

COM 691 – Fall 2014

Facilitating Intercultural Dialogue

Instructor: Benjamin J. Broome, PhD, Professor
Contact Information and Office Hours: [See Course Blackboard](#)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on facilitating intercultural dialogue with groups facing complex issues. The emphasis is on principles and methods for building consensus and promoting collaboration in settings that involve multiple stakeholders with diverse cultural backgrounds and viewpoints. Case studies will focus on protracted conflicts, but will include other settings appropriate to class interests. Various approaches to group facilitation are introduced, with a special emphasis on a structured dialogue process called Interactive Management (IM). Students will gain experience as participants in facilitated laboratory sessions in which they will explore issues related to facilitation and will analyze their own communication and group process. In these lab sessions, students will simultaneously learn about intercultural/intergroup dialogue while experiencing various methods for idea generation and structuring.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to provide opportunity for participants to:

- Learn about the *nature of dialogue* as a distinctive form of human interaction;
- Examine the *role of the facilitation process* in managing dialogue in intercultural groups in a problem-solving setting;
- Explore the primary *obstacles to dialogue* that potentially affect the facilitation process;
- Identify knowledge, attitudes, skills, and style desirable for the *facilitator role*;
- Experience selected *consensus methodologies* for managing group dialogue;
- Gain *practice in facilitating dialogue* in natural settings;
- Analyze problem-solving group work and make recommendations for *improving group communication* through facilitation.

The course objectives are directed primarily toward intercultural settings, in which group composition reflects a diversity of cultural backgrounds.

COURSE MATERIALS

1. Frey, L.R. (Ed.). (2006). *Facilitating Group Communication in Context: Innovations and Applications With Natural Groups*. Hampton Press.
2. Schwarz, Roger M. (2002). *The Skilled Facilitator*. Jossey-Bass (recommended)
3. Broome, B. J. and Keever, D. B. (Eds.). *Facilitation of Group Problem-Solving*, special issue of *Management Communication Quarterly*, Volume 3, Issue 1, Fall 1989.
4. Additional reserve readings (see attached list)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1. CLASS AND LAB SESSIONS** – You are expected to attend and actively contribute to class and laboratory sessions.
- 2. ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM** - An online discussion forum will be set up for the class, and you are expected to actively participate by responding to questions when they are posted. In our final online discussion forum, you will be asked to post independently prepared responses to a set of questions designed to help you and your classmates review and reflect on the course readings (this activity takes the place of a course exam).
- 3. SUMMARY AND COMMENTARY ON COURSE READINGS** – For each assigned reading, one or more students will be assigned responsibility to provide for the class (a) 200-250 word summary of the main points of the reading, and (b) a 400-500 word ‘commentary’ on the reading. The commentary can include your thoughts about insights offered in the article, limitations, potential applications, questions raised, etc. It might also link the reading to other readings in the course (or readings not assigned in the course). The summary and commentary should be posted on the course’s online discussion forum by midnight on the day prior to the class meeting in which the reading is assigned. During our class sessions, individuals responsible for particular readings will be asked to highlight key points from their assigned readings, and these will be used as the starting point for discussion of each article.
- 4. FACILITATION PRACTICUM** – This project provides opportunity for course participants to be involved in designing, facilitating, reporting, evaluating and analyzing a problem-solving session with a client. More information will be provided in class about this assignment.
- 5. RESEARCH PAPER/CASE STUDY** – This paper (4000-6000 words, plus references) should focus on a communication concept or facilitator competency important in facilitation of intercultural dialogue (e.g., building trust, empathy, etc.), or a case study of a specific application context in which facilitated dialogue groups have been used extensively. Students are welcome (but not required) to collaborate with another class member to co-author the paper. We’ll discuss this assignment in more detail in class.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

This is a PhD level course, and everyone is expected to contribute at a high level. The quality of the learning experience should be given primary emphasis, rather than concern about the letter grade one receives in the course. I’ve found that if the anxiety about grading can be minimized, performance generally increases. The pressure to do well should come from within, and there should be freedom to ‘play’ with ideas rather than worry about getting the ‘right’ answer. To be successful, a PhD seminar class requires a collective effort, and we all have responsibility to ensure an enriching learning experience for self and others. In class, we’ll discuss grades in more detail, but if everyone takes a professional approach to our class, we should be able to lower anxiety about grades and focus our energies on maximizing the learning experience.

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(subject to revision)

Class Sessions on Thursdays (6:00 – 8:45 PM)
Facilitation Lab on Saturday, Oct 4 (10:00 AM – 6:00 PM)
Facilitation Practicum (November, TBD)

Introductory Session (Aug 24): Overview, Introductions, Logistics

Unit 1 (Sept 3): Overview of Intercultural Dialogue

<p>Lab 1 (Sept 10, 17) TOPIC: Challenges in facilitating intercultural dialogue ACTIVITY: Identifying and Structuring Challenges</p>

Unit 2 (Sept 24): Facilitation and Group Process Designs

Unit 3 (Oct 1): Role of the Facilitator

<p>Lab 2 (Oct 4**) TOPIC: Characteristics of the Facilitator Role ACTIVITY: Identifying and Structuring Facilitator Characteristics</p>

Unit 4 (Oct 15, 22, 29): Approaches and Applications in Group Facilitation

<p>Practicum (Nov 5, 12, 26) TOPIC: Intercultural Dialogue at ASU ACTIVITY: Designing, Facilitating, and Evaluating Dialogue Workshop</p>
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Unit 5 (Dec 3, 10): Theoretical and Research Issues in Facilitation and Intercultural Dialogue

**List of Course Reading Assignments will be Posted on Blackboard*

***All-Day Saturday Facilitation Lab (no class meeting during following week Oct 8)*