

Syllabus: Group Dynamics

Psy 457 / 557

Spring 2004 10-11:20 Mon/Wed 146 Straub CRN:34199/34211

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Blackboard conference: <http://blackboard.uoregon.edu>

Class notes and supplementary articles will be posted on blackboard.

Course Description & Requirements

This course has three interrelated goals:

- 1) acquaint you with theory and research on small groups
- 2) improve your skills as participant in & observer of small groups
- 3) develop your ability to read and interpret the primary literature

To accomplish these goals, the main text and lectures will cover theories and findings on topics that students will also explore through *group exercises* in class. *Two tests* will assess learning of the basic concepts and findings. Students will also demonstrate their ability to apply what they are learning by writing *two essays* analyzing case studies. One recounts the story of a group expedition to Antarctic (intragroup dynamics); the other is a first-person account of ethnic conflict in Bosnia (intergroup dynamics). Finally, class groups will each focus in depth on a particular topic and read primary articles reporting empirical studies. Groups will give *a short presentation* to the class on this topic and turn in *a review paper*. An *optional final exam* will give students who are unhappy with their grades on the tests a chance to improve their scores.

NOTE: *Grad students* will have different assignments replacing the essays and the review paper. Details are given below.

1. Participation

Attendance is required. *If you can't attend class faithfully, don't take this course*.

You will be working in small groups each week, and group members will rate one another's participation at the end of the course. In week 2, students will form permanent groups. If a group member is chronically absent, does not come prepared, behaves badly, or otherwise gives clear evidence of being untrustworthy, groups may request that the person not be a part of the group project. Members who feel the rest of their group is not trustworthy may also petition to complete the project individually. Discuss any proposed adjustments to group membership with Holly by May 3rd. Changes will be implemented Wed. May 5th.

At the end of the class, each student will (confidentially) evaluate how well fellow members fulfilled their commitments to the group; these evaluations will largely determine the participation grade.

1b. Grad students: After moving around to different small groups during the early rotations, you will work together in a separate group. During some class sessions, you will observe and give feedback to the undergraduate groups.

2. Readings

The three required books are S. M. Burn, *Groups: Theory and Practice*, A. Lansing, *Endurance: Shackleton's incredible voyage*, and J. Dervisevic-Cesic, *The river runs salt, runs sweet: A memoir of Bosnia*. Strunk & White's *The elements of style* (any edition) is strongly recommended as a guide to clear writing. Supplementary readings (research articles from the primary literature) will be posted on Blackboard.

3. Tests

Tests will have an individual and a group portion. They will cover material from the texts, lectures, and supplementary readings.

3b. Grad students will complete the whole test individually (no group assistance) and will have some extra questions to cover.

4. Individual Essays (undergrads only)

Essays are limited to **250 words** each, and must be printed **on a single page**. To be deemed acceptable, they must fulfill the assignment, be carefully reasoned, clearly written, and grammatically correct (follow S&W guidelines!). Every sentence should contain specific, meaningful information that is clearly related to the assignment, and all opinions should be directly supported with evidence from the readings (cite author, page number). To receive full credit, a typed draft must be submitted and critiqued the class before the final essay is due.

4b. Grad students. In place of the two essays, you will give two short presentations (10 minutes) summarizing and critiquing a recent study related to the topics of the week. This will serve as models for the groups, which will do their own presentations in week 10.

5. Group Project: Literature Review and Study Presentation.

Groups will turn in a written paper and will also give a 10 minute presentation in Week 10.

The group will pick a focused topic to investigate (a list of suggestions will be provide), develop a bibliography, construct an overview table that identifies basic information for each study covered, and write a review essay that identifies (1) similarities and differences in theories and methodology among the studies included, (2) convergent and divergent findings across the studies, and (3) two important questions that have not been satisfactorily answered in the studies. The review essay should be 3 pages long (plus 1 page for the overview table). The rest of the paper will consist of specific commentary on each article (1 page each), plus a bibliography in APA style. Each individual group member will be responsible for commentary on two articles. Grades will be based both on individual and group portions of the paper, and may be adjusted based on confidential member reports of one another's contributions.

To be eligible for full credit, all interim assignments must be completed on time

5b. Grad students will complete a case study or research proposal instead of the group project. *Case study option:* Write a case study based on your observations of a small group (size 3-25) and/or interviews with its members (Note: this should **not** be one of the class groups.) Be sure to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the group and analyze what you see as the contributing factors to these strengths and weaknesses. Consider composition, structure, task, context, and group development. Make one specific recommendation for improving the functioning of the group. The paper should have 4 sections: Intro, description, analysis, and recommendation.

Research proposal: Write a research proposal for a study of small groups. Assume you have unlimited resources. Follow APA style (only section missing will be results). Summarize theory relevant to your topic, identify the research question(s) and/or hypotheses, describe your research design, and in the discussion section, consider how you would interpret results that are contrary to your hypotheses. Include an abstract.

