

Group Discussion and Debate

Office: Sci. Bldg. Room 363

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Course Description: Fundamental theories and techniques of group interaction, problem-solving, persuasion, argumentation and debate. Videotaping will be used in the practical application and evaluation of these areas of study. This is a performance course in professional oral communication skills.

General Objectives:

1. To introduce students to the need for group process and debate in society.
2. To acquaint students with the theory of effective group process, decision-making, and leadership.
3. To provide students with the theoretical knowledge of argumentation and debate.
4. To provide practical experiences in group process and debate, and to evaluate their effectiveness.

Course Competencies: By the completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the theoretical principles underlying effective group discussion and decision making.
2. Function productively in small groups, and to evaluate the success or failure of other problem-solving groups observed.
3. Organize ideas, develop analytical skills, gather research, and work with a partner to orally defend a proposition in a competitive situation, namely debate.
4. Perfect skills in critical listening.

Procedures: A variety of learning opportunities will be provided through required readings, oral and written assignments, in-depth research for oral projects, discussion, informal lectures, in-class oral and written exercises, video tapings, individual conferences with instructor outside of class, and use of television for self improvement.

Text: Effective Small Group and Team Communication by Judith D. Hoover.

(Harcourt College Publishers, 2002). New this semester; sold in the WCC bookstore.

This course grants 3 Communication/English credits. It meets the core requirement for English or General Elective credit.

BE AWARE THAT IN THIS CLASS MUCH OF THE WORK IS DONE IN GROUPS; THERE IS A RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR CLASSMATES; however, your final grade is based on your own individual production and work. Therefore, it is possible to do well as an individual in this course, assuming your production level is high, in spite of how you might feel about individual(s) in your group and/or their production level or quality of their work. The purpose of the course is to give you the experience of working collaboratively in teams with different members of the class. Some people you will feel more comfortable with than others.

Advice – This is a very practical exposure to group collaboration. To succeed, I suggest the following:

- Be committed to yourself and to the task at hand.
- Be tolerant of others.

- Be flexible.
- Be willing to seek help from others and me.
- Be willing to record all feelings and observations in your confidential journal, plus self evaluation and reflective responses to reading the text.
- Be prepared to do well individually in the course by always having a back-up plan ready if someone in your group lets you down. Never depend completely on someone else for your successes!

Course Requirements:(Subject to some slight alteration when needed)

45% Oral Projects

3 formal group projects. Each requires an individual oral performance by each participant which is worth 15 points each. In most cases, a written part of the project will also accompany the oral performance (worth 5 of the 15 points). Oral projects include:

- (15) Fact Finding Panel
- (15) Debate Tournament
- (15) Final Project (probably a second debate!)

35% Written Projects

- (10) "Who Are You?" Essay
- (25) Journal (5 entries worth 5 points each on the depth and quality of your comments. Be honest. No one will see it, but instructor!) The journal is worth 25 points of the course. It will reflect your personal, confidential views on the group projects, your own self evaluation and responses to questions on the text.

20% Exams (based on the text and handouts, in-class, short answers, best 1 out of 2, plus a formal written final (worth 10 points) during the official exam week. The final exam is required! There are no make up exams either in the course or the final. Please make careful note of when final exam in Group Discussion and Decision Making is given. The student is responsible for bringing any conflicts to the attention of the instructor by the deadline. The Group Discussion and Decision Making final is

100% _____

Possible: Extra Credit - earned through Attendance Incentive and/or Extra Credit

Extra Credit: Written Papers and/or doing a Debate Critique. Papers and critiques 2 to 7 are worth 2 points based on quality of comments, presentation, etc. See Extra Credit Paper handout for details. A total of 4 points may be earned for extra written and/or oral work.

Attendance Incentive is worth 2-3 points.

- Perfect Attendance (No Absences) earns 3 additional points on the final grade.
- One to three absences earn 2 additional points on the final grade.