



SYLLABUS

COMM 4635

Communication Dynamics in Groups
SP26

COURSE OVERVIEW

Instructor

Instructor: Jane Shawcroft, PhD

Email address: shawcroft.1@osu.edu

Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 1:30 – 2:30 EDT/EST, appointment encouraged but not required. Students with an appointment will be given priority.

Course description

This class examines the communication dynamics that positively (and in many cases negatively) impact teams in many facets of society. Students will learn how to be better group members, will become more aware of actions that undermine group performance, and improve group communication skills. To build these skills students will simultaneously learning about group communication theory while engaging in regular application activities. It is hoped that the combination of academic, experiential, and reflective learning will provide a foundation that will help students become better team members, and have more rewarding group experiences, in their personal and professional lives.

Course learning outcomes

The overall goal of COMM 4635 is to develop the knowledge and skills required to become a more effective group member and leader.

1. Students will understand and apply factors that shape the communication process in groups.
2. Students will understand and apply relevant principles, theories, and research findings associated with group communication to their own lives and various leadership contexts.
3. Students will understand and apply basic communication competencies needed by individuals to be more effective leaders.

4. Students will understand and apply the communication skills needed to function within task-oriented groups and teams.

HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

Mode of delivery: This course is 100% in-person.

Credit hours and work expectations: This is a **3-credit-hour course**. According to [Ohio State policy](#), students should expect around 3 hours per week of time spent on direct instruction (instructor content and Carmen activities, for example) in addition to 6 hours of homework (reading and assignment preparation, for example) to receive a grade of (C) average.

Attendance and participation requirements: Because this is a small, seminar-style course, attendance and participation is necessary from all students for the course to be successful. The following is a summary of everyone's expected participation:

- **Participating in online activities for attendance:** You are expected to log in to the course in Carmen every week. (During most weeks you will probably log in many times.) If you have a situation that might cause you to miss an entire week of class, discuss it with me *as soon as possible*.
- **Office hours and live sessions: OPTIONAL**
All live, scheduled events for the course, including my office hours, are optional.
- **Participating in discussion forums: 2+ TIMES PER WEEK**
As part of your participation, each week you can expect to post at least twice as part of our substantive class discussion on the week's topics.

COURSE MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGIES

Textbooks

ALL COURSE READINGS ARE ON CARMEN, HOWEVER, YOU WILL NEED TO PURCHASE A NOTEBOOK FOR THIS COURSE.

Course technology

Note – no technology is allowed during class time. This includes phones, laptops, etc. Failure to put technology away will result in a loss of participation points for that day.

For help with your password, university email, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the Ohio State IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at <https://it.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24/7.

- **Self-Service and Chat support:** <https://it.osu.edu/help>
- **Phone:** 614-688-4357(HELP)
- **Email:** servicedesk@osu.edu
- **TDD:** 614-688-8743

BASELINE TECHNICAL SKILLS FOR COURSE

- Navigating Carmen: for questions about specific functionality, see the [Canvas Student Guide](#).

CARMEN ACCESS

You will need to use [BuckeyePass](#) multi-factor authentication to access your courses in Carmen. To ensure that you are able to connect to Carmen at all times, it is recommended that you take the following steps:

- Register multiple devices in case something happens to your primary device. Visit the [BuckeyePass - Adding a Device](#) help article for step-by-step instructions.
- Download the [Duo Mobile application](#) to all of your registered devices for the ability to generate one-time codes in the event that you lose cell, data, or Wi-Fi service.

If none of these options will meet the needs of your situation, you can contact the IT Service Desk at 614-688-4357 (HELP) and IT support staff will work out a solution with you.

GRADING AND FACULTY RESPONSE

How your grade is calculated

ASSIGNMENT CATEGORY	POINTS
Reading (32% of total grade)	
<i>Weekly Quizzes</i>	74 points (across 13 quizzes)
<i>Discussion Questions</i>	6 points x 13 weeks

Class Participation (35% of total grade)	
<i>Discussion Leader</i>	20 points x 2 weeks
<i>Discussion Participation</i>	5 points x 13 weeks
<i>Application Activity Participation</i>	5 points x 13 weeks
Application (33% of total grade)	
<i>Weekly Reflection</i>	12 points x 13 weeks
<i>Attend Office Hours</i>	4
Total	482

See course schedule below for due dates.