Either option: Limit 8 pages double-spaced, including title page.

Grading

Elements	Points	Course grades based on percentage of total points earned			
Participation (group exercises & evals)	10	A	93-100	C	73-76.9
		A-	90-92.9	C-	70-72.9
Undergrads: Essays (2) [Grads: Presentation]	20	B+	87-89.9	D+	67-69.9
		B	83-86.9	D	63-66.9
Tests (2)	40	B-	80-82.9	D-	60-62.9
Group [or grad] project	30	C+	77-79.9	N	< 70
TOTAL points	100			P	\$ 70

Special Needs:

Learning disabilities & athletes. If you have a documented learning disability and need adjustments, or are on a UO sports team and will miss class because of travel, contact Dr. Arrow ASAP. With advance planning, adjustments are relatively easy. Adjustments at the last minute are problematic and sometimes not plausible.

Late and Missed Work:

Late Penalties: Three-point penalty for late essays, unless you have **prior approval** for an extension based on some catastrophic life event. Two-point penalty if typed essay draft not completed on time.

Tests: If you miss a test, you should take the optional final exam as the make-up.

Group Project: Up to 5 points will be deducted from the group project grade if the group does not turn in all interim assignments when due.

Academic Dishonesty:

All work submitted in this course must be your own (or your group's) and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources must be properly acknowledged and documented. Academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade in the course and will also be referred to the Student Conduct Committee.

Collaborating with group members is NOT permitted on the individual portions of tests or on the final exam. Students must generate their first essay drafts on their own; they are encouraged to make use of feedback and suggestions from group members in their revisions. If you have any confusion about what constitutes academic dishonesty, see <http://www.uoregon.edu/~conduct/sai.htm>

Readings and Assignments

<i>Week One</i>	Topic / Focus	Reading	Other Events
Mon Mar 29	Intro & Methods	Burn 1 & 2	First temporary group; Self-Assess
Wed Mar 31			Second temporary group
<i>Week Two</i>			
Mon April 5	Group Structure	Burn 3 & 4	Form permanent groups
Wed April 7			Practice Test (desensitization)
<i>Week Three</i>			
Mon April 12	Process & Change	Burn 5 & 6	
Wed April 14			Turn in topic for Group Project
<i>Week Four</i>			
Mon April 19	Crisis & Survival	Lansing	Test #1
Wed April 21			Essay A (first draft, typed)
<i>Week Five</i>			
Mon April 26	Group Challenges	Burn 7 & 8	Essay A (final, 2 copies, 1 p. max)
Wed April 28			Bibliography; Week 5 Assess
<i>Week Six</i>			
Mon May 3	Leaders & Goals	Burn 9 & 10	
Wed May 5			One article commentary per group
<i>Week Seven</i>			
Mon May 10	Decisions & Teams	Burn 11 & 12	
Wed May 12			Summary Table for Group Project
<i>Week Eight</i>			
Mon May 17	Crisis & Conflict	Dervisevic-Cesic	
Wed May 19			Test #2
<i>Week Nine</i>			
Mon May 24	Inter-Group Issues	Supplementary Readings	Essay B (first draft, typed)
Wed May 26			Essay B (final, 2 copies, 1 p. max)
<i>Week Ten</i>			
Mon May 31	Group Projects		Presentations; Wk 10 Self-Assess
Wed June 2			Presentations; Class & Mem Evals
Final Projects due by: Noon Mon June 7		Optional Final: 10:15-12:15 Fri June 11 (& pick up projects)	

Name: _____ Group Name: _____ Code: _____

Rate Your Group Skills (+3=very strong 0=okay -3= very weak)

Wk 1 Wk 10

1.	Communicate ideas effectively (self-expression)	_____	_____
2.	Listen to and understand others (empathy, perspective taking)	_____	_____
3.	Help others understand themselves with constructive feedback (guide)	_____	_____
4.	Seek feedback from others to know yourself better (personal growth)	_____	_____
5.	Establish rapport with others (make connections)	_____	_____
6.	Monitor and manage your own emotions (self-management)	_____	_____
7.	Organize people to achieve tasks (task leader)	_____	_____
8.	Identify and fill needed roles in the group (social flexibility)	_____	_____
9.	Promote group morale and cohesion (socio-emotional leader)	_____	_____
10.	Resolve conflicts and negotiate agreements (mediator)	_____	_____
11.	Analyze structural causes of group dynamics (social analysis)	_____	_____

Your own goals for this class:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 4. _____ |

Week 5 *peer* assessment of progress on these goals within your class group

Week 5 *self*-assessment of progress in developing and practicing group skills

Week 10 *self*-assessment of progress in developing and practicing group skills
