

ODKM 605: Group Dynamics and Team Learning

FALL 2025

Fridays 5:00 – 10:00 p.m. and Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Fridays: September 5, September 19, & October 3

Saturdays: September 6, September 20, & October 4

Class location: Van Metre Hall 318

Professor: Tojo Thatchenkery

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[View the ODKM Program LinkedIn page](#)

Facilitators: Lea Pickett, Nia Akinkugbe, & Erin Finn.

In the popular book *Emotional Intelligence* Daniel Goleman (1995) states that interpersonal skills are far more important to success in organizations than previously believed: “At best, IQ contributes about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80 percent to other forces” (p.34). You might have heard stories of exceptionally talented engineers and managers whose careers were stymied because of their perceived inability to work with others. Significant evidence exists to suggest that your impact in organizations depends partly on your ability to get along with others.

The “soft skills” have long been undervalued in management education until the late 1980s when a landmark report on the topic¹ called for a radical redesign of executive education emphasizing people management competencies. Since then, professional schools have redesigned their curriculum focusing on people management skills. The ability to work productively in small groups is now seen as a critical competence for achieving organizational effectiveness. Examples of small groups are top management, board of directors, product development teams, cross-teams, and in general, a relatively permanent group comprising about six to twelve members. Small group interactions have dynamics of their own and knowledge of them should improve your ability to function effectively in such contexts.

Group Dynamics and Team Learning provides an understanding of group dynamics inherent in small group interaction. In unstructured and structured learning environments you will experience intense group interactions to learn from one another. You will get plenty of opportunities to reflect upon your learning and communication styles and the impact they

¹ Porter, L., & McKibbin, L. (1988). *Management Education and Development: Drift or Thrust into the 21st Century?* New York: McGraw-Hill.

may have on others. The course will also explore various aspects of group dynamics such as Appreciative Intelligence, conflict, power, perception, motivation, leadership, and decision-making. As in a laboratory, you can experiment with and experience the relevance of several concepts related to group dynamics. The goal is to acquire a better judgment, understanding, and competence to be better facilitators of your own and others' learning in a variety of group situations.

Learning process

A student-centered approach is created where you assume responsibility for your learning. Participation is necessary and desired. Explorations of the subject matter in this course may generate a fair amount of ambiguity. Uncertainty or ambiguity reduction is a social process most often accomplished by interpreting or talking about them. When it comes to group dynamics, your classroom is a place to generate that dialogue. It is an opportunity to be innovative and bold about creating actionable knowledge of group and organizational dynamics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

1. Book Review & Critique

You will review a book dealing with group dynamics or small groups and write a critique articulating the impact the ideas and approaches in it might have had on your thinking about the subject matter. A list of suggested books is attached. If you want to pick one outside of this list, you must get approval from the professor regarding its appropriateness before you start working on it.

Grading criteria: The review should be divided into two segments. The first should be a summary of the book (5-6 double spaced pages, 8 grade points) where you will articulate the core ideas of the author(s). Do not include any critique in this segment; that will be the next section. Do not provide chapter by chapter summary. Instead, write a narrative that is holistic. Keep quotes to the minimum and short.

The second segment should be your critique of the core ideas, arguments, or themes of the book (5-6 double spaced pages, 7 grade points). There are two parts to your critique. The first is called conceptual critique. Consider showing the logical consistencies and inconsistencies regarding the core arguments. What are your agreements and disagreements with the author(s)? The second part is called personal reactions. Consider bringing examples from your personal or professional life to support or question the core arguments of the book. Be mindful not to bring any parts of the summary (which you have already written for the first segment) into the critique segment.

Please read the checklist at the end of this syllabus before you start working on the assignment. Use of ChatGPT or similar AI tools to write this assignment will lead to an automatic F grade. You are welcome to read other books and cite them for the critique, if necessary. Your writing style should be academic and scholarly rather than casual or colloquial. Use APA style only.

Due: Thursday, September 18, 8:00 p.m. by email to thatchen@gmu.edu and your facilitator

2. Personal Reflection and Application Essay (PRAE)

Based on your experience of the group dynamics as well as readings and concepts discussed in class, you will submit an analysis known as *PRAE*. A Personal Reflection and Application Essay (PRAE) is an assignment that integrates theory and practice. Following Kolb's (1984) *experiential learning cycle*, a PRAE will have four components: *concrete experience* (CE), *reflective observation* (RO), *abstract conceptualization* (AC), and *active experimentation* (AE). The CE is a detailed description of your experiences during the class and small group interaction. In RO, you will reflect on the experience from different perspectives. AC is the place to conceptualize the experience based on the research findings or theories listed in the three textbooks. AE is your opportunity to suggest what you might do differently in a similar situation in the future. In short, you will not only describe and reflect on your experiences, but also explain and make sense of them to experiment with new learning and action plans.

The PRAE should be about 25 double-spaced pages (30 pages maximum). Detailed guidelines and samples for writing the PRAE will be given in class. Please read the PRAE checklist at the end of this syllabus **before** you start working on the assignment. The checklist should be self-scored and attached to your assignment. The citations in your PRAE should not have been used in any of your previous PRAE or any other assignment in GMU or ODKM courses.

