

## COM340 Small Group Communication, Fall 2017

### Instructor Contact:

Name: Dr. Knopf [pronounced “nope”] (she/her/hers)

Office: Cornish D109

Office Hours: M/W/F 9:15-10:10am & 2:45-3:30pm

Email: [christina.knopf@cortland.edu](mailto:christina.knopf@cortland.edu) Phone: TBA

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/profknopf](http://www.facebook.com/profknopf)

### Class Meetings:

Section 001: M/W/F 10:20-11:10

### Course Description:

Study and application of communication theory, concepts and principles in small group contexts, including committees, classroom, families, formal organizations and public forums. Analysis of messages, communication barriers and breakdowns, interpersonal communication processes and influences, communication networks and group development, composition, standards and goals. Emphasis is on making communication more efficient and effective in small group activities.

### Course Topics:

- Development, cohesion, and conflict in groups
- Group member communication and personality traits
- Small group and relational communication
- Group decision-making procedures
- Preparing and delivering group presentations

### Learning Outcomes:

- Fulfills LASR
- Read, understand, and apply communication theory and contemporary research
- Explore and better understand group dynamics
- Improve teamwork strategies and interpersonal communication skills
- Practice leadership and organization/management techniques
- Develop decision-making processes
- Advance public speaking skills

### Required Text(s):

Scott Myers & Carolyn Anderson, *The Fundamentals of Small Group Communication*.  
Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2008. ISBN 978-1-4129-5939-1

Additional readings provided via Blackboard or digital library resources

### Assignments/Grade Distribution:

*First Half:*

30 points- Group Project 1 (Game 10pts, Presentation 10pts, Portfolio 10pts)

15 points- Midterm Exam, multiple choice on readings and lectures

*Second Half:*

30 points- Group Project 2 (Service 5pts, Presentation 10pts, Portfolio 15pts)

15 points- Final Exam, multiple choice on readings and lectures since the midterm

*Throughout the Semester:*

10 point- Class Participation (team building exercises, readings, Jobstables, Blackboard worksheet, pop quizzes, attendance)

### Grading Breakdown:

98-100 pts = A+    92-97 pts = A    90-91 pts = A-

88-89 pts = B+    82-87 pts = B    80-81 pts = B-

78-79 pts = C+    72-77 pts = C    70-71 pts = C-

68-69 pts = D+    62-67 pts = D    60-61 pts = D-    0-59 pts = E

**Extra Credit:**

- +5 points for perfect attendance
- +5 points for no missed or late work
- +5 points for C or better on all pop quizzes
- +2 points for each item of written work submitted early

**Grade Questions & Grievances:**

If you find an error in grading, bring it to the instructor's attention immediately so it can be corrected.

If you have a question about assignment feedback, exam answers, etcetera - ask. It will help you learn.

If you disagree with a grade you earn, you can file a request for reconsideration no sooner than 24 hours after receiving the grade and no later than 1 week after receiving the grade. The original work with all evaluation forms should be re-submitted to the instructor along with a 500-1500 word explanation (typed, double-spaced, serif-font) of why you believe your work warrants reconsideration and a higher grade; it should be specific with arguments well supported, using all you have learned in class relevant to making your case. The instructor will reconsider your work within 2 weeks; any grade change at that time, including a lower one, will remain final.

**Attendance:**

Roll will be called at the start of each class meeting; please inform the instructor of your preferred name and pronouns if needed.

"The world is run by those who show up." The focus of this course is on live, non-mediated, communication. Attendance is, therefore, expected, necessary, and required. Everyone, including the instructor, is expected to show up and be prepared for class on time. (Now and then, life intervenes and we all get held up; occasional late arrivals are allowed, but they should not become a habit and they should minimize disruption to the class.)

If you arrive after roll is taken, you are considered late. If you leave before class is dismissed, you are considered late. Attendance and timeliness will be considered as part of your participation grade. More than 3 undocumented absences or 5 latenesses will have an adverse effect on your participation grade (because you can't participate if you're not in class).

