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## Department of Communication Studies

Course: COM 2020 - Small Group Communication, section 1 - meeting time: 11a-12:15a  
classroom: Salomon Theatre      final exam: thursday 5/2/24, 10:30a-1p (must attend)

**Required Text:** Communicating in Small Groups: Principles and Practices (2020) by Steven Beebe & John Masterson. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 12th edition (make sure to get the 12<sup>th</sup>!)

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professor: dr. sheri strothers

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office: Salomon 102.      office hours: Tuesday 12p-2p & Thursday 12:30p -3:30p  
or by appointment -or- reach out anytime: [sstrothe@pointloma.edu](mailto:ssstrothe@pointloma.edu)

The mission and explorations of PLNU are stated below and inextricably woven throughout this course.  
Together, we will grow in all areas of faith and communication.

**Course Description:** Nature and function of communication in the small group context. Includes consideration of research methods, leadership, and conflict resolution. Theory applied to active classroom participation.

**Course Learning Outcomes.** Students who successfully complete this course will:

1. Understand the nature and function of communication in the small group context.
2. Develop a theoretical understanding of task group processes and group dynamics in organizational settings.
3. Recognize the role of power and explain leadership styles and strategies for exerting leadership.
4. Explain cohesiveness in groups and strategies for building group cohesion.
5. Understand that a company's strength and success is largely dependent on effective small group communication.

### **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 is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

### **Spiritual Care**

PLNU strives to be a place where students grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith. If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain, or if you have prayer requests, you can contact the Office of Student Life and Formation.

**Foundational Explorations Mission:** PLNU provides a foundational course of study in the liberal arts informed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, the curriculum equips students with a broad range of knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to enrich major study, lifelong learning, and vocational service as Christ-like participants in the world's diverse societies and culture.

Genesis 1:26 (NIV) Then God said, "Let **us** make mankind in **our** image, in **our** likeness... (my emphasis added)

**Assessment And Grading.** A 10% grade scale will be employed for this course.

	A	93.5-100+	A-	89.5 - 93.4	
B+	89.4 - 86.5	B	86.4 - 82.5	B-	82.4 - 79.5
C+	79.4 - 76.5	C	76.4 - 72.5	C-	72.4 - 69.5
	D	69.4 - 59.5	F	59.4 and below	

### **Late Assignments.**

All assignments are to be submitted by the time they are due on canvas or (presentations only) at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be assigned 50% value and not graded or eligible for revision. If you are struggling with extenuating circumstances, please contact me directly.

### **PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy.**

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If you are absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, I can issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If your absences exceed 20 percent, you (the student) may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an "F" grade.

### **PLNU Final Examination Policy**

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the PLNU Class Schedule website. If you are scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

### **PLNU Academic Honesty Policy (plagiarism)**

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. 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. This includes the utilization of artificial intelligences tools (chatGPT etc). A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See Academic Policies for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

### **Content Warning**

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In COM 2020, all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include group and team communication in the workplace and beyond. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in small group communication and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”<sup>31</sup> The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”  
There is no commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:30*

## Course Specific Policies and Procedures:

### Concerns or Disagreements:

Any concerns regarding the policies or procedures of this course, as stated in this syllabus, or, as they occur in class should be discussed directly with me either after class or during an office visit. There is one provision to this: we cannot discuss a grade until 24 hours have passed since you received a grade and you have reviewed the requirements of the assignment prior to our discussion.

### Attendance:

This class involves both speaking and listening experiences that are critical to your learning. As a common and professional courtesy, please advise me & your group when you will miss a class meeting. A quick e-mail is sufficient notice of an absence ([sstrothe@pointloma.edu](mailto:sstrothe@pointloma.edu)).

### Speaking Assignment Policies:

There are a few presentations in this class: formal, informal, small group and impromptu. If you have a conflict with a scheduled presentation, you may make it up if \*prior\* arrangements are made with me.

### Makeups:

There will be no make-up quizzes or presentations. Ask in advance if you have a timing conflict. No “make-up” or extra credit work accepted after the final exam. Emergencies will be handled on an individual basis.

### Basic Protocol:

Make sure all devices are silent and tucked away, unless specifically in use for class. Weapons, drugs and alcohol are never allowed in the classroom. In all ways, please respect each other and our classroom environment: “love one another...” (John 13:34)

### Basic Class Expectations:

All persons will be treated fairly and with respect. We may discuss “hot topics” and must do so with compassionate, social decorum. Honest ignorance is okay, but rudeness, aggression, and/or disrespect will not be tolerated. If these expectations are not met, the violator will be appropriately chastised and disciplined.