Due: Monday, October 20, 8:00 p.m. by email to thatchen@gmu.edu and your facilitator

3. Attendance and Participation

Experiential learning requires that class participants form into a learning community and be actively involved throughout the course. You should be willing to engage with one another because of a conviction that learning is ultimately a social process. You should be open to examine your assumptions and how you are impacting the learning of others. You should feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for managing your own learning while facilitating others'. For this reason, full attendance in all classes is required. According to ODKM policy you cannot miss more than one class and still receive a passing credit for the course.

Because of the condensed nature of the class schedule and the experiential learning format of the course, missing sessions will negatively impact your ability to benefit from this course and receive a passing grade. In addition, you will be severely limited in your ability to write the PRAE assignment (60% of your grade) since it is based on your "here and now" experiences in class. You will lose grade points for coming late (including after breaks) or leaving early from class. You are expected to be in class five minutes before start time. Please remember that your small group sessions cannot start unless everyone is present.

You should take notes throughout this class. Audio or video recording of small group sessions is not permitted.

Evaluation:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Book review & critique | 15% |
| 2. Analysis of group experiences (PRAE) | 60% |
| 3. Attendance and participation | 25% |

The following scale will be used to determine your grade out of a total of 100 points.

98-100 = A+

93 - 97.99 = A

90 - 92.99 = A-

86 - 89.99 = B+

83 - 85.99 = B

80- 82.99 = B-

70 - 79.99 = C

Below 69.99 = F

Late submissions, in rare events, should be negotiated before due dates. If you are a student with a disability needing academic accommodations, please let the professor know and contact the Disability Services (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>) at 703 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the Disability Services before the beginning of the class. Late submissions will be penalized.

GMU & Schar School policy on plagiarism

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of education. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics. Plagiarism is the use of others' words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of others' work or derived from **artificial intelligence-enabled tools** such as ChatGPT. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources are essential while writing your assignments. The faculty of the Schar School has adopted a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F" and may lead to failure for the course.

To help enforce the Schar School's policy on plagiarism, your written work may be compared with electronic databases and submitted to commercial services to which the Schar School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work to such services without prior permission from the student. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code. It is not intended to replace or substitute the GMU policy.

You must cite each time you reuse any of your own work indicating all previous uses you have made of the same work. Using the same citations (readings) from other assignments written for any other professor should be acknowledged (Please see additional restrictions in the PRAE checklist).

Required Texts

Forsyth, D. (2019). *Group Dynamics*. Boston, MA: Cengage [Earlier editions are also acceptable].

Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2012) *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Thatchenkery, T., & Metzker, C. (2006). *Appreciative Intelligence: Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Course Outline

Recommended preparation before the beginning of class:

1. Watch the film *Twelve Angry Men* (original Black & White, 1957). Henry Fonda, Lee J. Cobb, et al. Director: Sidney Lumet.
2. You may also choose a book for the book review & critique assignment due on September 18 and start reading.
3. Thatchenkery & Metzker, Chapters 1- 11
4. Forsyth, Chapters 1 – 2.
5. Complete the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) that will be sent to you and submit the results to thatchen@gmu.edu. (LSI is copyrighted and therefore you cannot use the scanned copy for anything other than learning about your own learning styles). On the first day of class, we will use the survey results to help us form small groups that have a diverse mix of styles.
 - Please make sure you score your answers correctly (i.e., a "4" is how you learn BEST and a "1" is how you learn least). In the past, a few students had scored them in reverse, leading to confusing results.
 - Make sure that only one of each number is being used for each question (i.e., you cannot say "4" twice for the same question).
 - Make sure that the numbers at the bottom add up to 120.
 - Do not discard your original LSI sheets as you may need it during class.

Session 1: Friday, September 5

5:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Van Metre (VM) 318

Preparation

Thatchenkery & Metzker, Chapters 1- 11.

Forsyth, Chapters 1 – 2.

Agenda

Overview of the course.
Managing expectations.
The nature of group dynamics.
Gaining expertise through experiential learning: Learning from the “here and now.”
Small groups laboratory as a microcosm of the real world.
Form small groups.
Personal Board of Directors exercise.

Homework

Review your *Learning Style* inventory and bring to class on Saturday.

Session 2: Saturday, September 6

9:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m.

Van Metre 318

Preparation

Forsyth, Chapters 3-7, & 12.

Agenda

Reflections on various group processes such as power, motivation, leadership, and communication.
Developing skills to simultaneously participate as well as observe group processes.
Analyses of different roles members are engaged in.
Learning Style discussion (Please bring your LSI profile to class).
Understanding the relation between learning styles and writing PRAEs.
Conceptualizing the group dynamics class as an experiential learning cycle.
Comparing influence process.
Individual and group decision- making (simulation).

Homework

Complete *Style Matters Online* for use in class on September 19. You can get the instrument for \$16.00 with your student discount. Go to [this page](#) to order. Place the \$59 product in your shopping cart and proceed to checkout. Enter your coupon code **student16** which will bring the price to \$16 and you can then pay with credit card or PayPal. If you experience difficulties contact them at center@RiverhouseEpress.com or (717) 456 0441.

