Course Syllabus
COMM 340: Leadership and Small Group Communication
Immersive Learning with the Boys and Girls Club of Muncie
Volunteer hours are required
Fall 2026

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Department of Communication Studies

Catalog Description: Introduces students to classical and contemporary leadership and group theories, with an emphasis on the central role of communication. Focuses on leadership strategies in a variety of group and team settings and may include such topics as team development, decision-making and problem solving.

Banner Attribute: HIIM (High Impact Immersive Learning)

Definition: Immersive learning projects are high-impact learning experiences that involve collaborative student-driven teams, guided by faculty mentors. Students earn credit for working with community partners such as businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies to address community challenges through the creation of a product that has a lasting impact.

Criteria:
- Community-Engaged: The class works with a community partner (local or national non-profit, business, government agency, school, etc.) with the faculty member acting as mentor, liaison, and guide.
- Collaborative: Students work collaboratively on teams.
- Project-Based: Student teams create an outcome or deliverable that addresses a community-identified issue.

Course Description: This course is designed to introduce students to the basic principles of how to become more effective communicators and leaders within small group and team settings. Emphasis is placed on the skills needed to engage in effective communication, decision making, and problem solving as contemporary leaders. Leadership approaches that focus less on control and more on the communication processes involved in leadership will be emphasized. Students will understand the theory component and the practical processes of leadership and communication in teamwork and group contexts.

Course Rationale: This course will provide students with the opportunity to gain theoretical and practical expertise in leadership and communication in groups/teams. This learning experience will enable students to develop an effective leadership philosophy based on theory, research, and practice. Given different organizational settings, students will acquire the ability to generate ethical theory-based solutions to problems and analyze the responsibilities and privileges of leaders during decision-making tasks. Ultimately, this course will provide students with skills that simultaneously develop their scholarly potential and provide the means for them to make sense of their own work life.

Course Content: Topics to be addressed in this course include the following:
1. Small group communication theory
2. Styles and approaches to leadership
3. Team & leadership development
4. Managing conflict as a leader
5. Decision-making and problem-solving strategies
6. Leader/follower relationships
7. Ethical considerations for teams and leaders
8. Personal approach to leadership and team communication strengths

Course Learning Objectives: This course addresses the following department learning objectives:

1. Employ communication theories, principles, and concepts.
2. Engage in communication inquiry.
3. Create written and spoken messages appropriate to diverse audiences, purposes, and contexts.
4. Critically analyze messages.
5. Employ ethical communication principles and practices.
6. (HIP 1) Students will create a constructive collaborative climate.
7. (HIP 2) Students will apply previous knowledge or skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.

Course objectives are aligned with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Competencies.

Course Objectives	**NACE Workplace Competencies**
Identify and differentiate among the classic and contemporary theories associated with leadership.	Critical Thinking Leadership
Explore the purposes, processes, and elements of leadership and team communication	Leadership Career & Self-Development
Critically explore the difference between ethical and unethical leadership and team behavior.	Critical Thinking Professionalism
Demonstrate knowledge of the nature of group roles and norms, and the implications of them.	Leadership Teamwork
Assess the strengths, weaknesses, and assumptions of key leadership approaches	Critical Thinking Teamwork
Identify and reflect on personal leadership strengths and communication behaviors.	Career & Self-Development
Demonstrate skill and knowledge of various means of decision-making and problem solving.	Communication Leadership
Explain the nature of group/team structure and process.	Teamwork Leadership

Required Text: Northouse, P. G. (2013). *Introduction to Leadership: Concepts and Practice* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Other course materials are posted in the course site.

Students' course materials are available via Canvas and through the Ball State First Day partnership with Barnes & Noble. This program ensures students obtain all their course materials the first day of classes. Students are automatically enrolled in the program and charged the flat course material fee on their BSU eBill. Students can opt out of the program by the deadline listed on the "Course Materials" page in Canvas. Please review the program details to make the most informed decision regarding your course materials and participation in this program: Ball State First Day

Course Policy Statements

Attendance Policy: Attendance counts for 15% of the final grade. Points from in class activities cannot be made up if class is missed without a documented and approved circumstance. Students who arrive late or who have earbuds in or otherwise disengaged will not receive full attendance points. Students arriving late will be marked "Late" in Canvas with reduced attendance credit, and students with earbuds or otherwise disengaged will be marked "Absent" in Canvas.

Submission of Assignments: All assignments must be uploaded to the correct Canvas assignment link before the deadline. Emailed assignments will not be accepted. Links to online storage accounts (SharePoint, Google Docs etc.) will receive an automatic 0. Assignments posted to the wrong assignment link will be given a 0 as grading in Canvas relies on assignments being posted to the correct link. It is the student responsibility to check for accuracy. Assignments that are inaccessible at the time of grading (online storage account, wrong files/assignments, corrupted files etc.) will be given an automatic 0. It is the responsibility of the student to submit correct and accessible assignments before the deadline.

Communication and Email Etiquette: Students are expected to communicate in a positive and professional manner. Emails to your professor should include an introduction including what course and section you are in, as well as an appropriate greeting with the appropriate title. For example: "Hello Dr. Rediger, my name is [your name] and I am in your COMM ___ course." Followed by your email. Then, please allow up to 48 hours for a response. I reserve the right to decline to respond to emails that are disrespectful, argumentative, or otherwise fail to meet standards of professional communication.