**Note:** You will only gain from this class & your faith what you put into it. If you are lazy with either, the result will reflect that; likewise, if you are actively engaged and curious, your learning AND your faith will be incredible.

### The Loma Writing Center may assist you with any/all writing assignments for \*any\* class. See info below:

The Loma Writing Center exists to help all members of the PLNU community cultivate transferable writing skills to engage their academic, professional, personal, and spiritual communities. We work toward this goal by conducting one-on-one consultation sessions, supporting writing education across the PLNU community, and participating in ongoing writing center research.

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you’re in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar and polishing final drafts, and more. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see [Loma Writing Center webpage](#) or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221

# Assignments

**Project Group** – The bulk of your “group” time in our class will be spent with your project group. Early in our class you will join with 3-5 other people of your choosing and design, develop, and implement (actually do) a meaningful group project. Your choices are (almost) limitless, but must sustain you for the entire semester and ultimately “make the world a better place.” Your journals and final group presentation will be based on your work in this group. We will discuss this in detail, in class. You choose your own group, and once chosen, they are permanent for the semester.

**Journal** – (35 + 50 = 85 points total) - Your journal represents your learning throughout the course and should be (mentally) started the first day of class. You will be synthesizing, applying, analyzing, and questioning what you learn. Include your own personal, critical reflections as well as specific questions which address text materials and classtime as well as any ties to the Bible or faith based concerns. There will be 2 separate entries. A complete entry requires answers to all questions and is usually 3–4 typed, double spaced pages. See limited example on p. 7 herein.

1. What are you learning about how faith and communication, specifically in a group context, are connected?
2. How have you recently applied the chapters to your *life*? Highlight 1 specific example + text.
3. How have you recently applied the chapters to your *project group*? Highlight 1 example + text.
4. Offer a critique OR insight from our class time
5. How and why did your project group do well this week? Explain with *specific* detail and analyses.
6. On what can your project group improve? Explain with *specific* detail.
7. Discuss your current hidden issue in your group and how it is affecting you and the group as a whole.
8. Describe your present personal challenge in the group and/or in the class.
9. If you could tell someone in your group (or the entire group) anything you wanted, what would it be, how would you say it and why are you not saying it now?
10. What / how have you been praying for your group?

A good entry will be organized, well formatted and provide analyses and hypotheses about WHY you believe your group is behaving in the ways that you are observing. *Questions, specific examples, and critical thinking* are required as are specifics about how you are feeling and communicating during the group time. Your entries are to be truthful and personal. All journals are strictly confidential. **TIP:** type out & paste the above questions into two separate word documents, ready to fill in for each entry.

**Final Group Presentation** - 70 points – (SEE GRADE SHEET – HEREIN) The culmination of your group's work will be a multimedia presentation to the class. You are required to 1) prepare and distribute a QR or handouts that promote your project and explain how we can “help” 2) utilize at least two forms of media 3) be highly analytical and at times painfully honest and 4) enjoy your presentation! There is no written assignment due for this presentation. All group members will receive the same grade. Please be honest with each other and the class about your group experiences ☺

**Creative Presentation** -25 points- One time in a small group, you will creatively present a chapter to the class. The presentation must be 7-20 minutes in length, include a case study or story that relates to the chapter and actively engaging. Your group will be graded on audience participation, creativity, group balance, and organization (see gradesheet herein. You will all receive the same grade. The format is up to you, but do not lecture more than five minutes, do not play Kahoot!™ or Jeopardy™. Class participation is required.

**Participation** - 25 points - Because communication is an inherently participative and experiential activity a portion of your final grade will be based on your participation in class. Basis for participation points will include, but is not limited to, asking thoughtful questions during class, taking part in or initiating class discussions & respect for classmates & me.

**Exams** -105 points- There are three exams. Each exam is worth 35 points and will cover any material from the textbook, lectures, and/or class activity. We will not have a study guide; however, you are always welcome to ask me questions AND the textbook provides exam questions via the optional online resource.

**Article Summary** - 25 points- Once in the semester, you will research and discuss 1 scholarly article and share it with the class in a discussion format. Please include the citation, summary and application to your life with clear examples (1 page of notes, maximum). The presentation will be 3-5 minutes and we will do these often in class.

**Daily Lesson Groups** -25 points- Each day that a new chapter is scheduled one person in your assigned daily lesson group will be responsible for facilitating a lively discussion including: (see example on next page)  
The goal of our class is to improve “small group communication” and this is an excellent opportunity to do so!

