

NPLD 782: Small Group Processes SYLLABUS, Fall 2017

*School of Social Policy & Practice
University of Pennsylvania*

Section 101

Instructor:

e-mail:

Course Description

This course explores the contours and dimensions of our human interactions, in the context of small groups, in order to help us better understand our relationships with others in multiple settings and circumstances. Human interactions form the strata and sub-strata on which the social world we inhabit is built. We spend the majority of our lives in interactions with others, even when we are alone, yet we rarely work on examining, discussing or understanding these processes and experiences.

This course is designed to help you explore and discover who you are in relationship to others, and who others are in relationship to you. One of the premises is that it is not possible to understand oneself without knowing about the context in which one lives (i.e., the groups we are part of, the communities we are part of, and the systems we work and interact with). Although the course looks at issues we associate with our inner lives (i.e., identity), the frame we use views all these issues as inextricably interconnected with others and the social world we inhabit.

Through experiential and didactic work the course will emphasize and examine the issues of 1) identity, 2) authority, 3) freedom/oppression, 4) bias/ethnocentrism, 5) leadership/followership, and 6) the relational world. Students who take the course will develop a deeper understanding of the overt and covert processes that influence our human interactions, and how these play out in the multiple small groups of which we are a part.

Students are required to complete a series of required readings before the course begins, write a short paper before the class begins, be present psychologically and physically for every session of the course throughout the weekend, and participate in a small group project at the end of the weekend.

Learning Goals

- Learn about human interaction in the context of small groups
- Through interaction with others in small groups learn about how identity is influenced by current social, historical and economic lived realities
- Gain a deep understanding of your identity in relationship to others

- Learn about authority and your interactions with those in authority and about your own authority
- Experience how you live out freedom and oppression in a small group setting
- Gain understanding of bias and ethnocentrism and how that plays out in human interactions
- Experience the inseparable links between leadership and followership
- Gain an understanding of how the relational world operates
- Gain understanding about the overt and covert processes which influence all human interaction

Course Structure

The hours spent in this weekend course will consist of both experiential or ‘here and now’ activities, plus more traditional seminar type discussions and finishing with a more reflective opportunity. Group based experiences and reading/seminars/writing will be seamlessly integrated. It is important to **note that you are to do three readings and write a short paper, using these articles/chapters before you enter the class.** The bulk of the class takes place over one weekend. Participants will be given a basic grade at the end of that weekend. After the weekend, students have another opportunity to further their learning if they choose. This also gives them an opportunity to get a more advanced grade.

Seminar/Activity Topics

Anxiety

Authority

Understanding human interactions

Group Reflection

Identity

Freedom/Oppression

Bias/Ethnocentrism

Leadership/Followership

Social Identity

Unconscious or Out-of-Awareness Processes

Requirements

Attendance:

You are **required to attend all class sessions** in order to receive credit for the course. There are **no exceptions** to this requirement. Because of the unusual nature of this course and the effect that one's timely presence has on the course interaction and group dynamics, you are to be present and on time for every class session.

This course meets on the following dates and times:

Friday, September 15, 6:00pm-10:00pm

Saturday, September 16, 9:00am-10:00pm

Sunday, September 17, 9:00am-6:00pm

Note: Experiential learning of this nature can be stressful. If you are undergoing unusual stress in your life (recent difficult breakup, death of a close loved one, major physical illness, psychiatric episode, etc.) please speak to your Instructor as to the advisability of taking the course at this time. Please be sure to reserve the Friday and Saturday evenings after class solely for sleep, as well as physical, emotional and intellectual restoration.

Investment:

The expectation is that you will come to the course ready to fully engage your head (intellect) and your heart (emotions). This course offers many new ways of viewing human interaction and groups, and if you come prepared to invest yourself fully, you will likely gain deeply from the experience.

Readings

You are **required** to read the 3 articles/chapters listed below before the weekend class and before you write the paper.

Moxnes, P. (1999). Deep Roles: Twelve primordial roles of mind and organization. *Human Relations*, 52(11), 1427-1444.

Nisbett, Richard E. (2003) *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently ... and Why*. New York: Free Press. Introduction and Chapter 1, pages xiii-xxiii and 1-28.

Wells, L. (1995). The group as a whole: A systematic socioanalytic perspective on interpersonal and group relations. In C. P. Alderfer & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Advances in experimental social processes (Vol. 1)*. New York: John Wiley & Sons. [Read pages: 50-56 & 76-85]

Required Pre-course Paper

Before the class starts course candidates are required to do the above, pre-course required reading and write a paper (6 to 8 pages – double-spaced, 12 font). This paper is to address each of the three readings, how you connected with them and include an example from your own experience to bring these understandings to life. This should consist of about 2 double spaced pages on each reading and a relevant example. We are interested in how you understand the concepts and ideas in each of the three articles/chapters and how you apply them to your own life. Also include a 1-page conclusion to the paper which discusses your expectations about the course, how the concepts you have discussed in the paper fit with what you hope to learn from the course, and hopes and concerns about the learning process described in the syllabus. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how you have understood and integrated these concepts in your thinking and how you have interacted in groups previously.

