

*NCLC 102 Global Networks & Communities: Food and Sovereignty
Fall Semester 2009*

Group Contract Guidelines

Group work is an integral part of the NCC curriculum, not only in terms of projects you will complete as a group, but also for the skills we would like you to further develop. These skills will serve you through your university course work and into your professional endeavors.

You have probably participated in study groups previously at work, school, a religious organization or other setting. Some of these experiences have surely been more rewarding than others. As you begin this new group experience, please take the opportunity to reflect on past successes and challenges to group work and allow these experiences to inform the decisions you make in all of your subsequent study group experiences.

Your group contract constitutes the foundation on which you will build a working relationship with your group members, and your instructor will call on these contracts if problems arise within your group. The purpose of the contract is to help you prevent conflict from arising by discussing each group member's expectations, and it is a resource for you in the event conflict does arise in your group. If expectations are clearly set forth, there is less chance for misunderstanding. As you think about a group contract, take the time to have a good discussion with all group members present. Everyone's ideas and concerns should be heard and noted. During this discussion, pay attention to possible sticking points and be sure to address them in the written contract.

Assignment: The contract must be typed and signed by each group member. Each group member should keep a copy of this signed contract.

Cover all of the following points in your group contract:

- How will you establish governance, that is, what rules do you want to create for how the team will operate?
- By what methods will communication be maintained across group members? For example, how often will you meet? Where will you meet? How will you coordinate your schedules and efforts across team members? Consider how you can use technology(ies) to your advantage.
- How will your group divide up the work? You will likely need to revisit this point on the contract as the assignment becomes clearer.
- How will you deal with problems that may arise in your group? A group member may neglect to follow the contract by failing to complete assigned tasks or may be consistently late for group meetings, for example. How will you deal with this? You need to discuss these possibilities now, before they are problems, so expectations and consequences are clearly outlined in your contract.
- What is the process for determining when a problem reaches the point that your instructor should be consulted?
- Include any other points your group deems important to include to ensure that you start off on the right foot. Remember, the first purpose of this contract is to help you prevent conflict from arising in your group. Having a good conversation about expectations and recording these in the contract will certainly help.

You may need to revisit this contract as the course progresses. This document can be revised with the input and agreement of all group members - as needed.

What to do if problems arise:

- Address them early! Do not wait until the last week to let your instructor know that your group has been having trouble.
- Address the problem with the person (individually) or with the group as a whole.
- If discussing the problem as a group doesn't work or if it doesn't feel safe, discuss the situation with your instructor.