Group Processes
PSY 840-001

Course Syllabus

Overview

This is a course in the behavioral science of groups. It is designed to guide graduate students through a discussion of the cross-disciplinary study of the nature and causes of human social behavior and cognition in groups. The conceptual focus will be on the literature in behavioral economics, evolutionary biology and social psychology most relevant to group processes. We will discuss the evolution, function, strategic logic, and psychological mechanisms employed in how individuals manage social relationships in order to achieve their objectives in the context of the objectives of others. Perhaps more than most courses, this seminar is concerned with the "big questions" regarding human social life in the context of group living. As such, we will analyze topics such as family and friendship, sex and gender, cooperation and conflict, and organizational and workplace dynamics within intra- and inter-group contexts.

Course Themes and Goals

The study of Group Processes refers to the examination of the behavior and psychology of people within a social group (intra-group dynamics) and between groups (inter-group dynamics). This seminar is designed to provide graduate students with exposure to both classical and contemporary perspectives on group processes. This course seeks to provide the conceptual tools to explore fundamental behavioral science themes relevant to human social life in ways that can be integrated with theory and research in evolutionary biology, economics, anthropology and social psychology.

An important thread that unifies these disparate enterprises is the notion of strategic logic of behavior. This way of viewing the world is informed by the commonalities in analytical reasoning tools developed in theoretical biologists, mathematicians, and economists as exemplified in what has come to be known as game theory. This way of addressing intellectual problems commonly is becoming ever more prevalent in the social sciences in recent years, and has the potential to become a key unifying principle bridging the natural and social sciences. This powerful analytical tool cuts to the core of

TOPICS BY WEEK

Foundations of Human Pro-Sociality in Groups

Week 1
Introduction to Game Theory

Week 2
No Meeting

Week 3
Why do we live in groups? Herds, aggregations and “real” groups

Week 4
Kin and Reciprocal Altruism

Week 5
Bounded Rationality and the Sexual Division of Labor
the fundamental nature of the human condition, and has the potential to synthesize various ways of thinking about the world into a coherent network of concepts, with the potential to be as intellectually satisfying as any explanation of the natural phenomena coming from physics or chemistry.

Students will be challenged to reflect on the way they conduct their own research in their specific areas in terms of broader “why” questions, and how the perspectives discussed during seminars can be integrated (or not) with their own working assumptions about why we are the way we are. Although practical applications are an important component of the seminar, the ultimate goal of this course, it might be argued, is to be as helpful as possible to providing students the exposure to the ideas for building a meta-theoretical framework for framing their own research goals and aspirations.

Evaluation

Grading evaluation is based on a midterm exam (15%), class participation (50%), game theory exercises (%15), and a final paper (20%).

Exam & Term Paper

The midterm is a "take-home" exam composed of 8 short essay items. Test items are posted on Angel in the 7th week, and responses are due via Angel within 3 days.

The final term paper will be on a specific area relevant to your own research interests. The paper will be written as a research proposal designed to test hypotheses informed by perspectives discussed in this seminar. The paper should be written in the format of your discipline, and range from 5-8 double-spaced pages (excluding references). More details to follow.

Class Participation

Meetings are structured such that students lead discussion of the readings. And is the focal point of this class. Each week, one to three students will serve as a “defense team,” presenting the arguments and evidence for them while highlighting the strengths the perspectives provided in the readings. One-to-three students serve as a “prosecution team,” and raise concerns regarding weaknesses and problems with the readings. Through this dialectic method, students critically evaluate the logic, clarity, and evidence for theories and hypotheses covered in the week’s readings. This allows for learning reinforcement of the principles necessary for the highest levels of engagement of theory and research in the science of group processes.

In addition, students not serving on the prosecution or defense teams for that week’s readings are required to submit one or two paragraphs of their thoughts or initial impressions on this readings at least 12-hours before each class meeting. The purpose of this exercise is to further encourage class

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**Behavioral Economics in Group and Intergroup Contexts**

**Week 6**
Gender, Kin, and Prosociality

**Week 7**
Levels of Selection and Pro-Sociality: Strong Reciprocity or Individual Self-Interest?

**Week 8**
Deception in Groups

**Week 9**
Reciprocity Norms and Groups

**Week 10**
Swarm Intelligence and the Wisdom of Crowds

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**Social Psychology and Behavior in Groups**

**Week 11**
Midterm – No Class (OPTIONAL READINGS: Mobbing and Stereotype Threat

**Week 12**
Social Facilitation and Groupthink

**Week 13**
Social Persuasion and Influence in Teams
discussion and critical thinking about the readings. Students may be asked to elaborate on his or her thoughts/impressions with the class.

**Game Theory Exercises**

There are bi-weekly homework assignments to help us through basic concepts in elementary game theory. These assignments are designed not for diagnostic purposes, but for development. No formal mathematical training above the level of elementary algebra is required. More info TBA.

**READING SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)**

**WEEK 1**

**Introduction to Game Theory**

Tutorial available on Angel.

**WEEK 2**

No Meeting

**WEEK 3**

**Why do we live in groups? Herds, aggregations and “real” groups**


WEEK 4

The Origins of Groups: Kin and Reciprocal Altruism


WEEK 5

Bounded Rationality and the Sexual Division of Labor


WEEK 6

Gender, Kin and Pro-Sociality


Hamlin et al (2010). How infants and toddlers react to antisocial others. *PNAS.*

**WEEK 7**

**Levels of Selection and Pro-Sociality: Strong Reciprocity or Individual Self-Interest?**


Fehr, E. & Schneider, F. (2010). Eyes are on us, but nobody cares: are eye cues relevant for strong reciprocity? *Proc. R. Soc. B*, 277, 1315–1323.

Responses to Henrich et al. (2010). *Science*.

**WEEK 8 – Deception in Groups**


**WEEK 9 – Reciprocity Norms/Expectations in Groups**


Yamagishi, T., et al. (2012). Rejection of unfair offers in the ultimatum game is no evidence of strong reciprocity, *PNAS*, 109(50).


**WEEK 10 – Swarm Intelligence and the Wisdom of Crowds**

Krause1, J, Ruxton, G., & Krause, S. Swarm Intelligence in Animals and Humans. *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*. 25(1)


**WEEK 11 – Mobbing and Stereotype Threat**

Midterm, No Meeting (Readings Optional)


WEEK 12 - Social Facilitation and Groupthink


Chan, A. et al., (2010). When groups are wrong and deviants are right. *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 40, 1103–1109

WEEK 13 - Social Persuasion and Influence in Teams


WEEK 14

Conflict Resolution in Groups and Between the Sexes


styles of managers: At work and at home. *Sex Roles*, 20, 149-163


WEEK 15

The (Im)Morality of Groups


