

**HIED 731/831**  
**Group Dynamics in Higher Education**  
**Course Syllabus**

**Course Number:** HIED 731/831

**Course Title:** Group Dynamics in Higher Education

**Course Sequencing and Prerequisites:** HIED 733/833 or permission of the instructor

**Course Description:** This course examines the principles and dynamics of group interaction and process while providing strategies for working with groups in higher education settings (i.e., focus groups, task groups, and student, staff, faculty, and parent groups). Students will explore and develop their leadership skills specifically related to forming compatible groups capable of completing tasks that complement the mission, vision, and goals of an institution of higher education. Lecture 3 hours; 3 credits

**Course Purpose:** Effective higher education leaders promote open, honest communication that supports innovation and teamwork. Leaders frequently work in groups while striving to create a positive environment. Leaders use active listening skills to understand, comprehend, analyze, engage, and act as they work effectively and diplomatically with unique constituent groups such as legislators, board members, business leaders, accreditation organizations, and others, managing conflict and change by building and maintaining productive relationships.

**Course Objectives:** After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Use basic attending skills, including (1) non-verbal attending (including minimal encouraging), (2) paraphrasing, (3) responding to feelings, (4) open invitations to talk (e.g., questions), and (5) summarization.
- Self assess their facilitation skills and other leadership skills.
- Understand group members' roles; stages of group development; problem behaviors in group; issues related to gender, culture, and class; and strategies to address each
- Develop consensus techniques, team building strategies, and collaboration models.
- Examine the opportunities presented by developing teams of persons with culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Expand their effectiveness in conducting meetings and forming a vision for organizations.
- Gather strategies to deal with conflict as well as develop their skills for negotiation and compromise.
- Collaborate with peers to design and present effective training programs and facilitate focus groups

**Required Texts and Readings:**

American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Hulse-Killacky, D., Killacky, J., & Donigian, J. (2001). *Making task groups work in your world*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Johnson, D.W., and Johnson, F.P. (2006). *Joining together: Group theory and group skills* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon

### **Suggested Texts:**

Brown, N. (2004). *Psychoeducational groups: Process and practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Francis, D., & Young, D. (1992). *Improving work groups: A practical manual for team building* (Revised). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Kline, T. (1999). *Remaking teams: The revolutionary research-based guide that puts theory into practice*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

**Course Requirements and Course Overview:** Each class meeting will comprise a combination of lecture, discussion, and learning activities such as instructor and learner demonstration, exercises, activities, and practice with attending skills – at times in whole-class, individual, small group, or team formats.

Students are expected to

- read all assigned readings from course text and all additional readings in advance of the next class meeting;
- actively participate in class discussions, demonstrations, practice, and activities; and
- contribute professional experiences as appropriate during the class.

All assignments and work must be submitted

- according to requirements or detailed guidelines to be provided in class meetings;
- in professionally appearing form;
- following APA style guidelines where relevant; and
- on time.

All students are expected to have access to email, and competency with communication technology, including word processing, presentation technology, and electronic searching.

**Weight of Assignments:** Please note that doctoral student work is expected to be of higher quality. Doctoral students will work with the instructor to design a separate project appropriate to the student's future career placement and/or dissertation.

Personal Reflective Writings	15%
Proposal / Group Plan / Training Session	35%
Group Facilitation and Group Activity	15%
Self-Critique of Leadership	15%
Mid-Term	20%

**1. Attendance and Participation.** This class is experiential in nature and requires that class participants form into a learning community and be actively involved throughout the course. Learning how to be a productive group member and group leader requires one to participate in group experiences; this class, then, provides a variety of opportunities for such participation. Students will take part in small group and large group activities, as members and in a leadership capacity, both in and outside of the classroom.

Because experiential learning constitutes the majority of this course, missing sessions will significantly affect your ability to benefit from this course. In addition, you will be severely limited in your ability to complete several of the assignments since they are based on your experiences in class interactions.

