

CAS 100B: Effective Group Discussion Syllabus

Please note: Penn State encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. This syllabus can be made available in alternate formats for students who require this assistance. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please let me know as soon as possible.

A Note on my Teaching Philosophy:

I believe that every student in my class has the ability to succeed in this course. My goal is to create a comfortable environment in which you can explore and improve your ability to think critically and skillfully present your ideas to an audience. I do not “give” grades; students earn grades. While this may seem like semantic hair splitting, it is an important distinction. No one is entitled to get an “A” in a class unless they earn it. I cannot grade on effort—I must grade what you actually do. My job is to push students to do their best and to then exceed that standard. I recognize that this is futile unless I also provide the support and assistance that each student needs to excel. Therefore, I provide office hours and expect students to use them. I strive to provide the tools and support necessary for each student to succeed. However, you will not excel unless you too are willing to pay the price of excellence. Part of that price is a devotion to your coursework. I assume that attaining a university degree is your first priority. If this is not the case, it is less likely that you will achieve excellence. It’s not impossible to achieve excellence without trying but it is also not impossible to survive a fall from an airplane traveling at 10,000 feet. Most of you are here because you want to get a better job. While I reject the notion that a university is simply job training, if you want to treat it as such, recognize that you would be required to work 40 hours a week (or more) likely from 8am until 5pm. If you are chronically late, they fire you. If you do not do your work, they fire you. If you drop the ball, you probably will not get a raise, they may fire you, and in some cases legal action may be taken against you. I believe that education should do much more than job training, but if you see it as job training, at least take it seriously. Bottom line—you do your part to excel and I will be there to help you reach that goal.

Class Climate: My role as your instructor is to create a comfortable class environment and offer you constructive feedback to improve your team building and public speaking skills. Such an environment cannot be achieved without your active participation. To that end, the number one rule of this class is respect for everyone in the classroom. A performance-based class such as this is only successful to the degree that each student contributes to each class period, either through class discussion, speaking, or attentive listening. If you are disrespectful to me or to another student, you will be asked to leave class for the remainder of the period and will be counted as absent for that day.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Diagnose the effectiveness of a group's dynamics, predict its problem solving success, and make recommendations that will improve performance.
 - ◆ **Demonstration:** Observe the dynamics of a selected group and use the appropriate analytical tools to predict problems and performance.
2. Utilize proven techniques for improving group satisfaction and success.
 - ◆ **Demonstration:** Groups will provide ongoing group evaluations, monitor group successes, failures, and attempts to improve group satisfaction and success.
3. Successfully communicate a complex idea to a specific audience to show your understanding of communication as a process.
 - ◆ **Demonstration:** Create and deliver speeches tailored to a specific audience.
4. Formulate problems, brainstorm solutions, and choose and defend (with appropriate arguments and evidence) a viable solution.
 - ◆ **Demonstration:** Deliver group presentations that explain and defend group recommendations.

Course Policies:

1. **Attendance** is vital to the success of this course. However, since "life happens" you **are allowed three absences** during the course for sickness **or other needs**. Use these days wisely. If you miss more than three class periods, 30 points will be deducted from your final grade for each additional absence. Attendance will be taken at some point during each class. **You** are responsible for signing the attendance sheet. You are responsible for obtaining assignments and notes on any missed lectures from classmates. Excessive absences will negatively impact your final grade in the course. Students involved with University-sanctioned events must notify the instructor **prior** to the event. Habitual tardiness will also lower your course grade. If you are late to class on a presentation day, under **no** circumstances should you enter the classroom while one of your peers is giving a speech. Wait until the presentation is finished, then enter the room.
2. **Academic dishonesty** will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty is defined as follows: "Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students" (The University Faculty Senate Policies for Students).
3. **Citizenship/Participation.** Your grade in this class depends in part upon your level of participation. Your success in this course relies not only upon your group communication and public speaking abilities, but also upon your participation as a good group and general audience member. Good participation can include enthusiastically joining activities, asking and answering questions, actively listening to your peers and the instructor, and providing relevant, outside material to class. Alternatively, withdrawing from group discussions and activities, reading the paper

while others are speaking, making constant discussion and/or noise, falling asleep, or arriving late will all be noted as poor participation and will be reflected in your course grade. One more thing—**this is a cell free zone!** Turn off your cell phone when you come to class. If you have an absolute need to have a cell phone on (you are an on call EMT or you are expecting your significant other to go into labor and deliver a child any day now) tell me. Even silent mode is pretty loud and distracting when another group is speaking. If your cell phone goes off during another group's speech, I will severely deduct from your participation points.