Communication and Feedback: I will try to return e-mail from your official BSU e-mail address within 48 hours during the business week: Monday through Friday. If you haven't heard from me within that timeframe, please feel free to nicely follow up. Sometimes e-mails become buried. For work-life balance, I am away from email Friday 5:00pm until Monday 9:00am. I will read every submitted paper and assignment, but I don't always give thorough feedback beyond rubric comments. Please schedule an appointment with me if you would like further clarification about grades. I will make every effort to grade assignments within 5 business days of submission. End of semester assignments may take longer. Please feel free to e-mail me before that time if you have any questions or concerns about your performance in the course.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is taken very seriously by this University and in this department. Students are expected to follow the University's code of behavior regarding all academic matters. I will address academic misconduct with students directly, whether the misconduct was intentionally or because of a lack of awareness. Cheating, plagiarism (the using of another's work, words, or ideas as your own), and double-dipping (turning your own work in for credit in two different courses) are serious academic offenses. Please consult the guidelines provided for responsible AI use in this class. Work created outside of those guidelines will be considered an ethics violation. For additional information regarding academic integrity expectations and processes, please consult the University's policies related to academic integrity.

AI: In this course, I value your authentic voice and the development of your skills. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, or Grammarly may be used to support your learning within the following guidelines:

Permitted Uses:
- Brainstorming ideas.
- Generating outlines or structure suggestions.
- Practicing delivery with AI speech coaches (e.g., Microsoft Presenter Coach, Ovation VR).
- Clarifying grammar or revising drafts of your project outlines.

Prohibited Uses:
- Submitting coursework written entirely or mostly by AI.
- Using AI to generate citations, arguments, personal stories, or other assignment content you present as your own.
- Uploading course materials or other students' work to public AI tools.

All work you submit should reflect your original thinking, your voice, and your preparation as a student in this course. Improper or undisclosed use of AI tools will be treated as a potential academic integrity violation. If you're unsure whether a use of AI is appropriate, please ask.

Deadlines and Late Work:

- Deadlines: All (Canvas submission) assignments will be due on a Friday by 5:00pm. This is for three reasons:
    1. There is a better chance (but no guarantee) of having questions answered by me on a Friday before 5, than midnight if questions arise if you are submitting close to the deadline.
    2. To promote better sleep, study, and work/life balance. Cramming at midnight does not produce good work, and you (and I) should be able to enjoy the weekend.
    3. In the workplace, most assignments/tasks are due by the end of the workday, not midnight. A major aspect of this Leadership course is preparing students for the workplace. This includes preparing for realistic deadlines.
- Late Work: Work that is due by Friday at 5:00pm is accepted until Sunday midnight.
    1. There is a 10% penalty PER DAY it is late.
    2. I am UNAVAILABLE from Friday 5:00pm through Sunday midnight to help you navigate any issues. This includes questions about instructions, technological issues, or any other issues that would warrant my involvement. Either the assignment is in or it is not. **I will not be checking emails during this time.** This is for two reasons:
        - To promote appropriate work/life balance for you and for me.
        - Your boss/supervisor will not always be available to answer your questions. In the workplace you will be expected to problem-solve on your own. Late work (after Sunday) will not be accepted. Deadlines will only be extended for approved and documented circumstances. These must be communicated within a week of its occurrence.

Work will not be accepted after the late penalty allowance without a documented and approved circumstance. These situations must be communicated during the week the assignment is due. It is up to the student to able to make up missed work within one week following the approval of making it up.

Internet connectivity and technical issues may occur. Set up a backup plan such as visiting the library or borrowing a peer's computer. Technology failure at the deadline will not grant an extension.

Recording the Class: No electronic recording or broadcast of any portion of this class is permitted without permission; posting audio or video recordings of any portion of this class online is not permitted without permission. Students are prohibited from taking pictures or videos at the community partner site.

Course & Instructor Evaluation: Students will have an opportunity to participate in formal assessment of this course and the instructor's teaching performance at the end of the semester through the university's online evaluation process.

Grading:

- Grades are private and available only on Canvas.
- Final grades are not rounded up for any student.

Final Grading Scale:

A	94 – 100%
A-	90 – 94%
B+	87 – 90%
B	84 – 87%
B-	80 – 84%
C+	77 – 80%
C	74 – 77%
C-	70 – 74%
D+	67 – 70%
D	64 – 67%
D-	61 – 64%
F	0 – 61%

Course schedule and assignment details including instructions, due dates, and grading criteria and rubrics are posted and updated on Canvas. Please check Canvas regularly to stay informed and on track.

University Policy Statements

University Statement: We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.

Freedom of Expression: In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's Statement on Freedom of Expression, the resources on Ball State's Freedom of Expression webpage, and Ball State's Beneficence Pledge.

Disability Services: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu. Accommodations are not retroactive.

The Learning Center: The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit my.bsu.edu and click on "Navigate" in the Additional Tools section, or just go directly to https://bsu.navigate.eab.com. Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are available for students who have received the appropriate documentation from Disability Services. Tests may be administered in the Learning Center. Supplemental Instruction is available in select courses. If you have an SI leader for your course, that person will provide students with information the first week of school regarding weekly study sessions. For more information about Learning Center programming, visit bsu.edu/learningcenter or call 765-285-1006. Follow us on Instagram: BallStateLC.

CCIM Student Success and Advising: For academic advising and student success support, visit the **CCIM Student Success and Outreach Hub in BC 210**. Schedule an appointment with an academic advisor through Navigate, or walk in during business hours for assistance from Student Success staff.

The Writing Center: All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays, Bracken Library First Floor West in the evenings, or online during any of our regularly scheduled hours) to get additional feedback on your writing. The Writing Center offers free planning, feedback, and accountability sessions (in person and online) to all students composing essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to http://www.bsu.edu/writingcenter. Online and in-person appointments are available; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly!

Student Services – Dean of Students: If at any time you need the assistance of a mental health professional, are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the Dean of Students Office: https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/dean-of-students.

This syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.