

De Anza College, Winter 2025
COMM-15.01Y: Critical Decision-Making in Groups
Wednesdays, 12:30p-2:45p, Room L45
Online via Canvas Mondays 1:30p-2:20p, Fridays 12:30p-1:20p

Instructor & Contact Information

Instructor:
Nick Chivers
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Office Hours (F31B & Zoom):
Tuesdays & Fridays 9:30a-11:20a *and by appointment.*

A note about contacting me: *Please do it!* You may email me at literally any time, and I will get back to you as soon as I can (within 24 hours Mon-Fri, within 48 hours Fri-Sun). I am available via e-mail or Zoom during office hours to help you work through course material and assignments in any way I can. Please don't hesitate to ask any questions. ***Don't wait until the last minute!*** Check in with me early and often and I will assist you with the process. I never said it would be easy, but we can do it together.

How you can contact me: please use Canvas inbox for inquiries regarding the course. If we are outside of the active dates of the course, feel free to email me. Also you can drop in to office hours to chat 1-on-1 about anything you may need.

How i will contact you: my primary communication to the whole class will be **Canvas announcements**, so be sure you receive those and are notified when they are sent in Canvas (*they may be time sensitive!*). I may also use Canvas inbox to send direct messages regarding information that will need your attention specifically. Finally, i will use canvas rubrics and comments to communicate feedback on assignments and exercises.

Course Description

De Anza College Course Schedule: Study in communication and critical decision making in the context of effective group problem solving with an emphasis on principles of sound reasoning to make a well-reasoned decision. This course explores theory, application, and evaluation of group communication processes, including problem solving, conflict management, decision-making, and leadership, with the goal of understanding different points of view in an increasingly diverse and interconnected global society.

Your Instructor: "The trouble with life isn't that there is no answer, it's that there are so many answers." – Ruth Benedict
The world is complex, and we should be wary of anyone who tells us otherwise. To navigate through the infinite complexities of the world, we must first learn and utilize critical thinking and investigative skills to try and understand as many perspectives and truths of this world as possible, to discern the most valid and important truths. Second, as a part of this process we must embark on this endeavor collectively. This course aims to both sharpen our critical lenses and strengthen our powers of inquiry, as well as understand the communicative processes of small group dynamics, so that we may collectively take on the challenges of solving the world's problems together for the benefit of us all. ... Easy cake.

Class Modality

This course will be a **50/50 Hybrid Online Course**. This means we will meet on campus two-and-a-half (2.5) hours per week, and complete *at least* two-and-a-half (2.5) hours per week of coursework online via Canvas **asynchronously**. Make no mistake: **you must show up to class – in both online and face-face formats – to be successful**. You gotta show up if you wanna get it done. Please see the De Anza webpage [Your Guide to the Quarter](https://www.deanza.edu/quarter-guide/) (https://www.deanza.edu/quarter-guide/) for more information.

Student Learning Outcomes for Interpersonal Communication

Upon successful completion of COMM-15, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of group communication and decision-making through self-reflection and facilitated discussions.
2. Apply a range of group communication models and theories to effectively solve problems and make decisions in a group setting.
3. Demonstrate communication skills necessary for working productively in a group, including active listening, nonverbal communication, managing tension, consensus building and recording group discussion.
4. Develop & present informative and persuasive group presentations supported with quality sources using appropriate citation format.

Required Text/Materials

- Rothwell, J. D. (2021). *In Mixed Company: Communication in Small Groups and Teams (11th ed.)*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780197602812

- As a hybrid online course, this course requires reliable and regular access to technology, including but not limited to a device capable of accessing our learning management system, Canvas, as well as reliable internet access and audio & video recording capabilities.

