

SOCI 6201
GROUP DYNAMICS

Dr. Stone

Fall Semester 2002

W, 5:30 – 8:00PM

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The purpose of this course is to examine theories and research related to the study of groups and to engage in experiential learning activities that will increase the student's awareness of his/her own behavior in a variety of group situations as well as improve his/her group leadership skills.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- 1) Learn major research findings in the field of group dynamics;
- 2) Write critical analyses of journal articles related to group research;
- 3) Identify major theoretical perspectives on group behavior;
- 4) Learn one's own behavioral style in different groups and be able to identify the behavioral styles of others;
- 5) Improve one's own interpersonal/group interaction skills to increase one's ability to behave appropriately and effectively in a variety of group situations;
- 6) Learn and be able to identify different group leadership styles, both conceptually and as they apply to the students in the class;
- 7) Improve one's ability to effectively conduct different types of groups (work, educational, therapeutic) and demonstrate such; and
- 8) Conduct an original research project in the area of group behavior.

These learning outcomes are in line with the mission and goals of the Sociology graduate program. Students who successfully complete this course will gain theoretical, empirical and experiential knowledge in a specialty area of the discipline; they will engage in an independent research project; they will demonstrate competency in oral, written, and non-verbal communication skills; they will demonstrate critical thinking skills; and they will demonstrate competency in group-related skills. The learning outcomes further support the University's Bread-and-Butter goal of academic excellence, particularly in regard to student experiential learning and research, and the University's Visionary goal of faculty-directed student research.

TEXTBOOKS:

Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills, by David Johnson and Frank Johnson

The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense at Work, Suzette Haden Elgin

The (New) Art of the Leader, William A. Cohen

REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) Attend and participate in class. The classroom experiences will demonstrate many of the concepts, principles, and issues involved in group behavior. Class activities will also help build some of the skills necessary to be an effective group leader and member. You will not be able to learn the material in this course just from reading – it is designed to incorporate experiential learning. If you are not present, you will not benefit from the classroom experience. You will be allowed one absence for the semester; for any absences beyond that, except for a legitimate emergency, there will be a full letter grade reduction in your final grade.
- 2) When you are in class, I expect you to behave in a mature and courteous manner. Be on time and be prepared. Do not get up and leave the room after class has begun; we will take a break about halfway through each class. When people come and go during class it is rude, disruptive, and distracting. Do not have side conversations with your classmates during class time; sideline chatter is not only rude, disruptive, distracting and disrespectful, it is also unfair to those around you who are trying to pay attention. If you engage in side conversations, you may be asked to leave the room and you will be counted absent for that class. Similarly, turn off your cell phones, beepers, or any other electronic devices that make noise during class. These devices, when activated, are also disruptive and distracting. If you have an electronic device, especially a cell phone, that goes off during class, you may be asked to leave the room and you will be counted absent for that class. In addition, I expect you to treat me and each other respectfully. A large part of this class involves interactive exercises, and there may be different reactions to these as well as to some of the topics we will discuss. Since you all come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, I expect that there will be different points of view. Sharing those differences is important for the class, but we need to ensure that the classroom is a safe space for everyone to be heard. Your classroom behavior will be worth 50 points.
- 3) Appropriate, effective behavior in groups can be improved through increased self-awareness of how we are behaving, why we are behaving that way, and how our behavior affects other people. Many of the classroom activities and assignments are designed to increase self-awareness. To assist with that goal, you will be required to keep a personal journal during the semester. In this journal I would like for you to thoughtfully reflect upon your behavior in different group situations, explore possible reasons why you behave the way you do in particular situations, and examine the feedback loop that occurs as others respond to your behavior. I would also like for you to use the journal to record your impressions of the material you read for class and the class activities/assignments and how they affect you. Write about any changes you experience in your perceptions of yourself and others, changes in your behavior in different groups, changes in your thinking about groups and group processes, your own development or improvement of social interaction skills, etc. I would encourage you to use this course as an opportunity for personal growth, and writing can facilitate and

- enhance that process. You should have at least three journal entries a week. Journals will be collected at mid-term and at the end of the course. Journals will be worth 100 points. There is no right or wrong kind of journal entry. Grading will be based on your participation in the exercise and the extent to which you use the journal for the purpose intended.
- 4) In addition to offering an opportunity for experiential learning, the course will also examine the field of group dynamics from an academic perspective. We will discuss current research and theory in class, but you will be expected to explore these areas further on your own. During the course of the semester, you will need to accumulate a set of at least 10 journal articles dealing with group processes. Each article needs to contain a stated theoretical perspective and the description of a research project that tests the stated theory. The articles need to be from current, solid academic journals, but they can be from a variety of disciplines such as sociology, social work, psychology, social psychology, counseling, education, or business. The articles will be assigned on a more or less weekly basis, and they need to coincide with the topic we will be discussing the next class time. For each article, you will need to write a BRIEF synopsis of the article, stating the theoretical perspective, summarizing the research and findings, and discussing your views on the merit of the work and how it ties into what we are discussing in class. That will provide you an opportunity to learn about current academic work in the different areas of group studies. I will take your journal articles up after each class period they are due for grading. Each article will be worth 10 points and will be graded based on relevance to the topic, legitimacy of the journal, inclusion of the required components, and your review. The articles will be worth 100 points.
 - 5) Each student will be required to conduct an original study related to group dynamics during the semester, focusing on one of the areas we will be covering in class. The study can involve a group you are already participating in, or you may convene a group especially for your project. You will need to submit a research proposal for approval by me, conduct your project, then write up your study. Your written report needs follow a similar format as the journal articles we will be reviewing. The report needs to include the theoretical perspective you were working from, a brief review of the literature in that area, the hypothesis you were testing, a description of your research, your findings, and a discussion of your findings in relation to your original hypothesis. The written report will be due on the last day of class before exams. The project will be worth 100 points.
 - 6) There will be a final exam on the designated exam date, which will be worth 100 points

GRADING:

Journal	100 points	A= 405-450 points
Articles	100 points	B= 360-404 points
Project	100 points	C= 315-359 points
Exam	100 points	
Class participation/ Class behavior	50 points	D= 270-314 F= < 210

TOTAL POINTS = 450

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Aug 21	Introduction to class Film – 12 Angry Men
Aug 28	Group Dynamics J & J – Chapter 1 Begin reading <i>The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense at Work</i>
Sept. 4	Self in Groups and Experiential Learning J & J – Chapter 2
Sept 11	Social Interaction and Developing Trust J & J – Chapter 3
Sept. 18	Communication Skills – Verbal and Non-verbal J & J – Chapter 4 Begin Reading <i>The New Art of the Leader</i>
Sept 25	Leadership Skills J & J – Chapter 5
Oct 2	Power in Groups J & J – Chapter 6
Oct 9	Making Decisions in a Group J & J – Chapter 7
Oct 16	Creativity J & J – Chapter 8
Oct 23	Managing Conflict J & J – Chapter 9
Oct 30	Diversity in Groups

J & J – Chapter 10

- Nov 6 Leading Learning/Discussion Groups
 J & J – Chapter 11
- Nov 13 No class – I will be out of town at a conference
- Nov 20 Leading Therapeutic Groups
 J & J – Chapter 12
- Nov 27 No class – Thanksgiving Break
- Dec 4 Leading Work Groups
 J & J – Chapter 13
- Dec 11 Final Exam