

Dynamics of Work & Work Organization

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Fall 2012

Time: Tuesday

Room: Food Science 101

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:30 p.m.
& by appointment

Dr. Joan S.M. Meyers
jmeyers@work.rutgers.edu
Labor Education Center 136
732-932-1890
TA: Ommead Nejad
ommead@work.rutgers.edu

Course description

Workplaces have changed in fundamental ways over the last few decades. One of the most significant changes is the enormous growth in teamwork, employee involvement, communication, and other forms of “empowerment.” This course will examine the dynamics of these developments: how they are experienced in daily work. We will study factors that affect team formation and functioning, and strategies to create effective teamwork. To do so, we will read academic and industry writing on these topics, and explore issues through case studies.

Because our objective is to understand group functioning, there will be significant in-class and online group work in addition to lecture and discussion. Each week you will engage in an online group discussion or task, and you will complete a group paper and a group research presentation.

Grading will be based on the two group projects, online individual and group assignments, a midterm and final, in-class group workshops, and lecture attendance.

Learning goals

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate ability to structure team projects and work productively in groups
- Demonstrate competence in diagnosing group performance problems using appropriate theories and models
- Demonstrate understanding of how social status affects team functioning
- Demonstrate understanding of effective groups in simulations and discussions
- Demonstrate understanding of fundamental social science theories, and concepts relating to the dynamics of work teams, including the necessary conditions for effective cooperation and motivation
- Demonstrate proficiency in written and oral communication

Major assumptions of the course

- We are social beings who both shape and are shaped by the social worlds in which we live. We do not have *complete* autonomy and self-determination, but neither are we merely the products of institutions and structures.
- There is nothing natural or inevitable about the institution of work or the arrangements of power in workplace organizations. They were made by people and they can be changed by people. Therefore, it is worth our while to consider how such work and workplaces are constructed and maintained in order to imagine how they might be different.

Description of requirements

Group projects (30% of grade) Each student will be randomly assigned a group that will complete a case analysis in the first half of the semester, and then again randomly assigned to a new group that will create a research presentation in the second half. Grades will be based on both product (75% assigned by teaching team) and individual effort (25% confidentially assigned by team members).

Workshop participation and lecture attendance (25% of grade) Everyone is expected to participate in class, which obviously requires being present in class. I believe that students can learn best by actively engaging with material from course rather than simply memorizing names and concepts. This includes asking as many questions as are needed to understand the material, and working through the implications of new ideas. Participation includes asking questions or making comments in class, facilitating small group work, and participating in group activities. If you're wondering about something, it's likely there are other students who don't fully understand either. There are no stupid questions! Discussion is a way to experiment with ideas. Participation can also sometimes mean *not* talking to allow quieter classmates to speak. It means engaging with ideas that are different from your own in a respectful manner, even if you have serious disagreements. Criticism is encouraged, but personal attack will not be tolerated.

Exams (20% of grade) Each unit will be followed by an individual, non-cumulative, in-class exam (midterm and final). You will choose to answer three of five questions which require explanation and application of a concept or practice.

Individual online assignments (15% of grade) Each week you will answer a few short questions or complete a quick assignment in response to the readings. You will also write a weekly journal describing your group. Both assignments will be private, and only read by the teaching team.

Group online assignments (10% of grade) Each week, quickly following the class meeting, you will take part in a group discussion about the readings and lecture or workshop concepts.

Both the individual and group online assignments are "low stakes": you must think and write creatively, but there are no right or wrong answers. Therefore, these assignments will be graded as pass (completed fully), conditional pass (completed partially), or fail (not completed by the deadline).

Please note that there will be few—if any—options for extra credit. Given the interdependence of groups and the need for ongoing discussion of course material, you cannot pass this class if you slack off during the semester and try to make up for it at the end.

Final grade breakdown

Group projects	30 percent
Exams	25 percent
In-class participation	25 percent
Individual online assignments	15 percent
Group online assignments	10 percent

Make sure to complete *all* assignments; missing assignments count as a 0, not an F.

Office hours

All students are strongly encouraged to meet with me to discuss questions or concerns, or simply to continue interesting discussions from class. If you have a conflict with office hours, we may be able to find another meeting time. Email can be useful for quick checks to answers you can't get from classmates online, but any discussion of substance must happen in person to be useful.

Course format and policies

Students are expected to complete all required readings before class, and come to class prepared to discuss what they do and do not understand.