Absences on exam or presentation days for religious observances or college-sanctioned events should be discussed in advance for accommodations to be made.

Emergency absences on exam or presentation days require notification to the instructor at the earliest possible time and documentation (such as appointment cards or admissions forms for medical treatment) with work being completed immediately upon return to classes.

Absences for any reason at any time are not excuses for missed or late work. Assignments are all scheduled on the included course calendar so you know what is due and when. Deadlines are a fact of all aspects of life, from careers to credit cards. Late work is not acceptable. If you cannot physically be in class when written work is due, it should be submitted to the instructor via email by the time class starts (if you do not have a copy of the work on computer file, send a photograph or scan of it). Late work will be docked 5% for being turned in after the class in which it is due, and 10% per full day it is late.

**Academic Integrity:**

It is expected that students will maintain the highest academic and ethical standards. The College is an academic community, which values academic integrity and takes seriously its responsibility for upholding academic honesty. All members of the academic community have an obligation to uphold high intellectual and ethical standards. The Academic Integrity Policy can be found in Chapter 340 of the College Handbook.

**Accommodation of Disabilities:**

If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services, located in Van Hoesen Hall, Room B-1, or call 607-753-2066 for an appointment. Information regarding your disability will be treated in a confidential manner. Because many accommodations require early planning, requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible.

**Mental and Emotional Wellbeing:**

Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance.

If symptoms are related to your course work, please speak with the instructor. If you have communication apprehension (also known as “stage fright”) to a degree that can interfere with your success in a communication course that depends on public speaking, speak to the instructor *immediately* to learn management techniques and to discuss possible options to ensure you can complete the course.

If problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis are negatively impacting your mental health and/or interfering with your academic success, SUNY Cortland offers the following resources to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your personal or academic well-being.

- Counseling Center: Van Hoesen Hall, Room B-44 \* 607-753-4728
- Substance Abuse & Prevention Education Van Hoesen Hall, Room B-1 \* 607-753-2066
- Active Minds student club

**Physical Wellbeing:**

If challenges securing food or housing are affecting your academic performance, or your emotional wellbeing, you are urged to contact the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs for support (607-753-4721).

**Etiquette:**

Communication involves speaking *and* listening (or sending and receiving messages). Good communication requires participants to consider various ideas and be willing to be persuaded by others. In this class, we will all practice good communication skills by speaking and listening with respect to those around us. We will be open to opposing viewpoints, even if we are not always persuaded by them. We will make an effort to contribute to discussions and to ensure that others have opportunities to contribute to discussions. We will not use ad-hominem attacks (name calling) when we engage in arguments, nor will we use straw-man fallacies (off topic arguments) just to advance our own viewpoints.

Recent research has suggested that we are not as good at multitasking as we think we are, so to succeed in this class and to help those around us succeed, we will minimize distractions by using technology only in ways that are directly related to coursework and goals. Devices will be silenced and put away when not being used for class purposes.

We will not attend class under the influence of alcohol or other recreational substances. We will also minimize distractions such as late arrivals, early departures, food, drink, bathroom breaks, extraneous conversation, and packing up early before class is over; these not only break our own concentration but also disrupt those around us.

We will come to class on time and prepared with whatever materials are expected of our roles. For the instructor that means, at minimum, lecture notes, related presentation aids, graded student work, the roster, and writing instruments. For the student, that means, at minimum, any relevant texts, work that needs to be

submitted, paper (preferably in a dedicated notebook/folder/binder), and a writing instrument.

We will practice professional communication styles and habits. Emails will include formal salutations such as “Dear” or “Hello” and will be written in a way that are appropriate for acquiring and maintaining employment.

### **Assignment Details:**

All written work should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins using Times New Roman or another similar serif font (such as Garamond or Courier) in black ink. Improper formatting will result in the loss of 5 points. Papers should be written with a professional tone, using full sentences, proper punctuation, and correct spelling. An average of more than 3 spelling/punctuation errors per page will result in the loss of 5 points.

Any time outside sources (information, ideas, and/or words that comes from someplace other than your own brain) are used, they should be cited using the format of the APA. If you need help with APA style, visit <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>, talk to your instructor, or confer with a librarian.

