

Small Group Communication (COMM 3720)
Spring 2026

MW 9:30 – 10:50 AM
WH 315

Instructor: Iftekhar Ahmed

Office: GAB 315

Office Phone: 940-565-2588

Email: iftekhar.ahmed@unt.edu

Office Hours: Monday 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM; Wednesday 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM; by appointment

Communication Expectations

Office hours will be maintained in-person. You can also schedule one to one FtF session with instructor with prior notice during office hours. Additional time outside office hours are available by appointment. It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to schedule an appointment outside of office hours and give instructors at least 48 hours advanced notice of needing an in-person or virtual meeting. If you have a private question, please contact me via email and I will respond within 24 hours on weekdays (usually sooner). Please do not expect a response over the weekend. Please use office phone number as a last resort - but, also, please use it if you need to! Normally, we will return feedback on all written assignments within a week of the due date. Additional communication policies and etiquette for your course are mentioned in the course policy section.

Welcome to UNT!

As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be a part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. UNT's full Non-Discrimination Policy can be found in the UNT Policies section of the syllabus.

Course Description

Groups are an integral part of our personal and professional lives, and this trend is increasing. Regardless of what career or life path you've chosen, you'll ultimately spend a great deal of time in group settings. The purpose of this course is to aid your understanding of groups and particularly relevant communication issues within groups. This course will provide you with an understanding of the major communication theories, issues, and concepts related to the study of small groups.

Course Objectives

Students completing this course should be able to:

- Identify and confidently discuss major issues regarding group communication
- Use communication in ways that allow them to work effectively in group settings
- Use proper group communication techniques to plan/execute/evaluate major projects
- Appropriately evaluate group and group member performance, and remedy problems

I hope to help you meet these objectives through the following:

- Discussions of reading and lecture material in class

- Tests to ensure that you are grasping material
- An opportunity to explore a case study of an actual group's formation and (possibly) death
- One major group project your teams will plan, execute, and evaluate
- Evaluation assignment – evaluation of self and others as group members

Textbook and Readings

Rothwell, J. D. (2013). *In Mixed Company: Small Group Communication*. (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Additional readings may be distributed using Canvas course page. Class notes outlines will be placed on the Canvas course page. **You are responsible for ensuring that you print copies of the class notes via Canvas prior to class and getting copies of all class handouts.**

Assignments and Grading

Required Exams

All students are required to take three exams that will have objective formats (e.g. multiple choices, true/false, matching). These exams will be held during class and will cover selected lectures, class discussion, and textbook materials. These are individual exams. There are no makeup exams. If you miss an exam, you lose the points associated with it. The only exceptions are due to documented sickness, death in the family, or some other catastrophe. I am very unlikely to allow you to take an exam after the scheduled time if you do not contact me *prior to* the exam. (50 points each; 150 points total)

Group Project

This is a group project. The purpose of this project is to apply group communication knowledge learned in class in a real-world situation, and to identify challenges groups usually face. Think of your group as an ad-hoc committee set up to improve social situations or local communities. You need to identify a problem faced by the State of Texas or Denton community. Choose a project that will provide solutions to an existing problem. Your job will be to explain the problem and find solutions. You will write a brief paper and present your findings in public during COMM day. We will discuss more about this activity in-class. Specific instructions for the assignment will be discussed in class and will also be uploaded on Canvas. (150 points total; 100 for paper; 50 for presentation)

Activities

There will be a number of classroom activities during the semester. There are three types of activities. The first group of activities are designed to help your group project. These activities will require in-class and out-of-class work. The second group of activities are designed to develop your skills in applying small groups concepts in real-world situations. There are few other activities including pop quizzes, problem solving activities, and group communication related exercises. Activities are both individual and group based, and reflect specific theories, perspectives, and practices of group communication. These are mostly in-class activities and there will be no make-up opportunities for these activities. (150 points total)

NOTES:

- 1. Detail description of assignments and grading criteria will be provided through Canvas.**
- 2. The assigned group projects will require outside as well as in-class time. Outside activities could be conducted virtually through Canvas or Zoom or other technology of project groups' choice. There is no FtF expectation for this class beyond regular classroom activities and final group presentation.**
- 3. It is your obligation and responsibility to attend your group's scheduled meetings. Failure to participate actively in the group project will result in the lowering of your final grade.**

Below is the summary table of your assignments:

Assignment	Points Possible	Percentage of Final Grade
Exams	150	033.33%
Group Project	150	033.33%
Activities	150	033.34%
Total Points Possible	450	100.00%

Grade determination

The points in this class are based on the assignments discussed above. Your final grade is based entirely on the sum of those points assigned in the class, and I will adhere rigidly to those points. The points correspond to the following university guidelines: an A is reserved for excellent work; a B is for above average performance; a C is awarded for average work; a D simply means passing, and an F indicates below average, non-passing work.

Final grades will be:

405 - 450	= A
360 - 404	= B
315 - 359	= C
270 - 314	= D
000 - 269	= F

General Course Policies

Extra Credit

Please remember that extra credit opportunities are optional, situational, and not guaranteed during the semester. You will get a maximum of two opportunities to earn up to 10 total extra credit points (5 for each activity) by participating in departmental or university activities/events. There are few activities that we traditionally accept as extra credit events including *NCA Future Pros meetings*, *Gender Fair*, *SPOT participation*, and departmental performance events. Please notify me if you want an activity to count as an extra credit opportunity (at least a week prior to the event). We will make a case-by-case decision. To be considered as an extra credit event, an event needs to be university sponsored, and available to all students of this class. Extra credit points (if any) will be added to your course total to determine your final semester grade.