Course Assignments & Expectations

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points Possible</i>	<i>Your Total</i>
Group Formation Exercises & Activities (SLO 1, 3)	50	_____
Difficult Dialogue Presentation (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4)	75	_____
Creative Solutions Presentation (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4)	75	_____
Online Quizzes (6 @ 15 points)(SLO: 1, 2, 3)	90	_____
Discussion Boards & Thought Projects (4 @ 20 points)(SLO 1, 2, 3)	80	_____
Midterm Exercise (SLO 1, 2, 3)	40	_____
Final Critical Thinking Paper: Academic Pre-Mortem (SLO 2, 3, 4)	30	_____
Final Group Communication Reflection Paper (SLO: 1, 2, 3)	30	_____
Course Engagements (SLO: 1, 2, 3)	30	_____
Total	500	_____

Final Grading Scale

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Points</i>	<i>Total Point Range</i>
A	93-100	465-500
A-	90-92	450-464
B+	87-89	435-449
B	83-86	415-434
B-	80-82	400-414
C+	77-79	385-399
C	72-76	360-384
D+	67-71	335-359
D	63-66	315-334
D-	60-62	300-314
F	0-59	0-299

Grading vs. Feedback

Tl;dr: you're gonna get points, but your points won't help you be successful in class; *feedback will*. Before you see your points, you'll get comments and feedback through canvas rubrics, and if you have questions about the comments and feedback you should talk to me.

In this class, we will prioritize narrative feedback over quantitative scoring. The longer explanation of the philosophy will be described on Canvas, but you should know that the evaluation of your execution of the above assignments will be quantified with grade points as described above, and your final grade will be calculated by the total number of grade points scored, as described above. *However*, during the course, as each assignment is submitted and evaluated, you will be given narrative feedback through Canvas rubrics and comments – *without revealing* the associated quantitative points – to inform you on areas of strength and opportunities to help guide your progress through the outcomes and towards the objectives of the course. Your quantitative points will be recorded and revealed to you some time after the narrative evaluations have been completed, but we will prioritize the narrative feedback over the quantitative scoring.

Brief Descriptions of Assignments

(More detailed assignment sheets to be given as the due dates approach)

Group Formation Exercises & Activities

This course revolves around the strong cohesion and synergy of a small group. We will engage in several exercises and activities to create and build cohesion in our groups.

Difficult Dialogue Presentation

Your group will choose a current topic, situation, social justice issue, and/or taboo topic and research several different angles, perspectives, or positions to take on that topic, and present these distinct angles to the class in the form of a role-play conversation.

Creative Solutions Presentation

Your group will investigate a current social justice issue and come to a decision on the best course of action to take; enact a law or policy, support a nonprofit organization, etc. and present that decision to the class.

Online Quizzes

Throughout the quarter you will be required to complete several short quizzes that will test your knowledge of course content, including information from both required readings and in-class lessons. Quizzes will be taken via Canvas.

Discussion Boards & Thought Projects

Periodically, you will be required to engage in topical discussion board with your peers to have a conversation regarding group communication, or to analyze a situation that requires critical thinking.

Mid-Term Exercise

Near the halfway mark of the quarter, you will be required to do a short exercise to test your knowledge of key concepts from the first half of the course. This will be a group exercise with an individual accountability component.

Critical Thinking Reflection Paper

A final paper to demonstrate your critical thinking skills; analyze an issue you are familiar with that has been dominated by cultural norms and reflect upon it from different angles using our critical thinking skills.

Group Communication Paper

For the final exercise in class, you will be asked to reflect on the entire quarter's journey with your group, applying several small group communication course concepts to your experience.

Course Engagement

In a communication course, the classroom time and space are incredibly important, perhaps sacred. Developing a community within the classroom is crucial to the success of this course, and Course Engagement is an evaluation of your contribution to the community we are creating. There will be several miscellaneous opportunities to demonstrate course and community engagement throughout the term, including but not limited to low-prompt module discussion boards, post-presentation conversation and discussion, ice-breaker participation, in-class activity participation receipts, Canvas content page "hidden gems" or community Wikis, etc. Most of these engagements will be "credit/no-credit" evaluation and must be present in-time to complete. Also, see the "class etiquette" section of Course Policies for more information.