***The first group project will be to create an original game*** designed to be played by teams of 2+ each. This can be a card game, board game, athletic game, video game, etc (but no drinking games - sorry). The group will be in charge of creating the entire thing, from imagining a concept to writing the rules to designing and building the equipment needed. In other words, the game must be developed to the point of being playable. The group’s final presentation will be a participatory demonstration of the game to/with the class. The game will be graded as a group.

Groups will be comprised of 4-6 people. Each group will be initially established by the instructor. Groups’ first task will be to establish membership guidelines (to be reviewed by the instructor), including standards and processes by which a member can be “fired” from the group and by which new members can be “hired” into the groups. Groups cannot be smaller than 4 or larger than 6. Each student must be in a proper group at the completion of a project in order to receive a grade.

Each person in the group must take charge of the group work for at least one week, creating an agenda for the weekly meeting (if groups have 6 members, 2 should team up for one week; if groups have 4 members, at least 1 will need to take the lead twice – but this can be done in a partnership of 2). All weekly meetings must have an agenda. The agenda needs to be completed and distributed in advance of the meeting (weekly meetings will be held on Fridays in class; your agendas should be distributed by Wednesday, with a copy to the instructor).

Each person in the group must take minutes for at least one weekly meeting. All weekly meetings must have minutes. Minutes should be available to group members at the start of the following meeting (each Friday).

Portfolios will include a copy of the membership rules and group goals. copies of all agendas and minutes - each labeled as to who wrote it, individually written summaries and critical evaluations of each group member’s contribution (including one’s own), and a reflective analysis of the group’s performance that draws from - and uses the language of - the course content and readings. The analysis should consider strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, advantages and disadvantages in the group’s goal setting, task completion, workload distribution/delegation, team building exercises, interactions, democratic communication, etcetera throughout the entirety of the group’s time together, as well as the group’s final product and presentation. It is recommended that you keep notes of what happened and your reflections on it day-by-day or week-by-week; this will make your job at the mid-term easier; and, if you include applications of the readings and class lectures in your notes

as you go, you will also be better prepared for the exam. Portfolios will be graded individually.

Game presentations should be 20-30 minutes. They should follow all the principles of good public speaking practice: introductions & conclusions, 2-5 main points with supporting material and details, clearly applied organizational structure, transitions, and oral style. Additionally, they should employ good group presentation habits: all members should have a speaking role, all members must be introduced (either at the beginning or in the transitions from one speaker to the next), all members should be attentive to one another, all portions of the speech should form a cohesive whole with some consistency in style and content. Groups should rehearse ahead of time. All members should be capable of filling in for or helping one another if emergencies arise. Presentation content will be graded as a group; individuals will receive delivery grades.

***The second group project will be a service activity.*** The group must identify a club, organization, or charity that needs help (on campus or off campus), determine an activity that the group can do *together* to help the club/organization/charity achieve its purposes/missions/goals and successfully carry it out. Each group will be responsible for identifying an organization, communicating with them, and working with them in ways the organization considers helpful and acceptable. The final presentations will outline the organization's mission and needs, the group's goal in aiding the organization, an explanation of the actions/efforts undertaken by the group to achieve that goal, and a description and assessment of the results. The project will be graded as a group.

Groups will be comprised of 4-6 people. Each group will be initially established by the instructor. Groups' first task will be to establish membership guidelines (to be reviewed by the instructor), including standards and processes by which a member can be "fired" from the group and by which new members can be "hired" into the groups. Groups cannot be smaller than 4 or larger than 6. Each student must be in a proper group at the completion of a project in order to receive a grade.

Each person in the group must take charge of the group work for at least one week, creating an agenda for the weekly meeting (if groups have 6 members, 2 should team up for one week; if groups have 4 members, at least 1 will need to take the lead twice – but this can be done in a partnership of 2). All weekly meetings must have an agenda. The agenda needs to be completed and distributed in advance of the meeting (weekly meetings will be held on Fridays in class; your agendas should be distributed by Wednesday, with a copy to the instructor).