**2. E-Mail and Blackboard Account:** Students must activate and use their ODU student e-mail accounts. You will be responsible for checking your ODU account regularly during the semester and checking Blackboard at least twice a week for posted announcements and handouts. All students must have an activated ODU e-mail account and must appear on Blackboard no later than the first Friday of the semester. Since all class handouts are only available through Blackboard, it is imperative that each student confirms that his or her Blackboard account is working. It is the student's responsibility to work with OCCS in correcting any problem as the instructor is unable to correct these errors for the student. Students with problems activating their Blackboard account should immediately send an e-mail to OCCS at: [occshelp@odu.edu](mailto:occshelp@odu.edu). Blackboard can be accessed at: <http://blackboard.odu.edu>

**3. Personal Reflective Writings:** Part of your learning in this course includes reflecting upon what you have learned and applying this new knowledge to past and present experiences, but in a more personal way. Reflective writing assignments of *at least two pages in length*, typed, will provide this opportunity. *Reflections are to be submitted via e-mail to the instructor by 4 p.m. of the day they are due. Late submissions will receive a zero. Topics will be announced in class only.* Due dates are given in the Course Planner.

**4. Proposal, Psychoeducational Group Plan, and Class Training:** This assignment involves three parts: a proposal to present a psychoeducational group, a psychoeducational group plan, and a training session for classmates. A psychoeducational group provides psychosocial and educational assistance to its group members. To complete this assignment, students are to select and research a higher education-based population of interest. This may be a population with whom you are presently working or with whom you are interested in working in the future. Possible populations include, but are not limited to, transfer students, entering first-year students, returning women, parents of entering first-year students, first-generation college students, student athletes, and students with disabilities. Write a *proposal* to offer a series of psychoeducational group sessions for your chosen population that you could present to a program director for consideration. In addition, provide a complete *psychoeducational group plan* as described below. Later in the semester, students will provide a *training session* to the class on the needs of the identified population and suggested methods for working with this population. Design the training as you would for the purposes of staff development with your classmates as colleagues or supervisees who you are teaching how to work with this population. This assignment should be completed in a professional style *in APA format* with the assumption that it may be used in the future and become part of a professional portfolio. **NOTE: This is *not* to be a therapy group.**

The proposal to your program director needs to be accompanied by a psychoeducational group plan that includes the following:

1. An introduction and description of the higher education-based population, along with the population's needs.
2. A literature review on the conditions, issue, or problem and higher education-

based interventions. The lit review must be a minimum of 5 pages and use at least 10 articles from professional journals. Books may also be used but cannot substitute for journal articles.

3. A description of the pre-group and screening process to be used.
4. How to organize for environmental aspects, e.g. time, duration, structure, etc.
5. Goals, rules for members and how the group will be started.
6. A detailed description of primary concepts and skills that will be presented and taught.
7. The detailed session-by-session plan for a minimum of 8 sessions, including agendas, activities, and content to be delivered.
8. An evaluation plan for the group.

Each student needs to submit two copies of the proposal and the psychoeducational group plan, *in APA format*. Due dates are given in the Course Planner.

### Proposal, Psychoeducational Group Plan, and Classroom Training Assessment Rubric

	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Organization	Proposal / Plan is organized into logical sections including an overview of the population, concerns, type of group, duration, frequency, screening and orientation, goals of group and each group meeting and individual meeting agendas, exercises and activities. Training outlines training objectives and specifies recommendations for working with the identified population.	Proposal / Plan and training are organized but are in a format differing from the suggested one.	Proposal / Plan and / or training are not well organized and important data is difficult to locate.	Proposal / Plan and training are disorganized.
Completeness	All proposal and plan components are present. This would include an overview of the population, concerns, type of group, duration, frequency, screening and orientation, goals of group and each group meeting and individual meeting agendas, exercises and activities. The training contains training objectives and specifies recommendations for working with the identified population.	Proposal / Plan or training is missing one component.	Proposal / Plan or training is missing two components.	Proposal / Plan or training is missing three or more components.
Neatness	Proposal / Plan is formatted so that information is easily found. All sections have clearly labeled headings.	Proposal / Plan is missing headings but pages are still neatly organized with no loose pages.	Proposal / Plan is missing the headings and loose pages are present.	Proposal / Plan is unprofessional in appearance.
Written and Verbal Expression	Written proposal / Plan is free of spelling, grammatical, and APA errors. Training was professionally presented and geared toward the intended audience.	Proposal / Plan contains one spelling, grammatical, or APA error. Training was	Two spelling, grammatical, or APA errors are present. Training requires	Three or more spelling, grammatical, or APA errors are present.