1. a brief agenda, handed out to each group member which includes:
2. questions, and/or activities, and/or games, and/or exercises related to the chapter
3. example(s) from your own experience, related to the chapter

At the end of the course you, individually, will turn in a 1 page report including:

1. a list of the lessons you presented
2. a brief discussion of your preparedness
3. a brief discussion of your improvement with this activity, including listening to others
4. a critique & suggestions for improving the assignment
5. the amount of points you deserve out of 25 *please attach all of your agendas to your reflection.*

**Grades & Grading:** \_\_\_\_\_

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Points Available</u>
Journal 1	- 35 points
Journal 2	- 50 points
Article Discussion	- 25 points
Daily Lesson	- 25 points
Final Group Presentation	- 70 points
Creative Presentation	- 25 points
Exam 1	- 35 points
Exam 2	- 35 points
Exam 3	- 35 points
Participation	- 25 points
Extra Credit	varies.

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_ **360**

*Be still and know that I am God. ~ Psalm 46:10*

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**Daily Lesson Agenda Example** - (other formats are perfectly acceptable)

daily lesson agenda: Ethics. Chapter 2

facilitator: sheri

date: 3 January 2024

objective: to understand chapter 2 & practice respectful disagreement on a hot topic

Scripture reference: 1 Peter 3:15. "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

note from chapter: "Because public speaking is a form of power, it carries with it heavy ethical responsibilities" (O'Malley, p. 44)

discussion:

1. How is plagiarism prevalent today? How are students cheating in today's classroom? What about ChatGPT?
  2. What does the Bible say about ethics & communication?
  3. Give an example of an ethical dilemma in your life? Explain how you handled it AND a different ethical position.
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**Creative Presentation Grade Sheet**

**Creative Presentation** - In a small group, you will creatively present a chapter to the class. The presentation must be 7-20 minutes in length, include a case study or story that relates to the chapter and actively engaging. Your group will be graded on audience participation, creativity, group balance, and organization (see gradesheet herein. You will all receive the same grade. The format is up to you, but do not lecture more than five minutes, do not play Kahoot!™ or Jeopardy™. Class participation is required.

*Class participation is required. You will all receive the same grade. You may lecture for a maximum of 3 minutes.*

Audience Involvement: \_\_\_\_\_ /6

Balanced Work of Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_ /2

Overall Creativity: \_\_\_\_\_ /4

Coverage of Chapter Information: \_\_\_\_\_ /2

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ /4

Comments:

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ **total:** \_\_\_\_\_ /25

## Chapter 12 - Leadership

**1. What are you learning about how faith and communication, specifically in a group context, are connected?**

When we discussed on the first day of class that God is actually a small group, I was confused at first but then blown away and now pretty excited to think about all the ways the Trinity has affected my faith and beliefs!

**2. How will you apply the chapter to your life?**

I learned that I simultaneously crave authority and disdain it at the same time. At work, my team leader never asserts any authority and creates a lackadaisical work environment. She will occasionally correct people, but always follows her comments with an apology. I often wonder if she were a man (in the same position of authority) and behaved that way what would happen? I think he would be eaten alive and that is an unfair double standard. As a woman I am reluctant to mention it because I actually am enjoying the “benefits” of the double standard. ouch.

**3. How does the chapter apply to your project group? (use an outside group for first 3 chapters)**

In my project group John has been a true leader. He speaks up for us in public forums and often in class. I like the way he represents our group. Last week it was brought to my attention that he also represents the “mainstream.” Am I so comfortable with John because I see him as a leader, or because I expect him to be our leader, or because he actually is a good leader. “True” leader is more difficult than I originally thought. I also wonder how much pressure John feels from being put in this position by our group and likewise, how others, different from John, may feel ousted.

**4. Offer a critique OR humorous insight of our class time**

That was hilarious when Sarah’s divulged her disgust for Matt’s behavior! It perfectly fit the class’ mood at the time. Also – I was glad that you allowed her to speak so freely, while still staying on track with the discussion. Also – thanks for the leadership modalities quiz. That was super helpful ☺

**5. What is your project group currently doing well? explain why?**

What a week! MaryLou has been flirting with Samuel AND Christian all semester. Weird! After our group celebrated our project last week, we brought it up to her. Myself, along with Alice and Andi said that we were all guilty of egging her (and the guys) on with this. It was a difficult conversation because we (especially Samuel and Christian) realized how detrimental it had been to our group – it was a hidden issue for sure. Sam & Christian felt an awkward competition with each other, all stemming from MaryLou’s “attraction.” When she would flirt with one, the other would be jealous, etc. The whole group admitted being entertained and annoyed by it. I confessed first & then others also admitted it. MaryLou acted surprised at first, but then cried and admitted that she was desperate for attention. That blew us all away – too far away. We changed the subject (work avoidance – oops) and then continued celebrating with that awkward air around us. All in all it was an excellent conversation. We should have had it much earlier in the semester!

