

GROUP FACILITATION SKILLS SYLLABUS

PLAN 5580-002

Fall 2015

One Credit

Arch School, Dept of Urban & Environmental Planning

Instructor: Tanya Denckla Cobb, 2015 Ivy Road, tanyadc@virginia.edu, Text: 434-962-5724

Class Meets in Campbell 305 on Wednesday: 3:30-6:15

5 Class Dates: Oct 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov 4

Number of Students Authorized to Enroll: 20

PASS/ FAIL

Prerequisites

This course is open to all students in all Departments of the Architecture School. No prior course work or sequence is required. Should there be a wait list, graduate students in Planning will be given priority.

Course Description and Method

Students will learn the basics of group facilitation, including the international core values and ethics of facilitation, as well as procedural, behavioral, and problem solving techniques that comprise a group facilitation "tool kit." Instruction will involve a combination of dynamic group exercises, experiential role-plays, and mini-lectures, with the key emphasis on practicing and experiencing group facilitation. Good group skills are becoming an imperative skill in today's fast-paced collaborative work environment. This course is based on the premise that the best (and only) way to develop or improve these skills is through reflective and deliberative practice.

Requirements

Readings & participation in discussions	20
Personal mini-essays (2)	15
Facilitation exercises (preparation & execution in class)	65
	100%

Homework will include preparation of specific facilitation tasks and roles, which sometimes will require working in teams. Because no papers or exams are assigned, the grade of "Passing" is based entirely on full participation in each class and adequate preparation for the assigned facilitation tasks and roles. **Because of this, inability to participate in one class will require equivalent work in the form of attending a meeting and writing an analysis paper. Inability to participate in more than one class will automatically require an Incomplete.**

Readings

- *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, by Sam Kaner (2nd edition 2007, New Society Publishers) (NOTE: This is also on reserve.)
- *Facilitation at a Glance: A Pocket Guide*, by Ingrid Bens (3rd edition, 2012, Goal/QPC)
- Course Manual (PDF on COLLAB site)

About the Instructor

Director of the Institute for Environmental Negotiation, Ms. Denckla Cobb is an experienced mediator and facilitator specializing in environmental policy. She also serves as faculty for the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute. For more information see her resume on IEN's website at: www.virginia.edu/ien and her personal website at www.tanyadencklacobb.com. In the event of emergencies or other last-minute communication, you may text her at: 434-962-5724. Emails are not a reliable method of last-minute or emergency communication with her.

Web Address URL: <https://collab.itc.virginia.edu/portal/site/3430da7b-4215-4bda-85b1-a878f74bb62d>

Additional Suggested Readings:

- *Getting to Yes*, by Roger Fisher and Bill Ury – a classic must-read.
- *Getting Past No: Negotiating with Difficult People*, by William Ury (1991, Bantam)
- *Six Thinking Hats*, by Edward deBono (1999, Little, Brown & Company) – very short read; an excellent method for working a group through an issue. Well-worth the read.
- *You Just Don't Understand*, by Deborah Tannen (1990, Ballantine) and *That's Not What I Meant!* (1986 Ballantine) – excellent introduction to everyday challenges in communication and sources of conflict.
- *The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups*, by Roger M. Schwarz (1994, Jossey Bass) – more for internal organizational facilitation.

Computers, Laptops, Phones:

Use of electronic devices in Planning classes has become an increasing distraction. Therefore the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning is instituting a new policy beginning this fall (2015). Research on the differences in retention and learning between students who take notes with laptops and those who take notes by hand shows that “the pen (or pencil) is mightier than the keyboard.” For this reason, and because students have complained about their peers distracting them with inappropriate surfing, the use of electronic devices--laptops, tablets, and iPhones--will not be permitted in Planning classes. Instructors may permit their use on specified days, when they are needed for class exercises or in-class work. Otherwise, such devices should not be in use during class time. Recording devices are exempt from this policy. At the end of the 2015-2016 academic year we will review how these policy has been working and make whatever adjustments seem appropriate.

Grades: Because this is a one-credit course that is about learning a new skill, grades are Pass/Fail.

Special Needs: If you have any special needs of any kind, please come talk with me directly.

Class #1: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

Pre- class Preparation BEFORE 1st CLASS:

Readings

- *Kaner: Forward; Chapters 1-5, and Chapters 14-15 (90pp)*
- *Pocket Guide: Chapters 1,2, and 8 (45 pocket-size pp)*
- *Course manual: pp 1-12 (IAF Code of Ethics and IAP2 Core Values, and think about questions at bottom of page 12)*

Advance Writing – please send me the BRIEF (truly brief!) paragraph requested via email, in advance, no later than FRIDAY prior to class

Class Agenda:

- Icebreakers
- Discussion of reading
- Effective and ineffective meetings and facilitators
- Active listening
- “Interests” v. “positions”
- Key facilitator values, knowledge, strategies for impartiality
- Creating team expectations

Class #2: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

Pre-class Preparation:

