

# Seminar in Collective Psychology

PSYC 180S

T/Th 1:15-2:30pm, Lincoln 2114

**Instructor:** Dr. Shannon Burns

**Office:** Lincoln 2104

**Office hours:** M/T 2:30-4pm

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## Course Description

Why do people form online mobs? How can betting markets predict the future? Sometimes, people behave very differently when you put them together in groups. This behavior can be surprising or puzzling based on our knowledge of individual psychology, but is important to study given people spend the large majority of their lives embedded in groups of other people. In this class, we will learn the reasons behind group behavior. We will investigate topics such as why people form into groups, how groups guide individual attitudes, how groups coordinate members' behavior, intergroup conflict, etc. Each student will further develop their understanding of the course content through a research and writing project that explores group dynamics in a particular topic of their choice, such as protests, sports, music, social media, etc. By the end, you will be able to analyze current events through the lens of group dynamics and understand ways to leverage the group context for improving society and your everyday life.

## Course Goals

1. Think flexibly about groups in many contexts: This course explores research on groups in diverse contexts. Understanding the research on these different kinds of groups will help you interpret many real world events and apply certain findings to unique situations in your own life.
2. Critically consume scientific literature: Research papers can be obtuse and difficult to find. This course will help prepare you to understand and consume scientific publications more effectively, and help develop your critical eye when reading scientific press.
3. Effectively communicate ideas: Expressing yourself successfully is one of the most important skills you will ever develop. This course will give you practice parsing good and bad writing techniques and improving your own writing.
4. Implement psychology research: Most people will not become practicing scientists, but everyone uses the products of scientific inquiry. Being able to translate findings into actions is a valuable skill in the workplace and in your personal growth. One component of this course will be a final project in which you translate information you have learned about group behavior into a solution to a particular societal problem of your choice.
5. Successfully collaborate with peers: Collaborating well with others will be an important component to succeeding in this class, and in your future pursuits. You will get practice

creating and communicating in the group context through peer reviews, group discussions, and a group presentation.

## Class Texts

All course readings will be provided in PDF format via Sakai.

## Course Grading

Below is the distribution of points for grades in this class. There are 100 points total in the course, so adding up your course total will give you your course percentage grade.

Weekly readings responses .....	10 points
In-class participation .....	20 points
Leading discussion .....	5 points
4 peer reviews .....	12 points (3 points each)
Course project .....	53 points
- research topic/implementation ideas –	4 points (2 points each)
- reverse outline –	4 points
- lit review/implementation drafts –	10 points (5 points each)
- final paper –	25 points
- group presentation –	10 points

There will be no grades bumps or curving up at the end of the semester.

## Assignments

\*Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due by **8pm** the night before class. Late work will accrue a 2-point deduction for each day late.

1. **Reading responses:** Before each Thursday class, you will be responsible for completing that week's reading. These readings will be posted on Sakai under that week's folder in "Resources". Our class discussions will build off of these readings, so in order to prepare, a **2 page double-spaced reading response** will be due before each class. This response should consist of questions you had about the reading, connections you made to other knowledge, critiques you had, etc. **You may skip this reading response up to 2 times in the semester** at no penalty (so you must turn in at least 10 reading responses out of 12 days with readings). If you turn in more than 10, I will only count the 10 highest-earning responses for your final grade. For full credit, **turn these in by 8pm the night before class**. Half credit will be given if turned in after 8pm but before class. No late responses will be accepted.
2. **Class participation:** A typical week of class will involve one day of lecture, and one day of reading discussion. Several class periods will also include activities such as peer reviewing, group brainstorming, etc. You must actively contribute to these discussions and activities to receive in-class participation credit. You can earn up to 1 point of participation credit per class meeting (partial points will be given for so-so participation). **You may miss or abstain from participation in up to 7 class days** at no penalty (so you must participate in at least 20

classes out of 27 total meetings). If you participate in more than 20 class meetings, only your top 20 participation scores will count for credit. You may not make up any missed participation credit.