Each person in the group must take minutes for at least one weekly meeting. All weekly meetings must have minutes.

Portfolios will include a copy of the membership rules and group goals, copies of all agendas and minutes - each labeled as to who wrote it, individually written summaries and critical evaluations of each group member's contribution (including one's own), and a 5-7 page reflective analysis of the group's performance that draws from - and uses the language of - the course content and readings. The analysis should consider strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, advantages and disadvantages in the group's goal setting, task completion, workload distribution/delegation, team building exercises, interactions, democratic communication, etcetera throughout the entirety of the group's time together, as well as the group's final product and presentation. It is recommended that you keep notes of what happened and your reflections on it day-by-day or week-by-week; this will make your job at the end-term easier; and, if you include applications of the readings and class lectures in your notes as you go, you will also be better prepared for the exam. The analysis of the second project should be comprehensive of the entire semester in its consideration and application of course concepts. Portfolios will be graded individually.

Service presentations should be 10-15 minutes in length. They should follow all the principles of good public speaking practice: introductions & conclusions, 2-5 main points with supporting material and details, clearly applied organizational structure, transitions, and oral style. Additionally, they should employ good group presentation habits: all members should have a speaking role, all members must be introduced (either at the beginning or in the transitions from one speaker to the next), all members should be attentive to one another, all portions of the speech should form a cohesive whole with some consistency in style and content. Groups should rehearse ahead of time. All members should be capable of filling in for or helping one another if emergencies arise. Presentation content will be graded as a group; individuals will receive delivery grades.

All aspects of the course will work best if you do the **readings** when assigned. Lectures and class activities will be more meaningful to you; class discussions will be more robust and interactive; assignments will be easier to complete; your success will be promoted. It is easy to procrastinate on, and even ignore, reading off because the time and effort it takes doesn't have a visible result. To encourage you to keep up on the readings, part of your participation grade will be based on **pop quizzes** about the assigned reading. These quizzes can take any form - multiple choice, true/false, short answer, fill-in-the-blanks... so be prepared.

**Activities** designed to build teamwork and let you experience different group dynamics, outside of your formal group projects, will occur regularly throughout the semester. These will most often occur on Wednesdays. Your thoughtful, deliberate, and positive contribution to these learning opportunities will benefit your time, and your grade, in the course.

**Exams** will be multiple-choice, potentially including matching and true/false questions. Each will be 25-50 questions.

Pop quizzes and exams are part of this course work because psychological research on the science of successful learning has demonstrated that the act of preparing for a test and actually taking the test and retrieving information is a great boost to memory. Exams are not just an instrument to measure learning, they are also an instrument that aids learning. Exams are a clinically proven way to help students keep up with classwork – they encourage attendance, preparation and review in ways that less traditional or structured means don't, and the use of frequent quizzes or tests is likely to promote regular, moderate, work, whereas a few larger assignments tend to produce short bursts of cramming, often at the last minute.

COM340 Small Group Communication: Assignments are underlined & are noted on the day due