		presented well but requires modification for the audience.	refinement.	Training was inappropriate for the audience.
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**5. Group Facilitation and Group Activity:** The best way to learn to facilitate and participate in a group is to do so. For several weeks of the semester an hour will be dedicated to experiential learning by group interaction. Each student will have the opportunity to facilitate or co-facilitate the group. The student will both facilitate the group and design and deliver an exercise appropriate for the group. The exercise may be for the purpose of opening group discussion, learning and skill development or for group closure. The exercise should be designed appropriately for the group and evaluated as low to moderate risk taking for group members. The purpose of this course requirement is to provide students with group facilitation and activity design experience. Examples of group activities will be provided throughout the semester as part of the classroom experience. Prior to your scheduled facilitation experience, it is recommended that you speak with me for assistance. Groups, as you will learn, go through multiple phases. I may be a valuable resource for helping you to be successful with managing group interaction.

Group Facilitation and Group Activity Assessment Rubric

	3	2	1	0
Preparation	Facilitator was well prepared and facilitated on topic planned by the group. Facilitator arranged the work space prior to the group meeting and had all necessary equipment and supplies for activities.	Facilitator was well prepared but changed the topic planned by the group or facilitator did not arrange the work space prior to the group meeting or did not have all necessary equipment and supplies ready for activities.	Facilitator needed better preparation and neglected two critical preparation tasks.	Facilitator needed better preparation and neglected three or more critical preparation tasks.
Completeness	Facilitator included a group exercise or activity with an intended purpose consistent with the group focus. Facilitator opened the group and provided timely closure.	Facilitator included a group exercise or activity although it did not meet with the intended purpose of the group focus or facilitator did not open the group or did not provide timely closure.	Facilitator did not include a group exercise or activity or facilitator did not open the group and did not provide timely closure.	Facilitator did not include a group exercise or activity and facilitator did not open the group or did not provide timely closure.
Facilitation Skills	Facilitator worked to include all group members and provide supportive encouragement. Co-facilitators had	Facilitator worked to include all group members and provide supportive encouragement but missed an	Facilitator worked to include all group members and provide supportive encouragement but missed	Facilitator did not include all group members nor provide supportive encouragement and / or co-facilitators had

	well prepared roles and complimented one another.	opportunity to respond to a group member's need or co-facilitators had confused roles.	opportunities to respond to group members' needs and/or co-facilitators had confused roles.	confused roles.
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**6. Self-Critique of Group Leadership.** These critiques are intended to increase your awareness of the demands and responsibilities of group leaders, promote your awareness of group process, and evaluate your beginning group leadership skills.

They are self-evaluations that will help focus your attention on your strengths and weaknesses. You will be graded on the quality of the written critiques, not on the quality of your group leadership skills.

Each critique must have the following sections:

1. primary goals and objectives for the session
2. agenda for the session
3. the method or process you used to achieve the goals and objectives
4. interpersonal skills you used
5. a self-evaluation of your group leadership strengths and weaknesses
6. a summary of what transpired in the session
7. resistances you observed
8. feelings expressed by group members
9. communication patterns

Critiques are to be typed in APA format and submitted one week after you lead a session. As the instructor, I am to be considered a member of the group as far as confidentiality is concerned.

Try to be open and objective when writing your critique. You will be graded on the level and extent to which the critique meets the stated guidelines, not on how good you were as a group leader. You are expected to make mistakes at this point as you are learning how to use group leadership skills and become aware of group process.