The paper is due the day before the weekend class (Thursday, September 14th at 5:00 p.m.). If you do not turn the paper in you will not be permitted to participate in the weekend course. The

paper is your ticket of admission to the rest of the course. The paper represents your initial investment in your learning and contribution to the collective learning of the class.

The criteria that will be used to evaluate if your paper is satisfactory will be as follows:

- Level of commitment to learning indicated in the paper
- Willingness to explore new concepts and ideas
- Understanding of the concepts from the readings discussed
- Ability to self-reflect

The paper (including the summary paragraph) is to be 6 to 8 pages in length, double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman Font. The paper should not exceed 8 pages, not including references. If you turn in a paper over 8 pages, the instructor will read only the first 8 pages. If it is less than 6 pages, it will be deemed unacceptable. References should be in American Psychological Association (APA) Manual format. The paper is due on **Thursday, September 14, at 5:00 p.m.** via email (see first page of this syllabus) to the instructor. **Please send it as a word document.**

Closing Project

During the last part of the weekend class, the members of the class will be divided into small groups. Each small group will have 90 minutes to put together a video, a brief choreographed dance, a short theatrical piece, a presentation, or another format that illustrates their learning from the weekend. The purpose of this final project is to reflect on meaningful learning from the weekend and find a way to illustrate that to the other members of the class. Each small group will have 15 minutes to present their final project to the class before the close of the weekend.

Continued Learning – Two designated extra Web Chats

Students wishing to continue their learning on this subject, to gain some more advanced learning post the weekend, are invited to participate in two synchronous web chats on two designated Monday evenings after the weekend is over. Students electing to engage in the web-chats will be divided into small groups of 4 or 5 members. Each chat group will be assigned a specific set of readings. These readings will be different for each web-chat group and will be designated a week before the web chat. Each web chat will last for one hour and students will be given a question at the beginning of the chat to discuss during that specified hour. The question will be related to some aspect of the required assigned readings for that week. The membership of the web-chat-group on the second Monday will be different from the first Monday. To participate in this add-on experience you will be required to commit to doing both sessions. Failure to meet all the relevant commitments (i.e. do the assigned readings, be fully present with your assigned chat-group at the designated time, participate whole-heartedly etc.) will be dealt with in the same way as if you had elected not to be part of this add-on experience at all. Being involved in the web-chat groups will influence your grade. See details below.

Web chats for this section of the course are scheduled for:

- Monday, September 25 from 9:00 to 10:00 p.m. or 10 pm to 11pm.
- Monday, October 2 from 9:00 to 10:00 p.m. or 10 pm to 11pm.

Grading

Grading for this course is unorthodox. Se please read very carefully.

Students who faithfully do and submit their pre-course papers will be admitted to the course. These will ultimately be given a category of *acceptable* or *unacceptable*. You will receive written feedback on your paper and notice of its acceptability on the Thursday night following the intensive weekend. (If it turns out to be unacceptable, see below.) The paper is critical and must be done at an acceptable level. However beyond that it does not count towards your course grade.

The grade for the weekend class will consist solely of the instructor's assessment of the overall quality of the collective learning done by the whole class, with a slight elevated add-on for those who do stunningly stellar work. In this course, stellar work does not mean doing things to show how intellectual bright you are (we take that for granted) or more insightful than your peers (this is not a competition). It will be given only to those who take extra wholesome and emotional risks to advance his or her own learning **AND** the collective learning. This comprises absolutely everything that you do over the weekend, including your final small group project.

The highest grade given for a student who submits a satisfactory paper, faithfully attends every single minute of the weekend and fully engages in the learning is a B+. Grades are likely to range somewhere in the C- to B+ range. We call these your preliminary grade.

You can end your involvement in the course at this point and your preliminary grade will be your final grade.

By participating in the two web chats the student has the possibility of raising his or her designated weekend grade by three mini-grade levels. For example a student who receives a preliminary grade of a C+ could end up with a B- or a B or a B+. A student who receives a preliminary grade of a B could end up with a B+ or an A- or an A. This extra grade will be assigned based on the quality of your two web-chat groups and your individual contributions to that chat output. A good output would be dependent on members making sure their peers are also interacting at the highest possible levels. The texts of these web-chat-groups will be read and evaluated by the instructor.

If your initial pre-course paper was unsatisfactory, to get credit for the course you must do the web-chats and perform at a satisfactory level in order to be given even the original weekend grade you were assigned.

Unless you are fully present at every weekend session you will no longer be in good standing and you will be dropped from the course. You will be given a 'no grade recorded' which will convert to an F on your transcript.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to conduct themselves in ways consistent with the University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity, which presents standards regarding plagiarism,

multiple submissions and other actions. Students are expected to be familiar with the Code, which can be found at: <http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/>

Additional Readings

Listed below are additional readings that will provide you with more extensive understanding of the concepts and issues emphasized in the course.

Badger, E. (2016, Oct. 5). We're all a little biased, even if we don't know it. *New York Times*.

