Sages, scholars, and laypersons have been puzzling over group dynamics—the actions, processes, and changes that occur within groups and between groups—for centuries. Why do humans so frequently join with others in groups? How do members coordinate their efforts and energies? What factors give rise to a sense of cohesion, esprit de corps, and a marked distrust for those outside the group? And how do groups and their leaders hold sway over members?

Their inquiries provide the scientific basis for the field of group dynamics, which is the scientific discipline devoted to studying groups and group process. This course focuses, in particular, on studies of social psychological processes in groups. We will restrict our analysis to group phenomena that have been investigated empirically; that is, through the collection of data using scientifically acceptable procedures.

Beyond the content this course will provide an opportunity to develop further our scholarly and cognitive skills. Thus, the learning objectives include:

- **Understanding groups**: Knowledge of terms, facts, concepts, perspectives, values, methods, and theories specific to groups
- **General cognitive capacities**: Facility in analyzing and synthesizing information; solving problems; thinking creatively and critically; self-expression (oral and written); information literacy
- **Applications**: Ability to work with others in groups; development of communication and group problem-solving skills; conflict regulation
- **Personal development**: Development of self-regulation and self-understanding (particularly in group contexts); growth in human relations

The primary sources of information about groups that we will use in this course are a textbook, specific readings, and online resources.

- **Readings.** Articles are available via Blackboard. They are drawn from various sources, including scientific journals, book chapters, and the popular press. We will study these writings so that you can "listen" to other experts' voices talk about groups; these sources supplement the distilled, processed ideas that the text book presents.
- **Online materials.** I have developed learning resources to support this course, including online review quizzes, streaming mini-lectures, and PowerPoints for each topic. They are available in Blackboard.
Course Design

The course will be taught online, using Zoom, Blackboard, email, and other Internet-based communication tools. It will, therefore, be different from your routine offline class, but the online format gives us all the resources we need to acquire a deep understanding of groups and their dynamics, without the need to gather in a classroom at a fixed time and place.

1. Individual Preparation. I have developed extra resources to support this course, including online review quizzes and flashcards, streaming mini-lectures, and detailed powerpoints for each topic. Reading/studying the text and making use of these extra resources should be sufficient for most students to learn the course material. Regular assignments will be made to keep us all moving along at a brisk pace.

2. Zoom sessions. We will meet in online Zoom sessions, but those sessions will not be devoted to rehashing topics or reviewing readings. Instead, we will carry out group activities, solve group problems, conduct group experiments/ experiences, watch videos, and so on.

3. Activities. We will carry out activities that deal with groups. Teachers of group dynamics have for some time recognized the benefits of learning about groups by experiencing group processes and then analyzing the experience. Therefore, we will break up into groups and afterwards examine our experiences. In many cases I will ask you to write a short paper about the experience to prompt you to reflect on the experience—to consider the group process and not just the content. Also, questionnaires that measure aspects of your personalities will be administered and discussed and you will be asked to study your own behavior and the behaviors you observe. In most cases I will describe the goals of the particular exercise in detail before you begin.

4. Group-level outcomes. You will work as part of a group on projects. The grade your group receives on these projects (including quizzes) will be the grade you will be awarded individually; in some cases your grade will be the average of the grades of your group members. You will have the opportunity to rate the performance of your teammates. If you dislike working with others in a group, then this class will not be a good fit for your inclinations.

5. Portfolio: You will be asked to submit, during finals week, an electronic portfolio of your work in this class. Details of this assignment will be available on blackboard, but to summarize: In addition to your written assignments, gathered in a single file, a summary of your semester’s experiences (ranging from 15 to 30 pages in length). That summary will discuss how your understanding of groups changed over the course of the semester, as well as other items that are fully described in Blackboard.

Sensitivities

This course examines human behavior, so you may acquire insight into their personality, actions, and tendencies as a result of participation. In general the goals of any particular exercise will be described beforehand except when full disclosure will undermine the educational value of the experience.

Because people differ in their attitudes and values, you have the right to not participate in any activity if you do not wish to. If you are asked to participate in an activity which makes you feel uncomfortable, you should understand that have the right to pass, without penalty (although a “replacement” activity may be required). Groups should not pressure their members to engage in any behaviors their members wish to avoid.

The course also examines topics that may highlight each person’s unique interpretation and outlook. We will strive to remain sensitive to the feelings and perspectives of others during these discussions and respect each other’s right to express their views. If at any time you are troubled by any aspect of the course, please contact me.

This class examines group processes and applies that analysis to (a) the groups we observe around us and (b) the groups we will form in class. We need to be able to discuss these groups and their processes openly—and in many cases, critique them—without causing any harm or insult to those who are in the groups. Therefore, it is best to always be open in our dealings with each other, and to be respectful to the groups we are studying. Ideally, the contents of our discussions should be held in confidence. Things that are said in the class, that are private and personal, should not be shared with others who are not members of the class.

Because we will take part in groups throughout the course, interpersonal complexities are expected—rare is the group that can avoid any conflict. Groups should spend time resolving issues that are problematic, but remember you can always rely on your course instructor should you need to discuss class-related matters. Seek me out if something in class or your group is problematic and requires review, analysis, and resolution.
Feedback about Progress

Assignments (50-60%): Many written assignments (8 to 12) will be given during the semester. Most will involve answering questions concerning a group interaction held in class, but others will require you work with others on a single project or activity. Most will be submitted via Blackboard. Written assignments that are based on classroom activities can’t be made-up in the case of absence (but one additional activity will be offered in case you miss a class involving an activity).

Quizzes (35%): Each week students will be asked to complete a short quiz on the course’s Blackboard site. The online quizzes will be open-book, and the lowest grade (excluding quiz 1) will be dropped. You will also complete some quizzes in your learning group, and the group’s score will determine your individual score. These group-level quizzes are not droppable.