	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
Wk1	<b>8/28:</b> Class intro & overview	<b>8/30:</b> Small Grp Comm "Spiderweb" <u>Read-ch 1</u>	<b>9/1:</b> Group 1 assignments <u>Read-Communicative Constitution of Orgs chapter on Bb</u>
Wk2	<b>9/4:</b> <i>Labor Day</i> , no class	<b>9/6:</b> Group Socialization <u>Read-ch 2 * Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>9/8:</b> Group meetings
Wk3	<b>9/11:</b> Member Communication "Salt & Pepper" <u>Read-ch 3</u>	<b>9/13:</b> Diversity <u>Read-ch 4 * Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>9/15:</b> Group meetings
Wk4	<b>9/18:</b> Group Development <u>Read-ch 5</u>	<b>9/20:</b> "Paper Plane Contest" <u>Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>9/22:</b> Group meetings
Wk5	<b>9/25:</b> Group Tasks <u>Read-ch 6</u>	<b>9/27:</b> "Spaghetti Tower" <u>Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>9/29:</b> Group meetings
Wk6	<b>10/2:</b> Public Speaking for Groups <u>Read-Appendix B</u>	<b>10/4:</b> <u>Midterm Exam * Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>10/6:</b> Group meetings
Wk7	<b>10/9:</b> <u>Group Presentations</u>	<b>10/11:</b> <u>Group Presentations</u>	<b>10/13:</b> <u>Group Presentations</u>
Wk8	<b>10/16:</b> <i>Fall Break</i> No class	<b>10/18:</b> Decision-Making "Zombie Survival" <u>Portfolios * Read-ch 7 * Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>10/20:</b> Group 2 assignments
Wk9	<b>10/23:</b> Small Group Roles <u>Read-ch 8</u>	<b>10/25:</b> "Lego Moving" <u>Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>10/27:</b> Group meetings
Wk10	<b>10/30:</b> Leadership <u>Read-ch 9</u>	<b>11/1:</b> "Melting Ice" <u>Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>11/3:</b> Group meetings
Wk11	<b>11/6:</b> Relational Communication <u>Read-ch 10</u>	<b>11/8:</b> "Navigational Challenge" <u>Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>11/10:</b> Group meetings
Wk12	<b>11/13:</b> Conflict <u>Read-ch 11</u>	<b>11/15:</b> NCA - prof away. Class on Blackboard- Reading (Symbolic Convergence ch) & questions to be completed during class time <u>Meeting Agenda</u> (email to Dr. Knopf)	<b>11/17:</b> NCA - prof away Weekly group meetings continue as usual - minutes should be emailed to Dr. Knopf by 5pm
Wk13	<b>11/20:</b> Cohesion <u>Read-ch 12</u>	<b>11/22:</b> <i>Thanksgiving Break</i> No class	<b>11/24:</b> <i>Thanksgiving Break</i> No class
Wk14	<b>11/27:</b> Connecting Concepts <u>Read-Appendix A</u>	<b>11/29:</b> "Traffic Jam" <u>Meeting Agenda</u>	<b>12/1:</b> Group meetings
Wk15	<b>12/4:</b> <u>Group Presentations</u>	<b>12/6:</b> <u>Group Presentations</u>	<b>12/8:</b> "Jobstacles" <u>Portfolios</u>
Finals	<b>12/15, 8:30-10:30am:</b> <u>Final Exam</u>		

## ADDENDUM: Materials to Assist with Group Projects

### Agenda Content/Goals

- Establish the meeting's goals/objectives/purposes
- Provide time for old business (things previously discussed that need follow up)
- Provide time for new business (new things to be tackled)
- Provide time for all members to raise questions
- Prioritize the tasks and/or discussions
- Indicate whether discussion items require a decision
- Inform members on how to prepare for the meeting

### Sample Format

<b>MEETING AGENDA – [MEETING TITLE]</b>			
<b>MEETING INFORMATION</b>			
<hr/>			
Objective:			
Date:	[01/01/2000]	Location:	[Enter Room Number]
Time:	6:00 AM	Meeting Type:	[Type of Meeting]
Call-In Number:	[List number]	Call-In Code:	[Enter code]
Called By:	[Name]	Facilitator:	[Name]
Timekeeper:	[Name]	Note taker:	[Name]
Attendees:	[List Names]		
<b>PREPARATION FOR MEETING</b>			
<hr/>			
Please Read:			
Please Bring:			
<b>ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING</b>			
<hr/>			
Item/Responsible/Due Date			
1. [Item Description] / [Responsible]/[Due Date]			
2.			
<b>AGENDA ITEMS</b>			
<hr/>			
Item/Presenter/Time Allotted			
1. [Agenda Item] / [Presenter Name]/[Time Allotted]			
2.			
3.			
<b>NEW ACTION ITEMS</b>			
<hr/>			
Item/Responsible/Due Date			
1. [New Item] / [Responsible]/[Due Date]			
2.			
<b>OTHER NOTES OR INFORMATION</b>			
<hr/>			