**6. How can your project group improve? or Where are you lacking? explain why?**

Wow. After last week’s conversation, there is much we can improve upon, but there is one point I have not stopped thinking about and want to run this by you... Several times Alice brings up weird ideas and the group does not challenge her – we just take up her ideas and try to incorporate them. This bothers me because if it were Andi or John, I think we would shoot them down right away (no, I do not mention it). Here is what I think: I think the group tip-toes around Alice because she is black and maybe because she is (was?) an orphan. SHE does not need our sympathy, but I think we just give it to her and that is not right for her and certainly not for our group. I am angry with myself for behaving this way and angry with the group for colluding on this. Do you think this is accurate?

**\*\* THERE ARE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS YOU MUST ANSWER – SEE p. 4 HEREIN \*\***

**COM 2020 Final Group Presentation - Grade Sheet -**

**Group Project Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participants:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment Review (SEE SPECIFIC GRADING BELOW) The culmination of your group's work will be a multimedia presentation to the class explaining:

- 1- the origins of your project (important) & how they relate to the present
- 2- the intended goals of your project & the final results of your work and faith connections
- 3- the process your project took, with specific (funny?) details
- 4- conflicts and hidden agendas your group encountered
- 5- interpersonal reflections from the project, including what you learned

**THE PRESENTATION NEEDS TO BE 25 –35 MINUTES LONG (+ untimed Q/A will follow)**

**Media:** two forms of media AND a handout were presented/provided \_\_\_\_\_/5  
(quality counts)

**Origins:** the origins of your group, including how they affect your group today (loss of members, awkwardness, role development, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_/5

**Goals & Results:** present the beginning goals of your group, any changes as you progressed, the results of your project/work, and faith connections \_\_\_\_\_/5

**Process:** describe the technical processes of the project. Specific failures, meeting details, timelines, accomplishments, and humorous mishaps should be included \_\_\_\_\_/5

**Conflict & Hidden Issues:** explain why you encountered the conflict you did, how & why you handled it, and how hidden issues played in your group \_\_\_\_\_/10

**Reflective Analysis:** explain your group dynamic and why it played out as it did; what were the roles; who did what and who did not and why; what have group members learned and will take with them into their next group project(s) HYPOTHESIZE! \_\_\_\_\_/15

**Creativity:** enjoyable to the class and the instructor \_\_\_\_\_/5

**Balance:** all members participated in the presentation, mostly equally \_\_\_\_\_/5

**Organization:** focused and easy to follow \_\_\_\_\_/5

**Project:** your project was well described and (at least somewhat) successful \_\_\_\_\_/10

questions:

total: \_\_\_\_\_/70



## **Please Review the Following PLNU Required Statements For All Students:**

### **State Authorization**

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on State Authorization to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

### **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.

### **PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy.**

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will issue an academic accommodation plan ("AP") to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester. PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not wish to utilize some or all of the elements of their AP in that course. Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC.

### **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND DISCRIMINATION.**

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students. If you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available through the Title IX Office at [pointloma.edu/Title-IX](http://pointloma.edu/Title-IX). Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, it is required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at [counselingservices@pointloma.edu](mailto:counselingservices@pointloma.edu) or find a list of campus pastors at [pointloma.edu/title-ix](http://pointloma.edu/title-ix)

### **Course Credit Hour Information:**

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 3 unit class delivered over 16 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 112.5 total hours in order to meet the course learning outcomes.

*"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then is not an act, but a habit."*

*~Aristotle*

## Random Reflections:

- 1- What is God's purpose for me in this class, at this time? (me = you, student)
- 2- What is my goal, for my own education, in this class, at this time?
- 3- What are my specific prayer requests at this time?
- 4- What questions would I like answered in the next year?
- 5- Who do I want to say hi to today? 😊

...as a final note for group com:

*Never doubt that a small group of concerned citizens can change the world;  
indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. ~Margaret Mead.*

(He is 3 and called 12)