Bennis, W. G., & Shepard, H. A. (1974/1986). A theory of group development, in G. S. Gibbard, J. J. Hartman, & R. D. Mann (Eds.), *Analysis of groups* (pp. 127-153). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Berg, D. N. (1999). Chapter 7: Intergroup stories everywhere! In M. Edelson, & D. N. Berg, *Rediscovering groups: A psychoanalyst's journey beyond individual psychology* (pp. 86-90). Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Brazaitis, S. J. (2004). White women – Protectors of the status quo, positioned to disrupt it. In S. Cytrynbaum and D. Noumair (Eds.), *Group relations reader 3* (pp. 99-116). Washington, D.C.: A.K. Rice Institute.

Cushman, P. (1990). Why the self is empty: Toward a historically situated psychology. *American Psychologist*, 45(5), 599-611.

Diamond, M. A. (1998). The symbiotic lure: Organizations as defective containers. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 20(3), 315-325.

Dunning, G., James, C., & Jones, N. (2005). Splitting and projection at work in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 43(3).

Gemmill, G. (1989). The dynamics of scapegoating in small groups. *Small Group Behavior*, 20(4), 407-418.

Green, Z. G., & Molenkamp, R. J., (2005). The BART System of Group and Organizational Analysis: Boundary, Authority, Role and Task. Accessible at: www.academy.umd.edu/tle/BART .

Hayden, C., & Molenkamp, R. J. (2004). Tavistock primer II. In S. Cytrynbaum & D. A. Noumair (Eds.), *Group dynamics, organizational irrationality, and social complexity: Group relations reader 3*. Jupiter, FL: A. K. Rice Institute.

Hyun, J. (2005). But I didn't mean it that way: How cultural values can help or hinder you at work. In *Breaking the bamboo ceiling: Career strategies for Asians* (pp. 27-54). New York: Harper Collins.

- Janis, I. L. (1972). The groupthink syndrome. In *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 174-197). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Kaminstein, D. (2017). Reflections on beginning a course in small group processes. Unpublished manuscript.
- LaFarge, V. (1995). Termination in groups. In J. Gillette & M. McCollom (Eds.), *Groups in context: A new perspective on group dynamics* (pp. 171-185). University Press of America.
- Markus, Hazel R. & Shinobu Kityayama (1991) Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation. *Psychological Review*, Vol. 98 (2), pp 224-253
- Marshak, R. J., & Katz, J. H. (1997). Diagnosing covert processes in groups and organizations. *OD Practitioner*, 33-42.
- McCollom, M. (1995). Group formation: Boundaries, leadership, and culture. In J. Gillette & M. McCollom (Eds.), *Groups in context: A new perspective on group dynamics* (35-47). University Press of America
- McRae, M.B. & Short, E.L. (2010). Social roles in groups. In *Racial and cultural dynamics in group and organizational life: Crossing Boundaries* (pp. 79- 92). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Moxnes, P. (2006). Learning group psychology, leadership and anxiety coping by use of fairy tales as an educational guide. *Nordic Psychology*, 58(1), 5-21.
- Napier, R. W., & Gershenfeld, M. K. (2004). Norms, group pressures and deviancy. In *Groups: Theory and experience* (7th Ed.) (pp. 114-163). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Obholzer, A. (1994). Authority, power and leadership: Contributions from group relations training. In A. Obholzer & Z. G. Roberts (Eds.), *The unconscious at work: Individual and organizational stress in the human services* (pp. 39-47). New York: Routledge.
- Ramsay, S. (1999). After the conference is over. In R. French & R. Vince (Eds.), *Group relations, management and organizations* (pp. 251-263). Oxford University Press.
- Ronson, J. (2015, Feb. 12). How one stupid tweet blew up Justine Sacco's life. *New York Times*.
- Schein, E. (1989). Group and intergroup relationships. In S. J. Ott (Ed.) *Classic reading in organizational behavior* (pp. 216-222). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

- Smith, K. K., Miller, R. & Kaminstein, D. (2004). Consultant as container: Assisting organizational rebirth in Mandela's South Africa. In S. Cytrynbaum and D. Noumair (Eds.), *Group Relations Reader 3* (pp. 243-266). Washington, D.C.: A.K. Rice Institute.
- Taylor, F., Smith, K. K., and Kuriloff, P. (2004). Anatomy of a casualty, In S. Cytrynbaum and D. Noumair (Eds.), *Group Relations Reader 3* (pp. 183-207). Washington, D.C.: A.K. Rice Institute.
- Tillich, P. (1952). Being, nonbeing, and anxiety. In *The courage to be* (pp. 32-63). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Viswanath, R. (2009). Identity, leadership, and authority: Experiences in application of group relations concepts for Dalit empowerment in India. In E. Aram, & R. Baxter (Eds.), *Adaptation and Innovation: Theory, Design and Role-Taking in Group Relations Conferences and their Applications* (pp.179 – 195). Karnac Books Ltd.
- Wallach, T. (2014). What do students learn at group relations conferences? *Organisational and social dynamics*, 14(1), 13-38.
- Wheelan, S. (2013). From groups to teams: The stages of group development. In *Creating Effective Teams: A Guide for Members and Leaders*, 4th Ed. (pp. 7-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.