3. **Leading discussion:** Beyond participating in discussion every week, at the beginning of the term you will choose one week during which you will lead the Thursday reading discussion. This will require you to read the readings deeply, figure out the most important information, and generate questions to help the class digest that information.
4. **The class project:** Most of the work for this course will be different components of the class project. In this project, your goal will be to apply your understanding of collective psychology to a specific topic relevant in today's society. You must select a topic from the "Research Topics" section at the end of this syllabus. The final project will be a **12-15 page double-spaced paper** in two parts. **The first part, 6-8 pages in length, is a review of the research about group dynamics in your chosen context. The second part, 6-8 pages in length, is your description of how you can apply this research to solve a particular problem/achieve something new in this context.** Below are all the due dates for the incremental pieces of the final project that you will turn in. Each one of these is **due by 8pm the night before the first class of that week.**
  - a. **Due Week 4: choose 4 research topics:** Submit a list of your top 4 choices from the "Research Topics" section that you would like to work on. For each choice, include at least one problem or question within that domain that you would like to solve using knowledge from this class. Based on these responses, you will be assigned one of your choices and will be formed into groups of 3-4 students who are working on the same topic. Half credit will be given if your choices are submitted after 8pm, but before class. No late submissions accepted. If you do not turn in your top 4 choices, you will be assigned to any open group.
  - b. **Due Week 5: topic-specific reading and reverse outline:** After receiving your topic assignment, one of your readings for week 5 will specifically focus on your research topic. Pick one reading from your topic to do, and turn in a "reverse outline" of it – create an outline of this reading, as if you were preparing to write it yourself, highlighting the topic and communicative purpose of each section in the paper.
  - c. **Due Week 7: literature review draft:** Now that you and your topic group have chosen a domain-specific issue to address, find at least 6 academic sources that, together, provide evidence for ways to address your chosen issue. Your topic-specific reading can be one of these sources, but it doesn't have to be. Then, write a paper draft that summarizes the important results from these sources and synthesizes an overall message from them. Note that this will take significantly more time than the last two pieces of the project, so start early. No page count is expected at this stage, but keep in mind that the final literature review should be 6-8 pages long.
  - d. **Due Week 9: implementation worksheet:** On Sakai will be a worksheet to complete for this step of the assignment. The goal is to generate at least 2 ideas for how you will address your topic-specific issue based on the literature review you've done, and how you will tackle any practical concerns about your solution. During week 9, you

and your topic group will discuss these and choose one idea that you will all collaborate on developing. Half credit will be given if your ideas are submitted after 8pm, but before class. No late submissions accepted.

- e. **Due Week 11: implementation draft:** With your topic group, develop a specific plan for applying your research to your chosen problem. Give a detailed description of the problem, how your research provides a solution, why you chose this solution, and what limitations there might be to your solution. Though you are developing this plan with your group, *this paper must be written in your own words*. Group members copying each other will be treated as plagiarism. No page count is expected at this stage, but keep in mind that the final implementation section of your course paper should be 6-8 pages long.
  - f. **Due Week 15: group presentation:** The last project piece will involve making a 15-20 minute presentation to teach the rest of the class about your research project. This presentation should communicate the importance of your problem, how you intend to address it, and any background information a non-expert would need. You and your group will turn in one joint slide deck and will share the same grade for it.
  - g. **Due Finals Week: final paper:** By now you will have received feedback from the course instructor and your peers on the review and implementation sections of your paper. Make the necessary changes to improve your paper based on these comments, and then turn in the final version of your paper with both sections included. This must be 12-15 double-spaced pages all together. It is due by **8pm the Tuesday of finals week**.
5. **Peer Reviews:** Twice during the quarter (week 8 and week 12) you will benefit from peers reading drafts of each component of your final paper and giving comments. Thus, you will need to review for other students as well. For each component, you will be assigned two other students' papers – one on your research topic, and one outside it. Your job will be to **give comments on what they do well and how they could improve their writing**. Half credit will be given if you submit your reviews after 8pm the day before class, but before the class period. **Note:** if you do not turn in your own lit review or implementation plan by the time peer reviews are assigned, you cannot exchange papers with another student. Thus you will receive an automatic zero grade for the peer review.
6. **Optional Extra Credit: Group Process Review:** For up to 3 extra points toward your final grade, you may write a **3-5 page double spaced paper analyzing the experience you had in a group setting in class**, using concepts we learned in class. You can choose any group you experienced during the semester – your topic group, peer reviewing, activity group, or class discussion. **This is not required**. Grades will always be available on Sakai for you to review, so you can determine if you want to take this option or not. If you choose to do the extra credit, it is due by **5pm Monday of finals week**. No late extra credit will be accepted.

## **Course Policies**

### **Masks in Class**

The Psychological Science Department at Pomona College views protecting the health and safety of our campus, families, communities, and loved ones as our highest responsibility. This includes protecting those with medical conditions, older staff and family members, those with young children, and others who may not fully benefit from Covid vaccines and available treatments. As such, the Department will continue to observe an indoor masking policy through Fall of 2022. After that point we will re-evaluate the policy based on the best practices. This means that all students must wear a high quality (N95 or KN95) mask covering the nose and mouth at all times, including evening hours, when in the Psychology building, classrooms, laboratories, offices, or study spaces, and refrain from eating or drinking indoors during meetings. Failure to do so will result in rejection from the classroom.

### **Attendance**

You are being graded on class participation, not class attendance. As mentioned earlier, you can have an off day and sit out of up to 7 class periods at no penalty to your participation grade. Though be aware, if you miss class you might miss out on other benefits of that day – such as peer feedback on your writing, lecture on how to do a literature review, etc.