Course Policies

Attendance & Coursework

This class is going to be a blend of synchronous classroom meetings and online coursework. Attendance for the synchronous meetings will be mandatory in so much as all things in college are mandatory; you will be expected to know and apply the content covered in classroom discussions on other assessments. Since half of the coursework will be online, the expectation regarding attendance and coursework will be measured with rhythmic regularity. I will expect every student to attend the face-to-face meeting each week and check in on Canvas exercises two separate times each week. There will always be flexibility if there is communication, so if you know you are going to be irregular with your course engagements, let me know! Missing 7 consecutive days in class and on Canvas without notifying the instructor may result in being dropped from the course.

Assignments

All assignments will be submitted via Canvas; I will not accept assignments via email unless cleared with me in advance. I will evaluate submissions with variable urgency depending on the assignment (for example, a "rough draft" assignment will be evaluated with maximum haste for you to successfully complete a final draft, but a "reflection paper" may take longer since no subsequent assignment is relying upon that feedback), with an approximate maximum of 7-10 days after initial due date. Assignments will be accepted late with no penalty up until I have completed assessing that assignment and distributed feedback and evaluations, or the very end of the quarter, whichever comes first. Once assignments have been closed for submission, they will not be reopened for any reason.

Class Etiquette

This class is based on active engagement with the subject matter; therefore, full class attendance, punctuality, and focus on course material are essential. I feel that class time is sacred. **Having enrolled in this class, you are making a commitment to yourself, your instructor, and your peers.** We will learn much from each other, so long as we are all present and contributing to the learning environment. Furthermore, *the audience is a crucial part of the public speaking process; show up for each other, support each other, and we'll grow together.* The Communication Studies Department expects all members of the class (teachers and students) to treat each other with respect in their communication practices. This includes: 1) coming to class on time ready to participate; 2) *listening to others actively and dialogically*; 3) staying focused on the material of the class; 4) not disrupting class; and 5) *engaging in genuine dialogue, even amidst differences of opinion.*

- *Keys to Class Etiquette:* it is part of the course curriculum to learn the practices of effective interpersonal interaction, and we will practice these skills during class discussions. But here are a couple of basic rules:
 - *You cannot not communicate: everything you do in class contributes positively or negatively to the class culture.*
 - *Listen first and listen to understand; we are all here for new ideas, so let's embrace them.*
 - *Contribute bravely but own our perspectives and our questions (the devil needs no advocates).*

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

The Center for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals to action. The entire campus affirms the importance of academic integrity, fosters a “love of learning,” and holds each person responsible for defining and supporting academic integrity standards. In all phases of teaching and learning, the responsibility for fostering and maintaining campus-wide academic integrity must be shared by all.

If you were to ever consider breaking this code of academic integrity ... don't. If you are unclear about plagiarism, please see me. Plagiarism occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as their own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgement, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as their own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized **will be given an “F” grade (zero points)**. All instances of plagiarism in the Communication Studies Department will be reported to the Division Dean and may be reported to the Vice President of Student Services for further action.

For Your Information & Consideration

**most of De Anza's student services are working to assist you remotely. Nobody has ever succeeded in life or in college on their own, especially during times like these. You will have to ask for help, the trick is to know when and who to ask:

Disabilities and Accommodations

College is supposed to be hard – if it was easy everyone would do it – however a disability should not be the barrier that makes college impossible. Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the Disability Support Programs and Services. The mission of the Disability Support Programs and Services (DSPS) Division is to ensure access to the college's curriculum, facilities, and programs, and to promote student success in realizing individual educational and vocational goals. For more information, please visit Disability Support Programs & Services Division at RSS 141, or at the [DSPS Website](http://www.deanza.edu/dsps) (<http://www.deanza.edu/dsps>)

Student Success Center

One potential challenge in college is the increased expectations of academic skills; everything comes up a notch. Student Success Center peer tutors can relate and can help! Go to the [SSC homepage](https://www.deanza.edu/studentsuccess/) (<https://www.deanza.edu/studentsuccess/>) and click on the yellow links for schedules and Zoom links. The SSC is ready to offer: Individual Weekly or Drop-in Tutoring: Come with assignments or questions, or just drop by to see how tutoring works. Workshops, group tutoring and group study: Most people learn better with others...give it a try! Support for online learning: Speak with a friendly peer tutor or SSC staff member about motivation and organization strategies for online classes. We get it and are going through the same things, so let's support each other! After-hours or weekend tutoring: See the [Online Tutoring](https://www.deanza.edu/studentsuccess/onlinetutoring/) (<https://www.deanza.edu/studentsuccess/onlinetutoring/>) page for information.

