple pages, the paper must include a footer located in the bottom right corner with a page number and your name on every page. Source citations must adhere to APA style guidelines. For help with APA style, see online sources such as the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#). *Errors in APA, as well as spelling and grammar, will result in point deductions.*

### Assignment Deadlines

Deadlines are imposed to allow a reasonable amount of time to complete assignments and to give and receive feedback in a timely manner. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments must be submitted by the due date AND time provided. All times are Central Standard Time. Late work MAY be accepted at my discretion but only when arrangements are made in advance. IF accepted, late papers will be penalized one letter grade per weekday the assignment is late. Late work WILL NOT be accepted more than 3 days after the original due date.

## Class Environment

Our class may be virtual, but it is still important for us to create an open and respectful learning environment. In the absence of nonverbal cues, virtual communication may be easily misinterpreted. Therefore, it is important that we follow certain ground rules when interacting within the context of this course. These rules of civility include but are not limited to:

1. Displaying respect for all members of the classroom community, both your instructor and fellow students.
2. Being open to understanding different perspectives and experiences.
3. Avoiding racist, sexist, homophobic, or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom community.
4. Reading and re-reading your comments and questions before posting to avoid hasty, ill-conceived responses.

## Teacher Communication

The best way to contact me is via email (rather than phone). Be sure to include the two dots in my email address – [jennifer.mize.smith@wku.edu](mailto:jennifer.mize.smith@wku.edu). I will make every effort to respond to your email in a timely manner. However, email may not be checked after 5 pm each day, so plan accordingly.

## Academic Integrity

Western Kentucky University maintains a “zero tolerance” policy on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. As a student at Western Kentucky University, you are expected to demonstrate academic integrity, as outlined in the University Statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities (WKU Catalog, 260) in all coursework. Violations of this code of conduct include but are not limited to cheating (by giving or receiving unauthorized information before or during an exam or assignment), dishonesty (including misrepresentation and/or lying), and plagiarism.

**NOTE: Sharing online quiz/exam questions and/or answers with another student is cheating.**

Plagiarism consists of presenting work that is not your own without proper acknowledgment of its origin. This includes quoting or paraphrasing material (orally or written), copying from a book, and pasting text from web pages without proper citation. It also includes using an Internet source to obtain a full paper or part of a paper.

In short, **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE** for telling your audience or reader whether you are:

1. directly quoting from a source
2. paraphrasing closely from a source, which means using significant portions of another source's sentences or language
3. using the ideas advanced by a different source

In addition to plagiarism, other forms of academic dishonesty include falsified medical excuses, presenting another student's work as your own, using the same work for assignments in different classes, or sharing exam information.

**Student work will be checked using Safe Assign, the plagiarism detection software available through Blackboard.**

## Penalty for Academic Dishonesty

Western Kentucky University and the Department of Communication are committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on an exam, or purchasing papers, speeches, or other assignments will immediately receive a failing grade on the assignment and in the course, and will be reported for disciplinary action. As you can see, these are extreme measures for academic offenses that we believe are serious. If you have any questions, please contact me well in advance of the due date for your assignment.

## COURSE ACTIVITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

Course requirements include an equal combination of assignments to be completed as an individual and as a group. The majority of your individual points will come from chapter quizzes, exams, and homework activities while the majority of your group points will come from a major problem solving project.

### Chapter Quizzes

*Purpose: To encourage students to read the textbook and/or other assigned readings prior to applying/practicing course material during group activities*

Ten open-book quizzes will be made available under Quizzes on Blackboard. Each quiz includes 10 multiple choice or T/F questions covering the textbook chapter and/or any other assigned readings for that week. Please note that quizzes will be timed. Once you open the quiz, you must complete it within 30 minutes. You may not re-open the quiz once it is closed. Questions must be completed in the order given, and responses may not be changed after submission. Specific opening and closing dates and times are available on the course schedule.

**NOTE: Quizzes must be completed independently. Sharing questions and/or answers with another student is cheating. Anyone suspected of cheating will be required to take the remaining quizzes/exams at the WKU Testing Center, no exceptions.**

**NOTE: Quizzes are set up with two attempts. However, the second attempt is to be used ONLY if you have an Internet disruption. This is for your convenience so that if you are disconnected, you may log back in and use the second attempt without waiting for me to reset the quiz. Otherwise, only the first attempt will be graded.**

### Exams

*Purpose: To objectively measure student comprehension and application of course concepts and theories*

Two exams will be comprised of 50 multiple choice, matching, and/or true/false questions covering material from online mini lectures, readings, online discussions, and other assignments. Chapters/readings covered on each exam are listed on the course schedule. Exams are application-based and open book/notes.

