

Management 454
Work Teams in Organizations
Tuesday, 4:00 - 6:30PM, Business Complex, Room 108
Fall 2009

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 keep a written account of their observations, thoughts, feelings, etc. for each meeting of the class and 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 in 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 writing about what happened during the first class session and how you felt about the class. 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.). This is not a task that can be reconstructed too long after the fact (a week is too long), but must be kept current, immediately after each meeting of the class. Your personal journal can be handwritten, assuming that I can read it. Please date each journal submission, attach your name, and indicate your group. Journals will be turned in to the instructor at various times throughout the semester so as to provide you with encouragement and corrective feedback. Your journal will also be submitted the last day of class. **When submitting your journal turn in the complete journal, including instructor comments from previous entries.**
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***.
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 is due October 27th**. 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***.

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 Textbooks

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

Thompson, L.L. (2008) Making the Team: A Guide for Managers (3rd Edition). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall.

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