**Minutes Content/Goals**

- A list of who is in attendance
- Summaries of discussions that represent all views/voices expressed
- Notes of any work assignments made
- Tasks completed
- Decisions reached

**Form for Critical Summaries & Evaluations of Group Members (for Portfolios)**

Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

Particular Tasks for which Member was Responsible: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Tasks which Member Completed Successfully: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Member's Communication Strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Recommendations for Communication Improvement: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Member's Leadership Strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

## Group Project #1 Grading Rubrics

### Game

10 points total

- Gameplay was fully developed (in other words, it was playable) [4 pts]
- Goal or format was creative and/or original [2 pts]
- Execution was professional and/or creative [2 pts]
- Fulfilled assignment of being a team-effort for other teams to enjoy [2 pts]

### Presentation

10 points total

- Submitted game with presentation [1 pt]
- Coordination among Presenters [4 pts]
  - ✓ Offered references to members presentations/ideas
  - ✓ Presenters seemed familiar with group members presentations
  - ✓ Topics were well selected to meet the goals of the presentation
  - ✓ Avoided unnecessary redundancy among presenters
- Overall Organization of Presentation [2 pts]
  - ✓ Provided introduction
  - ✓ Used transitions between presenters to demonstrate relationships among topics Used sensible arrangement/sequence of presenters/ideas
  - ✓ Topics fit together to form a logical whole
  - ✓ Provided conclusion
- Overall Professional Appearance [3 pts]
  - ✓ Presenters demonstrated professional behavior during their own presentations
  - ✓ Presenters demonstrated professional behavior during members presentations Presenters set a professional tone for the presentation
  - ✓ Visual aids demonstrated effective design (if applicable)

### Portfolio

10points total

All portions complete

3 points

- Copy of membership rules
- 5 agendas
- 5 sets of minutes
- Critical summary & evaluation for each group member – including self
- 5-7 page reflective analysis

Reflective analysis

7 points

- Demonstrates understanding and synthesis of course concepts as presented in readings and lectures [3 points]
- Uses support from textbook, or other academic sources, as needed with proper citing in APA style [1 point]
- Reflects careful attention to group interactions [2 points]
- Writing is appropriate for a person with some college education and exhibits professionalism appropriate for the workforce [1 point]

## Group Project #2 Grading Rubrics

### Service

5 points total

- Identified an established group, organization, or cause in need of assistance [1 point]
- Coordinated with group/organization/cause to set an appropriate goal of assistance [1 point]
- Worked with group/organization/cause as needed to establish acceptable involvement [1 point]
- Assistance efforts involved full class group membership working together [1 point]
- Achieved all or some of established goal [1 point]

### Presentation

10 points total

- Coordination among Presenters [4 pts]
  - ✓ Offered references to members presentations/ideas
  - ✓ Presenters seemed familiar with group members presentations
  - ✓ Topics were well selected to meet the goals of the presentation
  - ✓ Avoided unnecessary redundancy among presenters
- Overall Organization of Presentation [3 pts]
  - ✓ Provided introduction
  - ✓ Used transitions between presenters to demonstrate relationships among topics Used sensible arrangement/sequence of presenters/ideas
  - ✓ Topics fit together to form a logical whole
  - ✓ Provided conclusion
- Overall Professional Appearance [3 pts]
  - ✓ Presenters demonstrated professional behavior during their own presentations
  - ✓ Presenters demonstrated professional behavior during members presentations Presenters set a professional tone for the presentation
  - ✓ Visual aids demonstrated effective design (if applicable)

### Portfolio

15 points total

All portions complete

4 points

- 1-page executive summary of service project
- Copy of membership rules
- 5 agendas
- 5 sets of minutes
- Critical summary & evaluation for each group member – including self
- 5-7 page reflective analysis

Reflective analysis

11 points

- Demonstrates understanding and synthesis of course concepts as presented in readings and lectures [6 points]
- Uses support from textbook, or other academic sources, as needed with proper citing in APA style [2 point]
- Reflects careful attention to group interactions [2 points]
- Writing is appropriate for a person with some college education and exhibits professionalism appropriate for the workforce [1 point]