Each exam will open at a specific time on Blackboard and will have a deadline for completion. Make-up exams or extensions will not be given. Exams will be timed. Once opened, you will have 1 ½ hours to complete the exam. The timer begins when you open the exam. Once you begin, you must finish. You may not re-open the exam once it is closed. Questions will appear one at a time and must be completed in the order given. Skipping and backtracking are not allowed, and responses may not be changed after submission. Specific dates and times are available on the course schedule.

**NOTE: Exams must be completed independently. Sharing questions and/or answers with another student is cheating. Anyone suspected of cheating will be required to take the remaining quizzes/exams at the WKU Testing Center, no exceptions.**

**NOTE: Exams are set up with two attempts. However, the second attempt is to be used ONLY if you have an Internet disruption. This is for your convenience so that if you are disconnected, you may log back in and use the second attempt without waiting for me to reset the exam. Otherwise, only the first attempt will be graded.**

### Discussion Boards

*Purpose: To engage students in the course material and with each*

A collaborative learning environment will be both more interesting and beneficial for everyone. Discussion boards provide an opportunity for you to offer your ideas, stories, and examples related to our course topics, just as you would orally in a traditional face-to-face class. Therefore, you are expected to participate fully in the course by posting the requested responses to the discussion boards. The comments you post should reflect your knowledge and understanding of the week's readings. \*\* You will need to have read and thought about the week's topic so that you can offer insightful responses and suggest appropriate comments.\*\*

Discussion Boards will be set up on Blackboard, sometimes as a whole class and other times in small groups. **Your original discussion board post should respond to the prompt and integrate course concepts where appropriate. You should also respond to at least one other classmate.**

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You have the opportunity to earn up to 5 OR 10 points per Discussion Board (as noted on the course schedule).

**Please note that simply posting will not necessarily earn you full credit.** Discussion boards will be graded on both quantity and quality. Overall, points will be awarded as follows:

5/5 or 10/10 pts = excellent: original response is thoughtful, thorough, and demonstrates excellent knowledge and integration of course concepts AND responds appropriately and thoughtfully to at least one classmate

4/5 or 7/10 pts = average: original response is appropriate but with less rationale or clear integration of course concepts AND responds appropriately and thoughtfully to at least one classmate

3/5 or 5/10 pts = below average: original response is minimal and makes only a weak connection to course concepts AND responds appropriately and thoughtfully to at least one classmate

0 pts = no participation: fails to meet the two minimum requirements; does not post an original response AND/OR does not respond appropriately and thoughtfully to at least one classmate

### **Collaborative Film/TV Show Analysis**

*Purpose: To enable students to work together to produce a written output on a smaller scale, prior to constructing the larger group project report*

Each group will choose a film or TV show that prominently features the interactions of a small group (5-7 people). After viewing the film/show, group members will work together to analyze the video by applying course concepts. Questions will be provided to guide your analysis and written report.

### **Group Project**

*Purpose: To offer a practical, hands-on group experience where students can apply course concepts and practice group problem solving*

Early in the semester, you will be assigned to a group of 4-5 members. Each group will identify a college student issue or challenge and work through the Procedural Model of Problem Solving to offer possible solutions. The project will culminate in a written report and other group outputs documenting your group's process and outcomes. Further project details will be provided.

### **Group Project Reflection**

*Purpose: To allow students to reflect upon the group project and related group processes*

Following the completion of your group project, you will have an opportunity to individually reflect on the both the project and the group experience. Guiding questions for your responses will be provided.

### **Interview Preparation Assignment**

*Purpose: To encourage students to think about how they will market their group experience in a future employment interview situation*

Each student will prepare responses to a series of potential job interview questions. Responses should draw upon group experiences and the group project FROM THIS CLASS in particular to demonstrate the student's skills in group communication, problem solving, decision making, and creative and critical thinking. Guiding questions will be provided.