Diverse ideas and beliefs will come up during the course, and you may find yourself disagreeing with fellow students or me. That's normal and expected, and the discussion of our difference analyses makes for a lively classroom and more sharply honed opinions for everyone. However while passionate intellectual debate is welcome, personal attacks or insults are not. Please refrain from making faces while someone speaks, using an angry or sarcastic tone in addressing their ideas, or snickering.

Don't plagiarize. Be sure you know the difference between *citing* a text, *quoting* a text, and *stealing* from a text (whether published, on the internet, or from another student). For more information, see the official policy at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml> or use the online tutorial at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/cir_tutorial.shtml. You can also get help at the Rutgers Learning Centers.

Borrowed material should be documented.

Any time you incorporate into your writing ideas, words, key phrases, or pictures that were *not originally created by you*, you must give credit to the original author by citing the source.

You must cite direct quotes.

You must cite paraphrases. Paraphrasing is rewriting a passage in your own words. **If you paraphrase a passage, you must still cite the original source of the idea.**

You must cite ideas given to you in a conversation, in correspondence, or over email.

You must cite sayings or quotations that are not familiar, or facts that are not "common knowledge." However, it is not necessary to cite a source if you are repeating a *well known quote* such as Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you . . .," or a *familiar proverb* such as "You can't judge a book by its cover." *Common knowledge* is something that is widely known. For example, it is common knowledge that Bill Clinton served two terms as president. It would not be necessary to cite a source for this fact.

This course requires regular attendance: there will be considerable group work and open discussion during class. You be expected to attend all classes with your groups. If you expect to miss one or two classes, be sure to use the University absence reporting **website** <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

The only excuses for missing a deadline or exam are *legitimate* illness or family emergency. There are no exceptions to this policy in the interest of fairness to the whole class. Be sure to contact me *well in advance* of a due date or exam if you foresee difficulties meeting a deadline. Absences with good cause will be excused, but must be negotiated with me in a timely manner. More than three unexcused absences from any class will result in an automatic F.

As noted above, office hours are the proper place for questions that require real discussion. This means that questions about assignments should be conducted during office hours. If you want advice on a group paper or presentation, bring a paper copy for me to read and review. *Do not send papers as attachments by email.* While I will not “pregrade” assignments, I will help you work through specific issues and respond to specific questions.

Email can be used for answers to smaller questions that cannot be answered by group member or other classmates in the online forums. I endeavor to answer all email within 24 hours (not including weekends and holidays).

Individual assignments must be completed online before the start of class on the day they are due. Group discussions must be completed by Friday night following class. The teaching team will review and comment on group discussions twice during the week.

Group papers must be turned in online before the start of class on the day they are due. Late group projects will be docked by half a grade for each day it is late *beginning from the start of class the day it is due.* That is, a B paper would become a C+ paper after the start of class, and a C paper the next day. Do not miss class to finish a paper! Nothing will be accepted a week past the due date.

If you believe you have received a lower grade than you should, you may contest it within two weeks by following these steps. 1) Allow a *24-hour “cooling off” period* so that you will be calm and collected when you ask for reconsideration of your work. 2) *Write out* the reason you think the grade should be changed. Describe *how* your work fulfills the assignment. We make mistakes but, “I just think I deserve better” doesn’t tell me what I might have missed.

Up to half of any missed credit on the exams can be partially made up *within one week* by a) reviewing the correct answers online, b) writing a critique pinpointing *how* your answer substantively failed to fully address the question, and c) writing a new answer entirely in your own words. The key is the critique of the original answer. *No extra credit* will be given without this critique.

I will do what is in my power to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities, but you must let me know what is needed (preferably after class or during office hours). Contact the Office of Disability Services for Students at 151 College Ave, Suite 123, Mon-Thurs, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. and Fri 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for examples of services and accommodations available on campus. (732) 932-2848 or <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>

Laptops and cellphones can be a great resource for bringing course readings and other pertinent information into the classroom, but can also be a huge temptation to text, email, use social media, or otherwise focus on non-course matters. Know yourself and turn off the electronic devices if they are too tempting. Use of electronic devices for non-course matters is distracting to other students as well as you, and is therefore not permitted. Such use of electronic devices will have a *strong negative effect on your participation grade.*

Course texts

All course materials will be available for download from the online class site. There will typically be 20-30 pages of reading each week.