

## COM 220: Small Group Communication

TR, 9:30 am – 10:45 am in C 202

Department of Communication & Theatre

Point Loma Nazarene University

**Professor:** Dr. Lisa Raser

**Email:** lraser@pointloma.edu

**Phone:** 619-849-2585

**Office:** Cabrillo, Rm. 205

**Office Hours:** M/W/F: 10:30-11:30 am; M: 1:00-2:30 pm and by appointment.

### PLNU MISSION

---

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

### REQUIRED MATERIALS & RESOURCES

---

Rothwell, D.J. *In Mixed Company: Communicating in Small Groups and Teams*. (9<sup>th</sup> Ed.).  
Boston, MA: Cengage.

\*Please read and save this syllabus. If you remain in the course after the first day of class, then you are stipulating that you will abide by the university and course policies described within this syllabus.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OUTCOMES

---

We often find ourselves engaging in small group communication practices throughout much of our personal and professional lives. This course provides an introduction to small group communication and the small group process. You will have opportunities to observe different types of communication occurring among small groups of people as well as practice leadership, group roles, dialogue facilitation, and conflict resolution within your own work group.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- explain and apply small group communication theories, processes, and practices
- demonstrate a more deliberate participation in and analysis of groups both inside and outside of the classroom
- observe and successfully perform a variety of group roles
- identify the ethical implications of group processes and decisions
- facilitate a World Café group dialogue about an important issue with students beyond this classroom.

### COURSE FORMAT AND POLICIES

---

**Support:** I am committed to helping every student attain their best possible education.

I AM HERE TO HELP! Please do not hesitate to ask questions, or ask for help, in or out of class. I will also be available if you would like me to review your work and give you feedback before it is turned in or presented. If you have any special needs that it would be helpful for me to be aware of, please do let me know.

**Attendance:** As members of a learning community, your presence is appreciated, and your absence is

noticed. The class sessions are set up to help people learn from each other (through discussions, activities, etc.) and you are expected to attend each class session. Everyone has useful and insightful information to offer to the class. Participation is the core of this work, and to help keep track of that, I take attendance.

You are allowed two (2) excused or unexcused absences in the course of the semester without penalty. The only absences excused after that will be university approved absences (see section below). It is your choice how you use these absences and it is encouraged that you use them wisely. Please note that these 2 absences DO include instances of illness and family obligations. Each absence over two will result in a 15-point deduction to your overall grade.

As noted in the University catalog: If you are absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings (3 classes), I have the option of filing a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (6 classes), you may be de-enrolled without notice. If the date of de-enrollment is past the last date to withdraw from a class, you will be assigned a grade of W or WF consistent with university policy in the grading section of the catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) in the undergrad student catalog.

**University Approved Absences:** Absences for certain events and obligations recognized by the University (i.e.: participation in sports, debate, music tours, etc.) may be counted as “excused.” Please notify me at least one week prior to such absences with documentation and contact information from the sponsoring program/department. You are responsible for making up all work missed due to absences in a timely manner, to be worked out ahead of time with me.

**Late to Class/Leaving Early:** It is an expectation of this class community that we begin our class time *together*, and complete our class time *together* each day. Instances of habitual lateness are a distraction to our class community and may impact your ability to participate fully in the course. Therefore, I do make note when you are late to class and habitual lateness will negatively impact your participation grade.

Being absent for more than 20 minutes during any part of a class period, whether at the beginning, middle, or end, will constitute an absence. Similarly, it is expected that you remain actively engaged in the classroom activities until the entire class has been dismissed for the day. Failure to do so will result in a deduction of your participation points for the course. If you absolutely must leave early one day for an important/legitimate/emergency reason, please approve it with me at the class period prior or via email. (Please arrange any meetings with your major adviser so that they do not conflict with your class schedule.) If you leave class early without timely notification/approval, it will negatively affect your course participation grade. Please talk to me early in the semester if you have any questions or concerns about this policy.

**Late Work/Make Up Work:** All work is expected on the planned “due dates” - at the beginning of the class period when they are due. In general, no late or makeup written assignments/presentations will be allowed. In the event of a documented personal emergency and at my discretion, makeup work *may* be accepted for half credit. If you are absent on the day of a test or a presentation, I will only consider a make-up opportunity if you have communicated with me in advance of your absence and you have a documented personal emergency. Depending upon the circumstance, a make up opportunity may not receive full credit.