Self-Critique of Group Leadership Assessment Rubric

	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Organization	Critique is organized into logical sections including primary goals & objectives for session, agenda for the session, method or process used to achieve the goals & objectives, interpersonal skills used, self-evaluation of leadership strengths & weaknesses, summary of session, resistances observed, feelings expressed by members, & communication patterns.	Critique is organized, but is in a format differing from the suggested one.	Critique is not well organized, and important data is difficult to locate.	Critique is disorganized.
Completeness	All critique components are present. This would include primary goals & objectives for session, agenda for the session, method or process used to achieve	Critique is missing one component.	Critique is missing two components.	Critique is missing three or more components.

	the goals & objectives, interpersonal skills used, self-evaluation of leadership strengths & weaknesses, summary of session, resistances observed, feelings expressed by members, & communication patterns.			
Neatness	Critique is formatted so that information is easily found. All sections have clearly labeled headings.	Critique is missing headings but still neatly organized.	Critique is missing the headings.	Critique is unprofessional in appearance.
Written and Verbal Expression	Critique is free of spelling, grammatical, and APA errors.	Critique contains one spelling, grammatical, or APA error.	Two spelling, grammatical, or APA errors are present.	Three or more spelling, grammatical, or APA errors are present.

**7. Mid-Term:** The midterm will consist of objective questions, scenarios, and a choice of two out of three essay questions.

### Grading:

92.5 – 100	A		80 – 82.4	B-
90 – 92.4	A-		77.5 – 79.4	C+
87.5 – 89.9	B+		72.5 – 77.4	C
82.5 – 87.4	B		70 – 72.4	C-

**Special Needs:** In accordance with university policy, a student who wishes to receive some instructional accommodation because of a documented sensory and/or learning disability should meet with the instructor to discuss this accommodation. Any student who has a concern or needs to make special arrangements for meeting the requirements of the course is also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

**Honor Pledge:** "I pledge to support the honor system of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community, it is my responsibility to turn in all suspected violators of the honor system. I will report to Honor Council hearings if summoned." By attending Old Dominion University you have accepted the responsibility to abide by this code. This is an institutional policy approved by the Board of Visitors.

**Office Hours:** Office hours are as follows:  
 Mondays 2:00-4:00 p.m.  
 Tuesdays 2:00-4:00 p.m.  
 Also available by e-mail and by appointment.

### Topical Outline:

Dates	Topic & Activities	Assigned Readings
<b>Week 1</b>	First class. Discussion of course syllabus, assignments, and expectations.  Introductory Activities (group assignments, attending skills practice, team-building exercise)	
<b>Week 2</b>	Experiential learning. Communication within groups. Team development, team training Attending skills activities Group activities Team-building exercise	Johnson: Chapters 2, 4, & 13
<b>Week 3</b>	Group dynamics. Communication within groups. Attending skills activities Group activities Team-building exercise	Johnson: Chapter 1 & 4
<b>Week 4</b>	Group goals, social interdependence, and trust. Group activities Team-building exercise  <i>Reflection #1 due</i>	Johnson: Chapter 3
<b>Week 5</b>	Leadership. Using power. Group activities Team-building exercise	Johnson: Chapters 5 & 6
<b>Week 6</b>	Decision making Group activities Team-building exercise  <i>Reflection #2 due</i>	Johnson: Chapter 7
<b>Week 7</b>	Controversy & creativity Group Activities Team-building exercise	Johnson: Chapter 8
<b>Week 8</b>	Midterm <i>Group Facilitation Activity</i>	
<b>Week 9</b>	Managing conflicts of interest. Diversity  <i>Group Facilitation Activity</i>	Johnson: Chapters 9 & 10

Dates	Topic & Activities	Assigned Readings
	<i>Reflection #3 due</i>	
<b>Week 10</b>	Cooperative Learning in the Classroom Group activities Team-building exercise	Johnson: Chapter 11
	<i>Group Facilitation Activity</i>	
<b>Week 11</b>	Task Groups Group activities Team-building exercise	Hulse-Killacky, Killacky, & Donigan: entire text
	<i>Group Facilitation Activity</i>	Johnson: Chapters 13 & 14
<b>Week 12</b>	Focus Groups <i>Group Facilitation Activity</i>	
	<i>Reflection #4 due</i>	
<b>Week 13</b>	Class Training Proposal/Group Plan due	
<b>Week 14</b>	Class Training Proposal/Group Plan due	
<b>Week 15</b>	Class Training Proposal/Group Plan due	
<b>Week 16</b>	Final Class Meeting Closing group activities	

***The instructor reserves the right to adjust this syllabus as necessary.***