## Assignments and Point Distribution

Individual Assignments (500 pts)	Points Possible	Your Score
Chapter Quizzes (10 x 10 pts. each)	100	
Exams (2 x 100 pts. each)	200	
Discussion Boards + BB Collaborate Ultra first meeting	40	
Individual Homework Assignments	60	
Group Project Reflection	50	
Interview Preparation Assignment	50	
Group Assignments (500 pts)		
Film/TV Show Analysis	50	
Other Group Assignments		
• Group Contract	15	
• P-MOPS worksheets	25	
• Agendas/minutes of first 2 virtual meetings	10	
Group Project Components		
• Written Report	200	
• Visual Aid(s)	25	
• Agendas and Minutes of Group Meetings	50	
• Executive Summary	50	
• Verification of Sharing Executive Summary	25	
• Peer Evaluations	50	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>	

## Grade Distribution (in Points Earned)

A = 900-1000	B = 800-899	C = 700-799
D = 600-699	F = below 599	

## A FEW NOTES ABOUT GRADES:

- Grades are reflections of the merit of a student's performance. Work that meets the minimum requirements of the assignment will earn an average grade of "C." To receive a higher grade, you must exceed the minimum requirements by demonstrating creativity and understanding of the material that goes above and beyond the norm.
- Final grades will be distributed according to the point scale listed above. Do not expect final grades to be curved, and do not ask to be awarded those couple of extra points needed to reach the next letter grade. Remember throughout the semester that every point counts!
- It is your responsibility to keep up with your point totals. If at any time you have a question about a grade, it should be addressed within one week of receiving the grade. Grades will not be reassessed or changed after that time period.
- Grades will not be provided to students via e-mail.

## STUDENT ASSISTANCE/RESOURCES

### Student Disability Services

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, 1074. SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at [sarc.connect@wku.edu](mailto:sarc.connect@wku.edu). Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a Faculty Notification Letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

## Student Academic Assistance

- The **WKU Writing Center** has locations in Cherry Hall 123 and in the Commons at Cravens Library on the Bowling Green campus. The Glasgow Writing Center is located in room 231 on the Glasgow campus. The Writing Center also offers online consultations for students who live at a distance or who cannot visit during our operating hours. Our writing tutors have been trained to provide helpful feedback to students at all phases of a writing project: they can *help you* brainstorm ideas, structure your essay, clarify your purpose, strengthen your support, and edit for clarity and correctness. But they will not revise or edit the paper *for you*. See instructions on the website ([www.wku.edu/writingcenter](http://www.wku.edu/writingcenter)) for making online or face-to-face appointments. Or call (270) 745-5719 during our operating hours (also listed on our website) for help scheduling an appointment. More information about the Glasgow Writing Center hours can be found at the website: <http://www.wku.edu/glasgow/writingcenter.php>
- The **Learning Center** (DSU A330) provides free supplemental education programs for all currently enrolled WKU students. TLC @ Downing Student Union and TLC @ FAC offers certified, one-on-one tutoring in over 200 subjects and eight academic skill areas by appointment or walk in. Online tutoring is offered to distance learners. TLC is also a quiet study area (with side rooms designated for peer-to-peer tutoring) and offers a thirty-two machine Dell computer lab to complete academic coursework. Additionally, TLC has four satellite locations. Each satellite location is a quiet study center and is equipped with a small computer lab. These satellite locations are located in FAC, Douglas Keen Hall, McCormack Hall, and Pearce Ford Tower. Please contact TLC @ Downing Student Union for more information or to schedule a tutoring appointment. For more information, or to schedule a tutoring appointment, please call TLC at (270) 745-6254. [www.wku.edu/tlc](http://www.wku.edu/tlc)
- The **WKU Center for Literacy** is located in Gary A. Ransdell Hall 2066. At the Center for Literacy, students can receive assistance in developing strategies to help with **reading/studying to learn** and **writing for evidence and argument**. The Center for Literacy offers both individual and small group sessions throughout the semester. Please email [literacy.center@wku.edu](mailto:literacy.center@wku.edu) to schedule an appointment or ask questions, visit our website at <http://www.wku.edu/literacycenter/>, or stop by GRH 2066 for more information.
- **Purdue Online Writing Lab** – Online assistance with APA formatting and other writing/grammar. Located online at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

## Title IX

WKU is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) at <https://wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf> and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040) at [https://wku.edu/policies/hr\\_policies/2040\\_discrimination\\_harassment\\_policy.pdf](https://wku.edu/policies/hr_policies/2040_discrimination_harassment_policy.pdf).

Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121

Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and **MUST** report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

*NOTE: The procedures and schedule in this course are subject to change as needed.*