**Incomplete:** Incompletes will only be granted under extreme circumstances, given reasonable justification.

**Electronic Devices:** The use of cell phones and laptops/tablets during class is prohibited unless I ask for them to be used as a specific part of a class activity. Please join me in turning off or silencing all cell phones, laptops, and similar electronic devices and keeping them out of sight for the duration of class. This policy was influenced by two important pieces of research: 1. Faria Sana, Tina Weston, and Nicholas J. Cepeda, “Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers,” *Computers and Education* (March 2013): “We found that participants who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored

lower on a test compared to those who did not multitask, and participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not. The results demonstrate that multitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both users and fellow students and can be detrimental to comprehension of lecture content.” 2. Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking” (April 2014). In this study, the authors found that students who hand wrote their notes during lectures remembered more material than students who used laptops for notetaking because they could not write everything down verbatim. The extra processing required by the hand writers to select important over extraneous information was beneficial for their retention of the material they were learning.

**Email:** I will frequently use email to communicate with you and I do my best to respond to your emails as promptly as possible. I will respond to emails Monday-Friday from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. If you send me an email over the weekend or holiday, I will respond on the following school day.

**Written Work:** Please type, double-space and staple all written work unless instructed otherwise. It is my expectation that all writing will be clear, coherent, and free of grammatical/spelling errors. Please proof all written work – your grade will reflect both the substance and the style of your writing. When working on the computer, try to plan for the “unexpected” but predictable problems: plan extra time for library printing lines and back up files as you go.

**Student Responsibility:**

It is the student’s responsibility to maintain his/her class schedule. Should the need arise to drop this course (personal emergencies, poor performance, etc.), the student has the responsibility to follow through (provided the drop date meets the stated calendar deadline established by the university), not the instructor. Simply ceasing to attend this course or failing to follow through to arrange for a change of registration (drop/add) may easily result in a grade of F on the official transcript.

**Final Exam Policy:**

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. Final exams will not be given early before our assigned date/time. Please arrange any activities or transportation for the break around this finals schedule so that you can be present to take the test at the assigned time.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. As stated in the university catalog, “Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one’s own when in reality they are the results of another person’s creativity and effort. Such acts include plagiarism, copying of class assignments, and copying or other fraudulent behavior on examinations. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for a) that particular assignment or examination, and/or b) the course.” See [Academic Policies](#) in the undergrad student catalog.

**Academic Accommodations:**

While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student’s instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual learning needs of the student. This policy assists the University in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

**Ferpa Policy:**

In compliance with federal law, neither PLNU student ID nor social security number will be used in publicly posted grades or returned sets of assignments without student written permission. This class will meet the federal requirements by (each faculty member choose one strategy to use: distributing all grades and papers individually; requesting and filing written student permission; or assigning each student a unique class ID number not identifiable on the alphabetic roster.). Also in compliance with FERPA, you will be the only person given information about your progress in this class unless you have designated others to receive it in the "Information Release" section of the student portal. See [Policy Statements](#) in the undergrad student catalog.

**PLNU Copyright Policy:**

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

## CLASS ASSIGNMENTS & COURSE SCHEDULE

---

**Exams:** There are two exams in this course – one near the middle of the semester and one during finals week. The exams will include material from the book and in-class discussion/activities. Exams may contain T/F, Multiple Choice, Matching, Fill-in-the-blank, and short response/essay questions. You will receive a study guide before each exam to aid in your preparation.

**Derber Field Observations:** We will be reading an excerpt from Charles Derber's book, *The Pursuit of Attention* (posted on Canvas.) Inspired by Derber's work, you will be conducting some field observations of conversational narcissism occurring in social settings outside of the classroom. You will be asked to turn in an essay in addition to your field notes that reflects upon your observations as well as your own practice of conversational responses. More detail about this assignment will be given in class on the day that it is assigned (see course schedule.)

**Dialogue Café Group Project & Presentation:** In this course, we will be learning about World Café, a method for group interaction that is centered around the practice of dialogue. As a group, you will create a time and space to host your own Dialogue Café (inspired by the World Café model). You will develop some central questions for discussion around an issue of your choice, invite some friends, and facilitate a dialogue around your selected questions. Your group will turn in a Dialogue Café plan for approval/feedback from me before you host your Dialogue Café. At the end of the semester, your group will present about your Dialogue Café to the rest of the class, including photos from the event and feedback from your participants. More detail about this assignment will be given in class on the day that it is assigned.