Engagement (5-10%): Your commitment to learning, as indicated by involvement in class, contributes to your overall grade (<). A portion of this grade may be based on other group members’ ratings of your work and my assessment of your engagement, including both online and in class activity.

Indicators of engagement include:
- Asking questions about course topics (not just about logistics)
- Contributing to class with comments that indicate preparation
- Opening files on the course website regularly
- Proofing written work carefully
- Remaining attentive during class

Indicators of disengagement include:
- Expressing negativity about course methods or content
- Making comments that indicate you did not do the readings
- Not attending class and group sessions, or putting very little time into those group sessions
- Using technology inappropriately

I will estimate your engagement regularly, but I will also ask your fellow group members to evaluate your contributions to the group activities. Individuals who are viewed as weak contributors to their groups will lose points.

Portfolio (25%): You will be asked, at the semester’s end, to submit a portfolio of your work in this class. In addition to your written assignments, gathered in a single file, a summary of your semester’s experiences. The details of this assignment are available in Blackboard. This portfolio will serve as the final examination in this class, and will substantially influence your grade. It should not be left to the last minute, but rather should be built across the entire semester’s work.

Your grade in the course depends on your successful completion of assigned tasks and overall engagement. A grade of B will be awarded to those who complete assignments skillfully and are fully engaged. Higher or lower grades will be awarded for superlative or lower quality work. In general—but not entirely—grades will be criterion-referenced, individualized, and teacher-generated. First, most of the grading in this class is not normed, but in some cases members’ scores will be determined by relative rank. Second, scores will be based on individual and collective work. Third, some portion of your grade will be based on others’ evaluations of your work.

This semester may provide us with unexpected events that may cause a change in the design of the course and grading. The grading plan listed below is, therefore, a tentative one.

### Grades and Point Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>A+</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C-</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D-</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>247.5</td>
<td>227.5</td>
<td>222.5</td>
<td>202.5</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>197.5</td>
<td>177.5</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>152.5</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>&lt;150</td>
<td>&lt;150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Course Instructor, Don Forsyth

I am a member of the Jepson School of Leadership Studies faculty, the UR IRB, the UR General Education committee, SPUR, the Beckman Foundation Committee, the American Psychological Society, Virginia Historical Society, American Sociological Association, the American Psychological Association (Divisions 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 49), the Society of Personality and Social Psychology, the Association of Personality Psychologists, The Society of Experimental Social Psychologists, Phi Kappa Phi, Golden Key, the River Oaks Civic Association, The UF and FSU Alumni Associations, Facebook, Reddit, several classes, and the Forsyth (paternal) and Caffery (maternal) families. I am a resident of Midlothian and Montebello Virginia and a U.S. citizen.

I received a BS at Florida State University (’74 sociology and psychology and minor in education) and an MS (’75) and Ph.D. (’78) from the University of Florida. I have taught at Florida, Virginia Commonwealth University, Kansas, and the University of Richmond. I study leadership, individual differences in moral thought, applications of social psychology in educational and clinical settings, and group dynamics. I hold the Leo K. and Gaylee Thorsness Chair in Ethical Leadership.
Disabilities

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require I provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact their instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams (see http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/disability-services/policies.html for more information).

This is an online class. You will need to be able to use various technologies to be successful in this class. I urge you to identify and make use of a quiet, distraction-free space where you can complete the work for this course.

Policies

• If you must be absent from class for religious reasons, because you are involved in University-level athletics, or some other good reason, inform me by email of the conflict.

• Please heed the basic rules of etiquette pertaining to class, including use of technology.

• Awarding of Credit: To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities (see http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html).

• Religious Observance: Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance. http://registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html

• Honor System: The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: “I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.” http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/honor/ If you plagiarize, where plagiarism is direct copying of others’ work or your own previous work (any sequence of 4 words or more) or use others’ ideas without attribution, I will turn you in to the honor council or fail you for the assignment and/or course. Passing on materials from this class to others (e.g., depositing course materials in “test bank” or online at resources sites such as CourseHero) are considered an honors violation. ALL work in this class is assumed to be pledged work and individual work unless you are explicitly asked to work collectively.

Tentative Calendar

This calendar is very optimistic. I expect that it will be revised to reflect changes in emphasis and unexpected events that alter the plan for the course. Check the course Blackboard Page for completely up-to-date information. I recommend you use the Blackboard task tools and calendar tools so you receive automatic notifications.

Dates listed in the calendar are for the week, rather than the date of the class, since considerable work for this class is done prior to, and after, the Wednesday class. I recommend developing a pattern, where you complete the readings and quiz Monday and Tuesday, attend class Wednesday, and complete the assignments (if any) Thursday.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 24</td>
<td>Introduction to Group Dynamics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 31</td>
<td>Research Methods in the Study of Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 7</td>
<td>Inclusion and Identity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 14</td>
<td>Group Formation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 21</td>
<td>Group Cohesion and Development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 28</td>
<td>Group Structure</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 5</td>
<td>Social Influence in Groups</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 12</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 19</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 26</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2</td>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 9</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 16</td>
<td>Intergroup Conflict</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 25-29</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 30</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 16</td>
<td>Portfolios are Due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Important: We are living during the time of a global pandemic. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you are experiencing health or economic issues.
Fair warning: This class will not be a good fit for you personally if...

- you dislike working with others in groups.
- you have trouble with self-regulated learning activities (i.e., out-of-class studying, completing work by deadlines).
- you dislike learning online
- you prefer one or two big projects and not a series of smaller ones

But if you are genuinely interested in people and their groups, then this group is a good match for your inclinations.