DPLS 773 Leadership & Group Process

Fall 2011 3 Credits

Professor: Chris Francovich, Ed.D.
Office Phone: 509-313-3592
E-mail: francovich@gonzaga.edu
Office hours: Please call for an appointment
Class Logistics: 9/9, 9/23, 9/30, (no class 10/14 see Blackboard), 10/28, 11/4, 11/18, & 12/2
Room: TBA

Course Overview
In general this experience will be an exercise in group dynamics, reading about and discussing self/group phenomena, and reflection.

This course is concerned with experiencing, thinking about, and observing individuals and groups. The basic assumptions and frameworks of the seminar are built on a set of ideas that emphasize a process view of the world that is fundamentally relational. Both of these perspectives are consistent with current thinking and theories in leadership studies that chart the evolution of trait based to transformative approaches and end up considering leadership as both relational and processual (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

A main purpose of this seminar will be to develop an enhanced ability to identify, understand, participate in, and transform paradoxical and/or contradictory group processes. To do this we will begin by exploring how the relational and processual perspective is contrasted with modernist views of the 'separate self' and the primordial 'object' that have developed out of Kantian philosophy and logical positivist science.

The knowledge of groups developed throughout the semester will problematize traditional belief structures of 'collectives' as either being formed by people (methodological individualism) or that people (or selves) are formed by collectives (methodological collectivism). Consequently this is also an inquiry into the paradox of the individual and the group.

A core objective of the course is that we as a group ourselves both experience and analyze the processes and events that occur during our meetings. To achieve this we will engage in extra-curricular projects/tasks to further concretize these ideas and the research methodologies they entail. Information about these projects will be posted to Blackboard prior to the beginning of the Fall semester.

It is my personal view that this perspective is generative of adaptive habits of mind, research methodologies, educational and social policy, and leadership theory that is fundamentally necessary for ecological balance and social justice. The purpose of this course is to develop both the theoretical background of the problem as well as a contemporary response to it. A primary requirement for taking this course is the willingness to entertain ideas that may destabilize one's traditional worldview.
Course Hopes and Aims

- To read, discuss, and reflect on literature in the areas of group process, social psychology, process metaphysics, cybernetics, and postmodern/post structural theory of identity and the self.
- To develop the ability to stay present to the ambiguity, tension, and/or discomfort of paradox in groups.
- To explore the basic idea that relationship or 'reciprocal influence processes' underlie leadership activity and descriptions of leadership activity.
- To stimulate and stretch one's thinking about the self and group process in leadership studies.
- To understand and apply appropriate research methodologies to perspectives emerging from a process and relational view of phenomena through observations of selected group interactions.

Assignments, & Grading

Please check Blackboard regularly for posted readings and copies of my reading notes. This course relies heavily on Blackboard technology and your ability to access, navigate, and manage the interface and all course assignments.

- Posts to Blackboard & Respond to Colleagues (10%) (see Blackboard > Assignments)
- Pre-Course Reading & Assignment - (see Blackboard > Assignments) (10%)
- Participation and Readings - Please check this folder regularly and read articles/papers when you can. (10%)
- Mid-Term Project Paper (35%) (see Blackboard > Assignments)
- Final Paper (35%) (see Blackboard > Assignments)

Required Texts


Other Required Readings (also available on Blackboard):

Expectations and Assessment

Assessment of doctoral work in leadership studies is problematic for me. Interdisciplinary work dealing with complex and sometimes contested theories and concepts requires (from my perspective) a tolerance for uncertainty, ambiguity, and contingency. I am also struck by the need for a high degree of self-directed behavior on the part of doctoral students and candidates. I would like my teaching style, assessment policy, and rubrics to support and facilitate self-direction.
However, behind my questions about assessment and uncertainty in evaluating anyone in an absolute manner there does reside (in my view) a set of skills that serve to hold and shape work with language in a complex world. As mentioned above self-direction is a key component of doing good work at the doctoral level. It also suggests normative and ethical components that the DPLS is keen to continually point out and facilitate. At a minimum those values reflect respect for one's self and others, a cultivated desire to serve and hold others in a good and kind light, and a self-examination of one's own beliefs and assumptions as they affect interaction and relationship at all levels.

I also believe we need a grammar, syntax, and semantics of clarity, coherence, depth, and breadth. My assumption at the beginning of the term is that all of the students in this class possess the requisite skills, talents, and propensities needed to be clear, cogent, and complete. I admit that the standards I refer to are objectively stated and subjectively enacted. My assessment will be based on the quality and content of expressed thought as exhibited in both written assignments and classroom presentations and participation.

Grading Criteria for Written Work (adapted from the DPLS Academic papers rubric)

Content Criteria:
The content of papers should reflect the level and style of content in readings and discussions. There is an expectation that doctoral students will reach outside of their comfort zone in terms of appropriation of ideas, concepts, and frameworks. The substance of papers and other writings will be weighed against the general level of discourse in class meetings and the style and density of expression of the readings.

Thought and Expression Criteria
Student writing should raise vital questions or issues, formulating them clearly and precisely. I will be looking for evidence of breadth and depth and the insightful, in-depth analysis of complex ideas. Main points should be developed and supported with relevant information and references that are appropriately incorporated.

The organization and logic of your writing is critical. The expectation is for well focused, well organized, and well reasoned conclusions. The writing should flow with the reader not getting lost or having to work to determine what you are saying.

There is also an expectation that your writing/thinking has an open and inclusive character when exploring alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as appropriate, their assumptions, implications, and/or practical consequences.

Technical Criteria
Your writing should be clear and demonstrate a high level of vocabulary through careful word choice. Sentences should be constructed skillfully and purposefully. Transitions between paragraphs and sections are important and will evaluated for their efficacy in weaving your concepts, themes, and purposes together. Summaries and conclusions are also vital elements of good writing and will be evaluated based on their appropriateness and effectiveness.
Of course grammar, punctuation, and spelling are expected to be flawless. Careful proof reading of your paper is a basic expectation.

Papers, unless otherwise noted are to be completed in APA style. References should be cited properly within the text and a complete reference list must be provided. Appropriate use of headings will also be noted.

Point/Grade correspondence:
95-100% = A
90-94.99% = A-
85-90% = B
80-84.99% = B-

References