If you feel extremely uncomfortable speaking in class or in groups, talk to me immediately so that we can construct a plan-of-action to help you negotiate these concerns.

Grades: Grading is based on a 1000 point scale:

Problem 1 – Symposium	150
Problem 2 – Group Analysis	175
Problem 3 - Dyncorp	175
Written IST Assignments	150
Group Notebook	150
Citizenship/Participation	100
Impromptus	50
Written Assignments	50

Grade Scale: (1000 points)

A =930-1000	B =869-830	C =749-700
A- =929-900	B- =829-800	D =669-600
B+ =899-870	C+ =799-750	F =599 and below

Your continued enrollment in this class signifies your knowledge of and agreement to comply with the guidelines, policies, and requirements contained in this syllabus for CAS 100B.

Class Schedule – Fall 2005

(Subject to change)

CLASS	DATE	AGENDA	TASK
WEEK 1			
1	Tuesday 8/30	Course Introduction / Group Foundations	Skills survey Read: Organizational Communication as Cultural Performance, p. 134-145
2	Thursday 9/1	PBL Skit / Groupthink	Introduce Group Notebook Assignment Introduce Group Symposium Project Read: Management Communication: The Threat of Groupthink
WEEK 2			
3	Tuesday 9/6	Public Speaking: Organization / Delivery	Read: Presentations 101
4	Thursday 9/8	Public Speaking: Evidence and Reasoning	Read: Bitzer – The Rhetorical Situation Read: Zarefsky, Chapter 6
WEEK 3			
5	Tuesday 9/13	Speeches of Introduction	
6	Thursday 9/15	Speeches of Introduction	
WEEK 4			
7	Tuesday 9/20	Group Development	Read: 5 Simple Strategies For Unifying Your Project Teams Read: Developmental sequence in small groups
8	Thursday 9/22	Norms/Roles	Read: The Development and Enforcement of Group Norms Read: Role Repertoires of Members in an Effective Small Group Topic Email for Group Symposium Due
WEEK 5			
9	Tuesday 9/27	Cleese Video Clips Effective Meetings	Read: The Ten Commandments of Meetings Topic Memos Due
10	Thursday 9/29	Communicating as a Group	Read: Tag-Team Pitches
WEEK 6			
11	Tuesday 10/4	Working day for Presentations	
12	Thursday 10/6	PMOPS	Introduce Group Analysis Project Read: PMOPS In Class Problem: Assign presentation order Group Videos Due Symposium Memo Due by Oct. 9
WEEK 7			
13	Tuesday 10/11	Present Group Symposium	
14	Thursday 10/13	Present Group Symposium	

CLASS	DATE	AGENDA	TASK
WEEK 8			
15	Tuesday 10/18	Working day for Presentations	Watch videos of other groups
16	Thursday 10/20	Managing Conflict	Read: Coping with Conflict
WEEK 9			
17	Tuesday 10/25	Personality/Leadership	Assign presentation order Read: Making work fun: An important role for managers
18	Thursday 10/27	Working day for Presentations	
WEEK 10			
19	Tuesday 11/1	Present Solutions: Group Critique	
20	Thursday 11/3	Present Solutions: Group Critique	
WEEK 11			
21	Tuesday 11/8	Impromptu Speeches	
22	Thursday 11/10	Impromptu Speeches	
WEEK 12			
23	Tuesday 11/15	Review of the Rhetorical Situation	Introduce Dyncorp Problem
24	Thursday 11/17	Working day for Presentations	NCA Convention
WEEK 13			
25	Tuesday 11/22	No Class	No Class – Friday Schedule
26	Thursday 11/24	No Class	No Class – Thanksgiving Break
WEEK 14			
27	Tuesday 11/29	Working day for Presentations	
28	Thursday 12/1	Working day for Presentations	
WEEK 15			
29	Tuesday 12/6	Present Solutions: Dyncorp Problem	Course Evaluations
30	Thursday 12/8	Present Solutions: Dyncorp Problem	Group Notebooks Due