**Reading Check-ins and Participation:** At times you will be given short assignments or exercises in class (typically at the beginning of class) that will prompt you to recall and/or reflect upon your reading assignment for that day. Reading Check-ins will vary between 5-10 points each and can take a variety of forms (free-write, short quiz, creating a discussion question, small group discussion, etc.) Reading check-ins cannot be made up. If you come late to class and miss a reading check in, you will receive a zero on that assignment. If you come late, you will not be given extra time to complete a reading check in. Your reading from the assigned chapter of the textbook should be completed before you come to class on Tuesday. Reading check-ins may be given on either Tuesday or Thursday class periods.

The remaining portion of this grade will be designated for your class participation and will reflect your involvement in the course, including (but not limited to): your regular and on-time class attendance, how well/completely you read for the day and incorporate text concepts into the discussion/activities, how "present" you are in class, how readily you volunteer for in-class activities, and how well you generally

project respectful involvement such as supportive listening, nonverbal feedback, etc.

## ASSESSMENT & GRADING

Grade Scale (% to Letter):

93-100	A	73-76	C
90-92.9%	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	0-59	F

### Point Distribution

<b>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>Number of Points AVAILABLE</b>	<b>Number of Points I EARNED</b>
Mid Term Exam	100	
Final Exam	100	
Derber Field Observations	100	
Dialogue Café Group Project - Plan	25	
Dialogue Café Group Project & Presentation	100	
Reading Check-ins & Participation	125	
<b>TOTAL</b> <b>- Absence penalties (15 pts. per absence after 2 absences)</b>	<b>550</b> <b>(e.g., 3 absences = -15)</b>	

### Tentative Course Schedule

- Subject to change with fair notice.
- Please complete reading prior to arriving at class on the assigned due date.

WK	Date	Topic	Reading/Assignments Due
1	R 8/31	Welcome/Course Introduction	
2	T 9/5	Comm Competence in Groups	Ch. 1
	R 9/7	Comm Competence in Groups	
3	T 9/12	Groups as Systems	Ch. 2
	R 9/14	Groups as Systems	
4	T 9/19	Group Development	Ch. 3
	R 9/21	Group Development <i>Assign: Dialogue Café Group Project</i>	Quick Reference Guide for Hosting World Café (find on Canvas)
5	T 9/26	Group Climate Dialogue Café: Set the Context	Ch. 4
	R 9/28	Group Climate Conversational Narcissism <i>Assign: Derber Field Observations</i>	Derber, Ch 2 (find on Canvas)
6	T 10/3	Roles in Groups Dialogue Café: Create Hospitable Space	Ch. 5
	R 10/5	Roles in Groups Dialogue Café: Questions that Matter	

7	T 10/10	Group Leadership Dialogue Café: Encourage Contribution	Ch. 6
	R 10/12	Group Leadership Dialogue Café: Connect Diverse Perspectives	
8	T 10/17	Developing Effective Teams Dialogue Café: Listen for Patterns	Ch. 7
	R 10/19	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
9	T 10/24	Ineffective Decision Making Dialogue Café: Share Collective Discoveries	Ch. 8 Dialogue Café Group Project <b>Plan Due</b>
	R 10/26	Ineffective Decision Making	
10	T 10/31	Effective Decision Making	Ch. 9
	R 11/2	Effective Decision Making	
11	T 11/7	Power in Groups	Ch. 10
	R 11/9	Synthesis Work	
12	T 11/14	Conflict Management in Groups	Ch. 11
	R 11/16	Conflict Management in Groups	
13	T 11/21	Share Derber results in class	<b>Derber Field Observations Due</b>
	R 11/23	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>	No Class
14	T 11/28	Technology and Virtual Groups	Ch. 12
	R 11/30	Technology and Virtual Groups	Ch. 12
15	T 12/5	<b>Group Project Presentations</b>	<b>Group project materials Due</b>
	R 12/7	<b>Group Project Presentations</b>	<b>Group project materials Due</b>
16	Finals Week	<b>Final Exam</b> Tues, Dec 12 <sup>th</sup> 10:30 am – 1:00 pm	<b>Final Exam</b>  Please note: Midterms and Final exams will not be given early before our assigned date/time. Please arrange any activities or transportation for the break around this finals schedule so that you can be present to take the test at the assigned time.