Stress and Mental Health

Balancing the rigors of academia with the ever evolving and complex social world students find themselves in can be challenging and potentially dangerous. If you feel you are having particular difficulty meeting all of the demands of your new lifestyle, perceived or real, do not fret! You are not alone. From time to time, problems of everyday living can be resolved through talking with friends, family, or someone whom we trust to help us. However, there are times when seeking help outside of one's familiar environment might be more helpful. The Mental Health and Wellness Center is here to meet such needs. For more information, visit the Mental Health and Wellness Center at RSS 258, or the [Mental Health & Wellness Website](https://www.deanza.edu/mhwc/) (<https://www.deanza.edu/mhwc/>)

Student disclosures of sexual violence

De Anza College is committed to fostering a campus free of sexual and gender-based violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as a De Anza College student, the course instructor is required to notify the Vice President of Student Services. To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact: Campus Police 408.924.8000; Health Services 408.864.8732; Psychological Services 408.864.8732; or Dean of Student Development 408.864.8828.

LGBTQ+ Students

To maximize success, it is crucial for all students to build upon strong foundations both in and out of the classroom. Despite much recent legal, political, and social change, being of a minority gender or sexual identity can potentially create instability in these crucial foundations. If you are an LGBTQ+ student struggling with identity or finding community, please see the Pride Center in Library 158 or visit the [Pride Center Website](https://www.deanza.edu/pride/) (<https://www.deanza.edu/pride/>)

Undocumented Students

Applying, transferring, registering, and paying for college can be a complex maze of forms and deadlines for any student, and this complexity is compounded for students with undocumented residency. Undocumented students have extra layers

of regulatory complexity to navigate, in addition to the fear and uncertainty surrounding legal citizenship status. De Anza College, its staff and faculty, are steadfast in their commitment to supporting our undocumented students. If you are an undocumented student and seek knowledgeable, honest, and trustworthy assistance with financial aid programs such as AB540 and the California DREAM Act or have any other concerns about your citizenship or academic pathways, please reach out to HEFAS at the [HEFAS website](https://www.deanza.edu/hefas/) (https://www.deanza.edu/hefas/) for more information.

The Food Pantry

Living in the Bay Area is financially challenging, to put it lightly, and to try to attend school here can be logistically impossible, and the financial stability to make it happen is a luxury we don't all have. Also, college is hard enough as it is, and it is even harder if you are truly hungry. If you qualify for EFAP, De Anza College has an on-campus food pantry available to you to help ease the financial burden and the health burden to maximize your success in your collegiate journey. See the [Food Pantry website](https://www.deanza.edu/outreach/food_pantry.html) (https://www.deanza.edu/outreach/food_pantry.html) for more information.

Course Calendar

*Subject to change (and, honestly, *likely* to change) at any time by the instructor. Changes will be communicated in class, online, **AND** in writing. Please keep an eye on Canvas and your De Anza e-mail accounts for updates and adjustments to the course calendar. Thank you for your flexibility.

COMM-15.01Y – Winter 2025 (50/50 Hybrid)

