

BUS 9816: Organizational Behavior Special Fields II

Group Behavior and Cross-Level Research

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is about group behavior and cross-level research. We will cover a variety of group processes and constructs, including performance, decision making, cognition, and learning. Throughout the course we will take a cross-level perspective, exploring how individuals within groups, through their interactions and behaviors, give shape to group-level constructs as well as how context affects group and individual behaviors and cognitions. This is primarily a micro course in that our main focus will be on groups and individuals (rather than organizations or populations of organizations) and how these two levels of analysis are linked.

MOTIVATION

Much work in organizations is done in groups. Groups make decisions, solve problems, generate ideas, and perform a variety of tasks. Groups also set goals and enforce behavioral norms. Individuals working in groups are interdependent and need to coordinate their behaviors and resolve conflict. Group researchers have studied these behaviors and phenomena and the first half of this course will be devoted to this literature. The objective is not to survey the entire field but to develop an appreciation for the work that has been done in some key domains.

Researchers in organizational behavior typically focus on one level of analysis: the individual, the group or the organization. Most research on groups treats the group as the unit of analysis, measuring constructs at the group level (group performance, cohesion) or aggregating individual responses or characteristics to form group-level indicators (e.g., group diversity, participation). Although researchers recognize the importance of organizational context for group processes and outcomes, context is typically taken into account in the form of a control variable (e.g., a dummy for organization or work group) or measured as an individual-level perception (e.g., perceived norms or perceived leadership style). Only recently have we begun to theorize and investigate empirically how contextual factors affect group and individual level processes and outcomes or how individual behaviors shape collective constructs. In this course we will explore this relatively new theoretical approach. I should note that although we may discuss some of the analytical tools available for cross-level research (e.g., HLM and MLwiN), these will

be a peripheral concern in this course. The emphasis will be on theory rather than on data analysis techniques.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Your grade for this course will be based on three components: the quality of your seminar contribution, reviews of two of your peer's research proposals, and a research proposal.

Seminar Contribution and Preparation	35%
Peer Reviews of Research Proposals	20%
Research Proposal	45%

1. Seminar Contribution and Preparation (35%)

The course is organized as a seminar. A key vehicle for learning is discussion of the assigned readings. I expect you to come to each session prepared and ready to contribute to the learning of your peers.

For each session you are to prepare a summary of key insights from each of the assigned articles, including questions that arose from reading each paper. This is not meant to be an abstract of the readings but your critical assessment of the theoretical and/or empirical contributions of each article. Specifically you should:

1. Summarize the key insights that you developed from each article, commenting on the significance of the findings or theories presented in the paper - what do they really mean? Given your knowledge of the literature so far, what is the contribution?
2. Make critical observations about the article. Be specific and realistic. Rather than saying "I don't like this topic" or "the study is not convincing" consider the avenues that could have been explored or how you would have designed a better study.
4. Think about questions that arise from reading each of the articles. Reading articles should always generate questions about, for instance, the soundness of the theory and methods used, or avenues that the research should explore.
5. Delineate some connections across the articles. These should not be superficial (e.g., "all papers are about group decision making") but should explore some key, meaningful issues, such as gaps in the literature, differences in types of groups or tasks, complementarities of approaches, etc.

These summaries should be no longer than 3 pages, 12-point font, double-spaced. You should e-mail these summaries to me and to the session facilitator (TBD) by 5:00 pm on the day before the seminar.

2. Reviews (20%)

You will write reviews of two of your peer's research proposal drafts. These reviews (3-4 pages long, double-spaced) should critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the theory and methods proposed and provide recommendations for improving the proposal.

3. Research Proposal (45%)

A research proposal is due at the end of the semester. This proposal should:

- carefully define a group-level or cross-level research question that is anchored at the group level,
- explain the importance of the research question,
- review the relevant literature in the area,
- develop hypotheses or propositions,
- propose a method for empirically testing these hypotheses or propositions,
- be written in APA format (I recommend that you consult the latest edition of the "Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association")

A solid research proposal will require about 20 pages (12 point font, double spaced), excluding references, tables and figures.

I am very open regarding the exact topic you choose. It should be a topic that interests you, with an obvious link to groups and OB. A first draft of your paper is due on March 18 at 9:00 am. You will provide feedback to two of your peers (and receive feedback from two) on this draft.

Late papers will not be accepted.

Academic Integrity

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Graduate Course Health and Wellness

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html

To help you learn more about mental health, Western has developed an interactive mental health learning module, found here: http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/module.html. This module is 30 minutes in length and provides participants with a basic understanding of mental health issues and of available campus and community resources. Topics include stress, anxiety, depression, suicide and eating disorders. After successful completion of the module, participants receive a certificate confirming their participation.

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COURSE OUTLINE

	Date	Topic	Facilitator	Due
1	Jan 7	Introduction		
2	Jan 14	Foundations of Groups Research		
3	Jan 21	Group Performance		
4	Jan 28	Group Decision Making		
5	Feb 11	Group Learning		
6	Feb 25	Cross-Level Research: Foundations		Paper Ideas
7	Mar 4	Cross-Level Research: Emergence		
8	Mar 11	Cross-Level Research: Context Effects		
9	Mar 18	Group Processes		
10	Mar 25	Groups and Social Networks		Paper Draft
11 & 12	Apr 1	Project Presentations		
	April 8			Final Paper