Late assignments

Late submissions will not be accepted and will automatically receive a zero. Please refer to Carmen for due dates.

Makeups or extensions due to medical issues or University-related travel may be requested. Documented makeups should be requested prior to the due date if possible, even if documentation has not yet been obtained. In case of a medical matter or emergency, makeups must be requested **within one week** of the assignment deadline. Due to the nature of this course, makeups cannot be given for class participation points.

Grading scale

93–100: A
 90–92.9: A-
 87–89.9: B+
 83–86.9: B
 80–82.9: B-
 77–79.9: C+
 73–76.9: C
 70–72.9: C-
 67–69.9: D+
 60–66.9: D
 Below 60: E

Instructor feedback and response time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call **614-688-HELP** at any time if you have a technical problem).

- **Grading and feedback:** For weekly assignments, you can generally expect feedback within **7 days**.
- **Email:** I will reply to emails within **24 hours on days when class is in session at the university**. I will not respond to emails over the weekends or university holidays.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Discussion and communication guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Writing style:** As our writing assignments will be completed in class, I do not expect perfect grammar, spelling, punctuation, or formatting. You will always be graded on the quality of your ideas, not on how perfect your writing is. However, you should remember that grammar, spelling, punctuation, and handwriting are important tools for conveying your ideas, so be sure to always write your best grammar, spelling, punctuation and handwriting.
- **Tone and civility:** Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. We all have different experiences and opinions, and it is important in this class that we practice disagreeing respectfully.

Academic integrity policy

POLICIES FOR THIS COURSE

- **Quizzes:** You must complete the quizzes yourself, without any external help or communication.
- **Written assignments:** Your written assignments should be completed by yourself without the aid of the internet, AI, or any additional resources.
- **Discussion Questions:** Reading is an important part of this course (1/3), and is the only outside of class assignment you have for the duration of the semester. One way to assess how deeply you have read the material is through your posted discussion

questions. These questions should be written by yourself, without the use of AI or in consultation with another class member, or anyone outside of the class.

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

Given that the learning goals of this class are to deeply learn and understand processes of group communication, the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools is not permitted in this course.

Any use of GenAI tools for work in this class may therefore be considered a violation of Ohio State's [Academic Integrity](#) policy and [Code of Student Conduct](#) because the work is not your own. If I suspect that you have used GenAI on an assignment for this course, I will ask you to explain your process for completing the assignment in question. The unauthorized use of GenAI tools will result in referral to the [Committee on Academic Misconduct](#).

OHIO STATE'S ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the university's [Code of Student Conduct](#), and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the university's *Code of Student Conduct* and this syllabus may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the university or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the university's *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by university rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the university's *Code of Student Conduct* (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the university.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages ([COAM Home](#))
- *Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity* ([Ten Suggestions](#))
- *Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity* (www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.htm)

Copyright disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Statement on Title IX

All students and employees at Ohio State have the right to work and learn in an environment free from harassment and discrimination based on sex or gender, and the university can arrange interim measures, provide support resources, and explain investigation options, including referral to confidential resources.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or discriminated against based on your sex or gender, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or sexual exploitation, you may find information about your rights and options at titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu. Title IX is part of the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) at Ohio State, which responds to all bias-motivated incidents of harassment and discrimination, such as race, religion, national origin and disability. For more information on OIE, visit equity.osu.edu or email equity@osu.edu.

Intellectual Diversity

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for

citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

Grievances and Solving Problems

A student who encounters a problem related to his/her educational program has a variety of avenues available to seek resolution. (Note: the procedures for grade grievances are explicitly covered in the faculty rules) Typically, a student is advised to resolve any dispute, disagreement, or grievance as directly as possible, engaging with the person or persons most closely involved. The faculty and staff of the departments and colleges are available to work with students in this regard. If this step does not produce acceptable results, the student should follow a logical stepwise progression to address the academic concerns.

