



**SOCI 0316-001, Summer-I 2011**

**Instructor: Dr. Tian-jia Dong**

Office Location: Mod Hall 101 D

Office Hours: MWF 11:30 am—1: 00 pm

Tel: 572-5383

E-mail: [tdong@wsc.ma.edu](mailto:tdong@wsc.ma.edu)



## **Small Groups**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this course is to develop analytical and diagnostic skills in sociological theorizing and research in small groups. It is also designed to give practical experience in research in group setting. At the same time, it is directed toward understanding social change in groups and by group dynamics. During the semester, students will learn to:

- 1) Conceptualize and carry out field research in group settings;
- 2) Develop theory through comparison of various groups;
- 3) Diagnose problems about group dynamics.

A case study of a small group is essential to all the goals of the course. Each student will choose a group to study throughout the semester. The choice should be a small group to which the student perhaps already belongs or can readily gain access. Over the course of the semester, a series of key concepts will be used to guide the case analyses.

The course will proceed as follows. We will first have reading assignments that introduce the key concepts about group dynamics. Class lecture outlines are designed to help you be focused on theoretical discussions about these key concepts. Each time after reading and reviewing class lecture outlines, each student will use these key concepts to examine his or her group, writing a short paper based upon the student's analysis.

By the end of the term, each student (1) should have enhanced ability to analyze small groups; (2) be more skillful in designing and conducting sociological research in

group settings; (3) have a sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the key concepts about small groups as analytical tools, and (4) have four medium length papers and a group activity report that, taken together, comprise a brief case analysis which can be developed into the springboard for a serious presentation on small groups.



## Requirements

### 1. Four Short Papers (they will account for 40% of your final grade)

There will be a series of four required short papers (4 pages minimum). They will give you opportunities to creatively and critically reflect on your own experience with the group of your choice. The key to write a good paper is to review the key concepts in the readings and address the key issues using the key concepts under discussion at the time. These papers are due on every Sunday before 11:00 pm starting from the second week of the semester. It's essential to send in your papers on time. Late papers will be docked 5 points per day late, inclusive of weekends. A timely submission will automatically earn 50% of the points regardless of the quality of your paper.



### 2. Participation (30% of your final grade)

I do care about your attitude towards learning. In fact, the class depends on engaged learning that is guaranteed through informed reading and active participation. Students are required to actively participate in class discussions at least twice a week. Also, it's vital that you come to the discussions prepared with assigned readings so that you can actively participate. I'll post the discussion questions and initiate discussions. You'll get 10 points for each time you participate in a discussion. I expect to hear your voice frequently throughout the semester in our online classroom. I reserve the right to deduct up to 10% from your final grade if I am convinced that you are not serious about this class. On the other side of the token, if I am convinced that you have truly made your efforts, I will add up to 10% to your final grade. I also reserve the right to fail any student who fails to participate in discussions for more than 50% of the time.

3. A Final Project (It will account for 30% of your final grade)

It will be a final research project. I would assume that by the end of the semester you will be able to integrate all your four short papers and your group report into a coherent case study. Consequently, a case study of a group is essential to all the goals of the course, including the final project. Your research project must be typed and no less than 8 double spaced pages. No late submission will be accepted.



**Grading**

Final grades will be based on a possible total of 400 points.

1. Papers = 160 points for total of four papers. Each paper will be graded on a perfect score of 40.
2. Final Paper = 120 points
3. Participation = 120 points. Each active participation will earn you 10 points.

The grade breakdown is as follows:

372-- 400	<b>A</b>	360-- 371	<b>A-</b>		
352-- 359	<b>B+</b>	332-- 351	<b>B</b>	320-- 331	<b>B-</b>
312-- 319	<b>C+</b>	282-- 311	<b>C</b>	270-- 281	<b>C-</b>
240-- 269	<b>D+</b>	220-- 239	<b>D</b>	<220	<b>F</b>

*Note: all final grades are final, unless a calculation error was made. Under no other circumstances will a course grade be changed. Further, there will be no extra credit.*



**Required Texts**

Charles Stangor, Social Groups in Action and Interaction, Psychology Press: New York and Hove, 2004  
(Available at the Bookstore)

*An alternative:*

Carol K. Oyster, Groups: A User's Guide, McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2000

*(Not available in the Bookstore but it's easy and cheap to buy it online)*

**You don't need to buy both—one of them is good enough.**



## **Outline, Exercises and Readings**

### ***Week One (May 23<sup>rd</sup> —May 28<sup>th</sup>)***

Getting Started and Community Building

*No reading Required*

### ***Week Two (May 30<sup>th</sup> —June 4<sup>th</sup>)***

Introduction: the Sociological Approach to small groups

*Reading:* Chapters 1, 3 & 11 (Stangor Book)  
Chapters 1, 2 (Sections 3 & 4), & 3 (Oyster Book)

**Paper 1: Guideline posted online, Due: June 5<sup>th</sup>**

### ***Week Three (June 6<sup>th</sup> —June 11<sup>th</sup>)***

Group Dynamics

*Reading:* Chapters 4 & 5 (Stangor Book)  
Chapters 4 & 5 (Oyster Book)

**Paper 2: Guideline posted online, Due: June 12<sup>th</sup>**

### ***Week Four (June 13<sup>th</sup> – June 18<sup>th</sup>)***

Group Formation

*Reading:* Chapters 6 & 7 (Stangor Book)  
Chapters 2 (sections 1 & 2) & 8 (Oyster Book)

**Paper 3: Guideline posted online, Due: June 19<sup>th</sup>**



**Week Five (June 20<sup>th</sup> – June 25<sup>th</sup>)**

Issues of Human Rationality

*Reading:* Chapters 8 & 12 (Stangor Book)  
Chapters 7 & 10 (Oyster Book)

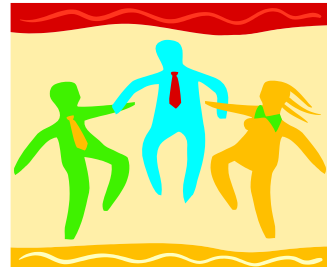
**Paper 4: Guideline posted online, Due: June 26<sup>th</sup>**



**Week Six (June 27<sup>th</sup> – July 1<sup>st</sup>)**

Final Project Week: concentrate on writing your final project

**A detailed guideline posted online.** I will conduct discussion sessions to help you write your final paper.



**Final Project Due: July 2<sup>nd</sup> before 11:00 pm**

