Group Work & Presentations
(Adapted from 7 Tips for Surviving a Group Project, from USA Today College; 5 Tips on Turning Your Unfocused Group into Group Project Masters, from CollegeDegrees.com)

Tips for Surviving a Group Project:

- **Choose group members wisely!**
  - Don’t always choose your friends. Friends don’t always make the best group members, especially if you are afraid of hurting their feelings.
  - If you know a person in the group has two jobs, four classes, and an internship, this probably makes them a poor person to work with due to their lack of free time.
  - Look for students who exhibit the right skills and motivation to excel in a team assignment.
  - If you don’t know anyone in the class, try Facebook “friending” another student and striking up conversations with students who sit around you.

- **Figure out your means of communication!**
  - Exchange e-mails, phone numbers, Facebook, etc. and figure out how you will communicate and share your information.
  - Create a free G-mail account and use Google Documents.
  - Figure out times when you can all (or almost all) meet in one location (library, dorm room, etc.).

- **Get started early!**
  - Professors will usually assign presentations a few weeks in advance, take advantage of this time and begin early.

- **Don’t be afraid to take the lead!**
  - If your group members are not stepping up, take the lead. Make sure to be fair and hear all ideas before you start discarding ideas that could be beneficial to your project.

- **Divide up the work evenly!**
  - Don’t take all the responsibility and put all the work on yourself, divide and delegate the work to your classmates. If the amount of work you have becomes overwhelming, ASK FOR HELP from your group members.
  - Divide the work based off of strengths and weaknesses. If one of the members of your group is great with math, let them analyze the statistics. If one of the members of your group is artistic, let them design the layout of your presentation.

- **Set up a timeline and deadlines!**
  - Set a deadline for each portion of the project.
  - Your final deadline should be days before the actual class presentation. This give you time to fix any mistakes, practice presenting to the class, and make any last minute adjustments.
Potential Problems & Ways to Resolve Them
(Adapted from Working in Groups, from Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University)

• **Controlling or Hesitant Participants**
  o Some people may dominate the conversation by interrupting group members, talking too often, and asserting their superiority.
    ▪ **Solution:** Using humor can sometimes discourage the dominating or controlling behavior.
  o Some people may not speak enough because they have difficulty asserting themselves in the conversation.
    ▪ **Solution:** Looking at the person who does not speak is a way to include them in the conversation, or actively ask for their opinion during a group conversation or outside of the group which can give them confidence when with other group members.

• **Deviations from the Topic at Hand**
  o Interesting side stories and off-topic conversations can get in the way of group progress.
    ▪ **Solution:** Take a look at the agenda or syllabus to get group members back on task, or summarize where the group was before they got off-topic. Consider what conversations get the group off-topic and attempt to avoid those subjects.

• **Getting Stuck**
  o Making little progress can get a group down.
    ▪ **Solution:** Take a short break and change your focus.

• **Feuds**
  o Conflicts can and do arise (sometimes having nothing to do with the actual project), this can hurt the work of the group as a whole.
    ▪ **Solution:** Have a mediator in the group hear both sides of the story and then encourage the group members to lay aside their issue. If the issue at hand involves the group project, take a vote among the members to decide which direction the presentation should go.
    ▪ As a last resort, alert your professor to the problem. The professor might have better insights or be able to solve the issue.

• **Ignoring or Ridiculing Other Group Members**
  o A member of the group may consistently ignore or ridicule what others say by criticizing experiences or knowledge.
    ▪ **Solution:** Good-natured humor can, again, discourage this behavior. If it begins to get out of control, take action by pulling the group member aside and have a private conversation with them about their behavior.