TEAM MEETINGS:

- Practice your facilitation skills during your team meetings!
- Discuss and plan your facilitation segments for class #2 – decide who will do what during the class – decide what needs to be prepared in advance, decide if need to meet again
- Observe dynamics of your own small group interactions, take notes for your journal entry

Readings

- Kaner: Chapters 6-12, 16-20
- Bens *Pocket Guide*: Read Remainder of Entire Pocket Guide
- Manual: read through entire rest of manual, pp 12 onward, especially all the tools and processes (which you’ll need for your process design)

Writing

- SHORT ESSAY DUE via email (2 pages, all double-spaced, 1” margin). Think about your team discussion process. Discuss 4 things: 1) what went well, 2) what could have been improved, 3) what you could have done differently, and 4) describe specific skills you intend to work on to improve *your own* group facilitation skills and ability to create successful teams.
- **IN ADVANCE of class- BY MONDAY NOON:** Send me via email the names of **ONE OR TWO** facilitation tools that you would like to try yourself and/or see demonstrated by someone in the class or by me. Each student will draw one tool from a hat; some will do demonstrate a tool individually, some may be paired with the other person who draws that same slip of paper. (Find examples in Kaner, Bens, or manual. Examples: *PAG/PAU, 5 Whys, Fishbone Diagram, Gap Analysis, Forcefield Analysis, Boomerang, Etc.*)

Class Agenda

- Discussion of readings (student-led): core concept, insights and challenges from readings dealing with: *listening, facilitation ethics and values, role of facilitators, role of group participants, group dynamics*
- Effective recording
- International facilitation ethics and core values
- Structuring a facilitated process
- Process design and essential ingredients of a meeting agenda
- Consensus: what is it, and how to build consensus

Class #3: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

Pre-class Preparation:

Readings

- Review Kaner and Pocket Guide segments dealing with opening meeting, building understanding, identifying issues, and brainstorming – as needed, to prepare for class

Preparation for Facilitation Demonstrations

- Team meetings and discussions; Use your facilitation skills during these meetings!

Class Agenda

- Discussion of readings (student-led): core concept, insights and challenges from readings dealing with: *opening meetings, building understanding, identifying issues, brainstorming*
- Gain facilitation skills by participating, observing and facilitating a meeting
 - Opening a meeting
 - Building understanding
 - Identifying issues – listing interests (not positions)
 - Brainstorming (rules of brainstorming, brainwriting, mapping ideas or storyboarding)
- Practice skills in listening, meeting participation and facilitation
- Behavior management techniques

Class #4: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

Pre-class Preparation:

Readings

- Review Review Kaner and Pocket Guide segments dealing with evaluating ideas, narrowing the field of options, building consensus, finalizing agreements – as needed, to prepare for class

Preparation for Facilitation Demonstrations

- Team meetings and discussions; Use your facilitation skills during these meetings!
- Be prepared to use different facilitation techniques, as needed
- Team segments should include
 - quick 10-second description of the specific tools you are using in the scenario,
 - quick description of the key issues/ challenges in using the “tool”
 - core facilitator values that should drive use of the tool or response, and

Class Agenda

- Discussion of readings (student-led): core concept, insights and challenges from readings dealing with: *evaluation of ideas, building consensus, finalizing agreements*
- Facilitation of stakeholder meeting, while demonstrating specific facilitation tools and segments of a facilitated meeting
 - Building understanding

- Evaluating/ assessing ideas
- Developing agreement
- Finalizing agreement
- Practice skills in listening, meeting participation and facilitation

Class #5: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Pre-class Preparation:

Readings

- Review as needed to prepare for class
- Answer questions at bottom page 12 (self-reflection questions) in Manual

Writing

- SHORT REFLECTION ESSAY DUE via email OR COLLAB (2 - 3 pages, all double-spaced, 1" margin). In this essay:
 - Discuss your team process: what went well, what was difficult, what improvements you've seen in your own ability to facilitate and create successful teams, and specific facilitation skills you intend to continue working on beyond the class.
 - Include in this essay at least one paragraph on a non-class meeting you observed, and describe at least one thing you learned about facilitation of group processes from this meeting.
 - Include in this essay at least one final paragraph in which you describe at least one key thing you are taking away from this class - realizations about your own strengths or challenges in facilitation and/or realizations about the nature of effective facilitation. Please also answer/ discuss the self-reflection questions on page 4 in Manual.

Preparation for Facilitation Demonstrations

- Be prepared to use different facilitation techniques, as needed!

Class Agenda

- Discussion of readings (student-led): core concepts, insights and challenges: *behavioral management, dealing with anger or challenging situations, special tools or methods*
- Facilitator guest(s) to discuss specific challenges
- Advanced facilitation "curve balls"

NOTE: One option for this class is that it could be to follow required attendance at a live meeting, followed by discussion of what have observed, what tools used, lessons learned. If there is sufficient interest, and an available meeting to attend, we can do this.