Reminders:

Please email your book review & critique by September 18, 8:00 p.m. to thatchen@gmu.edu and your facilitator. Your first Learning Community (ODKM 740) class will be on Saturday, September 13.

Session 3: Friday, September 19

5:00 - 10:00 p.m.

Van Metre 318

Preparation

Bring your *Style Matters* Inventory scores to class.

Forsyth, chapter 13.

Patterson et al, chapters 1-5.

Agenda

Understanding intrapersonal, interpersonal, and inter-group conflict.

Conflict resolution and negotiation strategies.

Conflict management exercise (Please bring your completed *Style Matters* inventory to class).

Introduce “Enhancing Your Social Capital” exercise (Presentation & Handout).

Session 4: Saturday, September 20

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Van Metre 318

Preparation

Forsyth, chapters 9-11.

Patterson et al, chapters 6-11.

Agenda

Enhancing Your Social Capital exercise (must have finished pre-work handed out on September 19).

Understanding the development and transmission of group norms.

Role differentiation and role stress.

Team development and team learning.

Valuing diversity.

Learning the art of giving and receiving feedback.

Session 5: Friday, October 3

5:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Van Metre 318

Preparation

Forsyth, chapter 8

Agenda

Understanding power dynamics in groups and organizations.

Refining your capacity for simultaneous participation and observation of group processes.

Enhancing your Appreciative Intelligence: Ability to reframe and see the positive.

Learning to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty.

Double-loop learning/reflection (thinking about your thinking).

Using “what” questions.
Enhancing mindfulness.
Issues of inclusion, intimacy, and influence in groups.
PRAE clinic.
Hand out Appreciative Feedback Exercise template.

Session 6: Saturday, October 4

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Van Metre 318

Preparation:

Bring the completed Appreciative Feedback (using the format shared in class on October 3) for everyone in your small group.

Agenda

Consolidate learning from group dynamics and team learning class.

Action plans.

Appreciative Feedback Exercise.

Course evaluation.

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Book Review & Critique List

Barrett, F. (2012). *Yes to the Mess: Surprising Leadership Lessons from Jazz*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Block, P. (2001). *The Answer to How Is Yes: Acting On What Matters*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Block, P. (2009). *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Bolman, L., & Deal, T. (2014) *How Great Leaders Think: The Art of Reframing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bopaiah, M. (2021). *Equity: How to Design Organizations Where Everyone Thrives*. Berrett-Koehler: San Francisco.

Bossidy, L., and Charan, R. (2002). *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*. New York: Crown.

Cain, S. (2012). *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*. New York: Random House.

Csikszentmihaly, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: HarperCollins.

Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York. Random House

Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. New York: Scribner.

George, B., & Baker, D. (2011). *True North Groups*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Gentil, H. (2023). *The Unlocked Leader: Dare to Free Your Own Voice, Lead with Empathy, and Shine Your Light in the World*. New York. Wiley.

Gladwell, M. (2005). *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York: Little, Brown.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books.

Grant, A. (2016). *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World*. New York: Viking.

Hare, B., & Woods, V. (2020). *Survival of the Friendliest: Understanding Our Origins and Rediscovering Our Common Humanity*. New York: Random House.

Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2010). *Switch: How to change things when change is hard*. New York: Broadway Books.

- Jana, T., & Baran, M. (2020). *Subtle Acts of Exclusion: How to Understand, Identify, and Stop Microaggressions*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. (2002). *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work: Seven Languages for Transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kleiner, Art. (1996). *The Age of Heretics*. New York: Currency-Doubleday.
- Kolb, D., & Peterson, K. (2017). *How You Learn Is How You Live: Using Nine Ways of Learning to Transform Your Life*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Peck, S. (1979). *The Road Less Traveled*. New York: Touchstone Books.
- Robinson, D. (2022). *The Expectation Effect: How Your Mindset Can Change Your World*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.
- Schein, E. (2013). *Humble Inquiry: The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler
- Schein, E. (2009). *Helping: How to Offer, Give, and Receive Help*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. New York: Free Press
- Torbert, W. (2021). *Numbskull in the Theatre of Inquiry: Transforming Self, Friends, Organizations, and Social Science*. Cardiff, CA: Waterside Productions.
- Wheatley, M. (2005). *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Worline, M., & Dutton, J. (2017). *Awakening Compassion at Work: The Quiet Power that Elevates People and Organizations*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Academic Standards

Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, coauthored pieces, and project reports.
- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. [The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's procedures here.](#) Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

Student responsibility:

Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration

of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit the [Disability Services website](#) for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Student responsibility:

Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor in advance of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

FERPA and Use of GMU Email Addresses for Course Communication

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the disclosure of education records for eligible students and is an essential aspect of any course. **Students must use their GMU email account** to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

Student responsibility:

Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

Title IX Resources and Required Reporting

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the "Complainant") will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see University Policy 1202: [Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence](#). Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

Student opportunity:

If you prefer to speak to someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential employees in [Student Support & Advocacy \(SSAC\)](#), Counseling and [Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#), [Student Health Services \(SHS\)](#), and/or the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).