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Class Activity/Subject</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
1	1/6 – 1/11	<p>Course Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • Philosophies • Expectations <p>Communication Competence in Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Defined & Described in Models • Communication Ethics <p>Module #0: Critical Decision-Making in Groups - Course Orientation</p> <p>Module #1: The Foundations of Communication - Its Probably More Complex Than You Think</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Defined • Components of Communication • Communication Ethics • Communication Competence • Social Construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student Survey ○ Online Engagement: Video Introduction - Expertise ○ DB/CTTP #1: Channels of Communication
2	1/13 – 1/18	<p>Communication in Small Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pros & Cons of Working in Groups (<i>NASA Activity</i>) • Social Construction & We Orientation • Serpentine Model • Deep Diversity • Power <p>Module #2: The Foundations of Groups - They're Also Probably More Complex Than You Think</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Groups Defined • GroupHate • Interconnectedness • Synergy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quiz #1 ○ Group Formation: Qualities of a Group Member Discussion Board
3	1/21 – 1/25 JANUARY 20: MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY HOLIDAY – CLASSES CANCELED, CAMPUS CLOSED	<p>GROUPMATE INTERVIEW ACTIVITY</p> <p>Module #3: Group Development - Roles & Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuckman's Phases of Group Formation • Group Roles: Task & Maintenance • Running a Quality Meeting: Preparing, Conducting, & Participating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DB/CTTB #2: GroupHate Vent Session
4	1/27 – 2/1	<p>GROUP FORMATION & SMALL GROUP AMAZING RACE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quiz #2

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Class Activity/Subject</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
		Module #4: Critical Thinking & Critical Theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defining Critical Thinking Dialects & Fallacious Dichotomies Power, Normalcy, & Critical Theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Formation: Video Conferencing Group Formation: Group Contract
5	2/3 – 2/8	Intro To Critical Thinking & Thought Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions & Questioning (Meme-ing Information Thought Project) Introduce the Difficult Dialogues Project Group Dynamics & Formation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Types of Roles (Social Construction of Roles) Adaptation, & Dynamic Equilibrium (lets play Jenga) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult Dialogues Project Topic Proposal DB/CTTP #3: Against the Grain
		Module #5: Critical Thinking, Research, Logic, & Reasoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sources, Skepticism, & Bias Argumentation, Logic, & Fallacies Citing Sources & Credibility 	
6	2/10 – 2/13 FEBRUARY 14: PRESIDENT’S DAY HOLIDAY – CLASSES CANCELED, CAMPUS CLOSED	<p style="text-align: center;">MIDTERM EXERCISE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz #3 (library tutorial) Difficult Dialogues Project Annotated Bibliography
		Module #6: Groups Moving Forward - Leadership, Climate, & Conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Styles & Becoming a Leader Creating Positive Group Climates Navigating & Negotiating Group Conflict 	
7	2/18 – 2/22 FEBRUARY 17: PRESIDENT’S DAY HOLIDAY – CLASSES CANCELED, CAMPUS CLOSED	Critical Thinking & Thought Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions & Questioning (Meme-ing Information Thought Project) Introduce “Creative Solutions” Project Leadership Styles & Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DB/CTTP #5: Leadership
		Module #7: Crash Course in Public Speaking (For Those Who Need It) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speech Anxiety (and tips to manage it) Speaking Styles Developing a Speech How to Create and Utilize Presentation Aids 	
8	2/24 – 3/1 FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28: LAST DAY TO DROP WITH A “W” GRADE	Presentation Prep & Crash Course in Public Speaking Difficult Dialogues Q&A & Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz #4 Difficult Dialogues Presentation Outline
		Presentation Prep	
9	3/3 – 3/8	<p style="text-align: center;">DIFFICULT DIALOGUE CONVERSATIONS</p>	
		Module #8: Critical Decision-Making In Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Standard Agenda 	

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Class Activity/Subject</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
10	3/10 – 3/15	(Potentially More Difficult Dialogue Conversations) Decision Making & Problem Solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking and Effective Decision Making, • Creative Problem Solving • Barriers to Effective Problem Solving. • Group Workshop for Creative Solutions Presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quiz #5 ○ Creative Solutions Presentation Outlines
		Group Workshop for Creative Solutions Presentation	
11	3/17 – 3/22	CREATIVE SOLUTIONS PRESENTATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Critical Thinking Reflection Paper: Academic Pre-Mortem
		Work on Final Papers	
Final Exam Week	Finals Week 3/24 – 3/27 Final Exam Meeting: Wed, 3/26, 11:30a-1:30p QUARTER IS OVER THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 11:59P.	Hold Open In Case of Emergency 😊 (Potentially more Creative Solutions Presentations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quiz #6 ○ Intragroup Evaluation & Scores ○ Group Communication Final Paper
		Work on Final Papers	