

**Management 454**  
**Work Teams in Organizations**  
**Tuesday, 6:00 to 8:30 PM, Business Complex, Room 247**  
**Spring 2008**

**Professor:**

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**Course Description and Overview:**

This course is designed to increase your knowledge about groups as well as increase your ability to be a member of a working unit and to manage these work teams. The primary emphasis will be placed on learning and understanding work team dynamics by actively being a member of an ongoing class group, specifically designed to explore group dynamics while being engaged in a real task.

**Learning Objectives:**

The goal of this course is to help you be able to more fully utilize the resources of any group or organization with which you are working. Learning objectives include:

- < to learn how to recognize and understand the subtleties of group processes
- < to learn how to build and maintain a team
- < to learn skills of effective group members (problem solving and decision making, communication, managing conflict, developing appropriate norms, leading and influencing others, etc.)

**Course Activities and Evaluation:**

The course will demand active involvement by all participants. Class sessions will not focus solely on textbook facts, but will comprise numerous activities and experiences that cannot be replicated without being in attendance. The beginning assumption regarding learning in this course is: to learn about teams and work groups requires that one be a member of an ongoing group in which course concepts and ideas exist and can be applied. The class exercises performed in these learning teams will enable us to: (1) see and experience what we read in our texts and course handouts about work groups, and (2) to use the learning groups as a laboratory

in which we can experiment with new behaviors and interactions with others.

Individual evaluation will be based on four components:

1. Personal Journal (20 points). Each individual will be a team member, but will also be a participant observer of the interaction dynamics of their group and the entire class. Each individual is required to provide an account (written or oral) of their observations, thoughts, feelings, etc. for class meetings of their learning group (both inside and outside of class). The journal requirement is an exercise in reflection and sensemaking. The comments you make through your journal will reveal your personal reactions to the class and how you conceptually put these experiences into some perspective. You might start the first entry by reflecting on what happened during the first few class sessions and how you felt about this. In addition to these comments in your journal entry you should also indicate how your observations relate to the group concepts we will be learning in the course (such as communication, conflict, power, leadership, task and maintenance issues, cohesion, etc.).

There will be 3 sections for each of your journals: (1) observation, feelings, and applications to course content; (2) team progress to date; and (3) plans for your team. The first section (observation, feelings, and applications to course content) was described in the foregoing paragraph. You will need to have a detailed story of what happened in your team, how this happened, and why it happened the way it did. In addition, superior journals will also show how these observations and team behaviors fit within the research and literature on teams that we will read during the semester. For the second section of the journal you will assess your team's progress based on your opinion of how your team is meeting goals that have been set by your team and the conduct of behavior your team will establish. During an early class period each Mgt. 454 team will set goals for their team and establish a contract of team behavior. The third section of your journal will be your comments related to future plans for your team. Based upon your observations and assessment of progress, this section of the journal will ask you to think about how your group should act in the future and will require you to provide specific plans of action.

***You are required to submit your personal journal in written format (3 times) and an oral format (3 times). Written journals will be due the week of: February 19, March 18, and April 22. Audio journals are due the week of: March 4, April 8, and May 6.*** More information on the audio personal journal will be given as the semester progresses.

2. Group Case Analysis Paper or Take Home Exam (20 points). Each learning group will prepare either a written analysis of a case or a take home exam given to you around midterm. Your group will have approximately two weeks to complete this assignment. Due date and other specifics will be given to you as the class progresses.

3. Group Process Analysis Paper (40 points). Each action/learning team will write (as a group) a

paper documenting their experiences that applies appropriate group concepts and theories to explain these experiences. A separate handout will explain this requirement more fully. Group process analysis papers will be ***due the last day of class (May 6, 2008)***.

4. Reflected Best-Self Report (10 points). Each individual will collect data on their best-self, analyze this information, write a reflected best-self portrait, and hand in a written report on these activities. The assignment will be **due March 11, 2008**. See handout for further details.

4. Personal Learnings Paper (10 points). Each individual will write a concise paper documenting what they have learned about work teams and themselves from participating in this course. In this paper you will also need to assess your skills as a productive team member. More specifics on this assignment will be given as the semester proceeds. This assignment will be ***due the last day of class (May 6, 2008)***.

### **Attendance and Participation**

Due to the nature of this course and my assumptions about learning, ***attendance and active class participation are mandatory and required*** of all class members. At my discretion, an individual's grade may be increased due to superior in-class participation that helps create enhanced learning opportunities for other class members. In addition, lack of attendance and appropriate participation will result in a lower individual grade.

### **Required Textbook**

Larson, C.E. and LaFasto, F.M. (1989) Team Work: What must go right/What can go wrong. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

The course will be supplemented with numerous handouts and other reading materials.