Incompletes

Grades of Incomplete are governed by university policy. A faculty member can award an Incomplete only in cases where students meet these conditions: (1) the student has completed 75% of the work for the semester, and (2) the grade is warranted by a military or medical excuse.

Late work

Except under the most extreme circumstances (and documentation of those circumstances is required), late work will be penalized. If you encounter an emergency situation of some kind, it is best to communicate with me about it earlier rather than later. Late papers or the final project will be graded for half credit. This is a severe penalty, but it is better than zero points (plus, you get the feedback on the paper). It is not fair to others who met the deadlines if I accept your's late. I will not accept any papers or assignments more than one week late. Also, no longer are Internet troubles and computer problems reasonable excuses for late submissions. I suggest knowing the equipment well enough and allowing ample time in case of problems.

Grade Disputes

You are required to wait 24 hours before contacting me to dispute a grade. Within that time, I expect that you will review the assignment details and reflect on the quality of the work you turned in. If you would still like to meet, email me to set up a meeting (I cannot discuss grades over email). You should come to our scheduled meeting with specific examples that demonstrate that you earned a higher grade than you received. If you miss your scheduled meeting, you forfeit your right to a grade dispute. If you do not contact me to schedule a meeting within seven days of receiving your grade, you also forfeit your right to a grade dispute.

Attendance

Attendance on this course is vital to your grade. Class sessions will employ case readings, application of content material, and group activities. Students should come prepared to discuss the readings and the cases. Hence, it is important that students keep up with the readings. Attendance is taken at the beginning of class. A student is expected to arrive on time and be present for the entire class period. Take care of personal needs (bathroom break, phone calls, eating, etc.) prior to class. All electronic devices, cell phones, and laptops must be turned off and stored prior to the start of class. After an initial violation, each subsequent violation of this policy will count as one absence. Excessive lateness (judged at the instructor's discretion) will constitute an absence. Excessive absences caused by serious health problems will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Please note: If you arrive on campus at 9:15 a.m. and expect to find a parking place near the building, you're going to be disappointed. So, make the proper adjustments because habitual tardiness will cost you. University of North Texas' Attendance Policy (<http://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-2->) to learn more.

Rules of Engagement

Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors. Here are some general guidelines:

- While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law will not be tolerated.
- Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in any communication online or face-to-face, even when their opinion differs from your own.
- Ask for and use the correct name and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
- Speak from personal experiences. Use "I" statements to share thoughts and feelings. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or other individual's experiences.
- Use your critical thinking skills to challenge other people's ideas, instead of attacking individuals.
- Avoid using all caps while communicating digitally. This may be interpreted as "YELLING!"
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm in emails or discussion posts as tone can be difficult to interpret digitally.
- Avoid using "text-talk" unless explicitly permitted by your instructor.
- Proofread and fact-check your sources.
- Keep in mind that online posts can be permanent, so think first before you type.

See these [Engagement Guidelines](https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) (<https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips>) for more information.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Policies and procedures regarding adjudication of acts of academic dishonesty are available in the UNT Policy Manual at <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>.

Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. All work submitted on this course must be your own. Contributions from anyone or anything else- including learning support platforms cannot be used for course assignments except as explicitly authorized by the instructor. Artificial intelligence (AI) language models, such as ChatGPT, QuillBot, Grammarly Premium, and online assignment help tools and services, such as Chegg® or EduBirdie are examples of online learning support platforms. All sources must be properly quoted and cited every time they are used (including any AI generated material). Online help tools and services have their place in helping to make our lives easier; these tools can also hurt your capacity to engage in critical thinking. Please talk with me before using any of these tools for this class to ensure that we're in agreement as to how they will affect your work. Submitting all or any part of an assignment statement to an online learning support platform and submitting it as your own work for this class is prohibited. Incorporating any part of an AI generated response in an assignment without proper citation is also prohibited. Failure to do so constitutes an academic integrity violation, and I will follow UNT's policy in those instances.

ODA Policy

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodation at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website \(https://disability.unt.edu/\)](https://disability.unt.edu/).

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct, investigates, and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's Code of Student Conduct (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>) to learn more.

Access to Information - Eagle Connect

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail Eagle Connect (<https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect>).

Student Evaluation Administration Dates

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during final weeks of the semester to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey, they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website (<http://spot.unt.edu/>) or email spot@unt.edu.

Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore, prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648.

Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at (940) 565 2759.

Academic Support & Student Services

Mental Health

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- [UNT Psychiatric Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)
- [Individual Counseling](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling>)

Chosen Names

A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. Below is a list of resources for updating your chosen name at UNT.

- [UNT Records](#)
- [UNT ID Card](#)
- [UNT Email Address](#)
- [Legal Name](#)

Additional Student Support Services

- [Registrar](https://registrar.unt.edu/registration) (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- [Multicultural Center](https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center) (<https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [Pride Alliance](https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance) (<https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance>)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>)

Academic Support Services

- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (<https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources>)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (<https://success.unt.edu/asc>)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (<https://library.unt.edu/>)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (<http://writingcenter.unt.edu/>)

Disclaimer

Syllabus Change Policy: This syllabus should not be considered a binding contract on the part of the instructor, who reserves the right to change any aspect of the course without prior notice.