According to University Policies, if you have a problem with this class, you should seek to resolve the grievance concerning a grade or academic practice by speaking first with the instructor or professor. Then, if necessary, take your case to the department chairperson, college dean or associate dean, and to the provost, in that order. Specific procedures are outlined in Faculty Rule 3335-8-23. Grievances against graduate, research, and teaching assistants should be submitted first to the supervising instructor, then to the chairperson of the assistant's department.

Your mental health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you find yourself feeling isolated, anxious or overwhelmed, please know that there are resources to help: ccs.osu.edu. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at (614) 292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Prevention Hotline at 1-(800)-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. The Ohio State Wellness app is also a great resource available at go.osu.edu/wellnessapp.

Religious accommodations

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation

requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement **and** the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the [Civil Rights Compliance Office](#). Policy: [Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances](#)

Weather or other short-term closing

Following [Policy 6.15](#) (Weather or Other Short-Term Closing):

Should in-person classes be canceled, I will notify you as to which alternative methods of teaching will be offered to ensure continuity of instruction for this class.

Communication will be via CarmenCanvas. Unless otherwise announced by the university, online or distance-learning classes will occur as scheduled.

ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Requesting accommodations

The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions, please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Accessibility of course technology

This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system). If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.

- [CarmenCanvas accessibility](#)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	1/14, 1/16	<p>Topic: Course Expectations and Mechanics</p> <p>Read (before class on Friday): Rapp (2025), Mathieu & Rapp (2009)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Dr. Shawcroft</p>
2	1/21, 1/23	<p>Topic: Group Composition</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Textbook Chapter 3, Gruenfeld et al., (1996)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Dr. Shawcroft</p>
3	1/28, 1/30	<p>Topic: Group Norms and Structures</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Textbook Chapter 4, Zurcher (1970)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Jane</p>
4	2/4, 2/6	<p>Topic: Group Performance</p>

Week	Dates	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		<p>Read (before class on Wednesday): The Pluses and Minuses of Working Together, Stroebe & Diehl (1994)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Cassidy</p>
5	2/11, 2/13	<p>Topic: Group Cohesion</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Craig & Kelly (1999), Pescosolido & Saavedra (2012)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Maria</p>
6	2/18, 2/20	<p>Topic: Working with People Who are Different from You</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Textbook Chapter 5, Mannix & Neale (2005)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Jane</p>
7	2/25, 2/27	<p>Topic: Bullying in Groups</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Ramsay et al., (2011), Nielsen (2013)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Lauren</p>
8	3/4, 3/6	<p>Topic: Managing Conflict</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Textbook Chapter 8, Farmer & Roth (1998)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Irene</p>
9	3/9, 3/13	<p>Topic: Decision Making</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Textbook Chapter 10, Postmes et al., (2001)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Irene</p>
SPRING BREAK		
10	3/25, 3/27	<p>Topic: Leadership</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Ciulla (read only Chapter 1, pages 3 - 29)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Cassidy</p>

Week	Dates	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
11	4/1, 4/3	<p>Topic: How to Run a Meeting</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): TBD</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Dr. Shawcroft</p>
12	4/8, 4/10	<p>Topic: Friends as Small Groups</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Dijkstra et al., 2013, Schmidt et al., 2022</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT), Final week to visit office hours for points</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Lauren</p>
13	4/15, 4/17	<p>Topic: Families as Small Groups</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Fiese et al., (2002), Knapp et al., (2015)</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Maria</p>
14	4/22, 4.24	<p>Topic: Why Small Groups Matter</p> <p>Read (before class on Wednesday): Bowling Alone, Chapters 23 and 24</p> <p>Due: Discussion Questions (Tuesday at noon EST/EDT)</p> <p>Discussion Leader: Dr. Shawcroft</p>

Note. Discussion leader reflections are due a week after you lead discussion (by midnight the next Tuesday).