### **Course Communication**

Official communication about this course will occur over email, so you are expected to check your email to receive important information. If you have questions about the course, please refer to this syllabus first for the answer. If you are still unsure about something, you may email me, the professor, at [Shannon.Burns@pomona.edu](mailto:Shannon.Burns@pomona.edu). I will respond by the end of the next business day (so don't expect a response when emailing an hour before a deadline or over the weekend). I reserve the right to not answer emails that only ask about things found in this syllabus (due dates, extra credit, etc.)

### **Late Work**

Because this class depends heavily on discussion and incremental writing, late or missing assignments will hold back your and your peers' progress. Therefore, late work will accrue a 2 point deduction for each day late without prior instructor approval, conditional on a documented reason for the late work.

### **Office Hours**

I will have office hours available every week at the time and location stated at the top of the syllabus. If for some reason I need to reschedule for a week, I will notify the class via email. If you cannot attend office hours, email me to set up another meeting appointment that works with both of our schedules.

### **Accommodations**

The time for asking for help with an issue is before it becomes a problem for you. If you need accommodations or learn about a disruption to your ability to attend class/work, please contact

ARS (<https://www.pomona.edu/accessibility/student-accessibility>) or me as soon as possible to sort out a solution. I will not allow make-up work or grade bumps post-hoc.

### **Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**

Even though you will be doing a group project and you will be submitting a paper on the same topic as your group members, every individual assignment submitted must be written in your own words. Any student who plagiarizes will lose one letter grade on their course total for a first offense, and will fail the class on a second offense. Plagiarism will also be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

### **Syllabus Updates**

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus, course schedule, and/or course grading during the semester should the need arise. In the event this happens, an announcement will be made both in class and through email, and an updated syllabus will be posted on Sakai.

## **Resources**

### **Research Support**

The Claremont Colleges library has many resources and consultation times available for all stages of the research process – information on how to find sources, conduct a literature review, etc. (<https://library.claremont.edu/ask-us/>)

### **Accessibility Resources & Services**

This is an equal opportunity classroom. If you need accommodations, please contact ARS as soon as possible (<https://www.pomona.edu/accessibility/student-accessibility>). I will work with ARS to provide equal access for all students.

### **Center for Speaking, Writing, & Image**

Writing or speaking consultation appointments are available to all students at CSWIM (<https://www.pomona.edu/administration/writing-center>). These appointments can help you at any stage of the writing process, from structuring your ideas to editing your final copy. They can also help you practice public speaking. I highly encourage you to make an appointment here at some point in your academic career just to see where you can improve.

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## **Course Schedule:**

### **SECTION 1: THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO STUDYING COLLECTIVES**

#### **Week 1: Introduction – What is Collective Psychology?**

*Do groups behave differently than individuals? How ubiquitous is the group context?*

<b>Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup></b>
Course lecture, intro to course Assignment due: n/a	Reading discussion, choose discussion leaders Readings due

**Week 2: What Defines a Group?**

*When do groups form? What groups do we join?*

<b>Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup></b>
Course lecture, reading an academic paper Assignment due: n/a	Reading discussion Readings due

**Week 3: Types of Groups: Task-Based Groups**

*What types of tasks can groups perform? Does the purpose of a group change its function?*

<b>Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup></b>
Course lecture Assignment due: n/a	Reading discussion, course project rubric discussion Readings due

**Week 4: Types of Groups: Relational Groups**

*Why are humans such social creatures? Why do we bond with certain people more than others?*

<b>Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup></b>
Course lecture, reverse outlining Assignment due: project topic choices	Reading discussion Readings due

**Week 5: Types of Groups: Crowds & Identity Groups**

*Is “mob mentality” a thing? What parts of our identity tie us to other people?*

<b>Tuesday, September 27<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, September 29<sup>th</sup></b>
Course lecture, discussion of project ideas with topic group Assignment due: topic specific reading & reverse outline	Reading discussion Reading due

### **Week 6: Basic Mechanisms of Group Interaction**

*How do group members share information? How do groups coordinate themselves?*

<b>Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup></b>
Course lecture, lit searching Assignment due: n/a	Reading discussion Readings due

## **SECTION 2: TOPICS IN COLLECTIVE PSYCHOLOGY**

### **Week 7: How the Group Influences Individuals**

*Why do people follow harmful orders? How does group membership change personal attitudes?*

<b>Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup></b>
Course lecture, peer reviewing Assignment due: lit review draft	Reading discussion Readings due

### **Week 8: Fall Break / Peer Review Week**

<b>Tuesday, October 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup></b>
<i>Fall break, no class</i>	Peer review discussion, writing a proposal, mid-semester course eval Assignment due: lit review peer review

### **Week 9: How Individuals Influence Group Function**

*When can an individual influence others? What effect do leaders have on a group?*

<b>Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup></b>
Course lecture, discussion of implementation ideas with topic group Assignment due: implementation ideas worksheet	Reading discussion Readings due

### **Week 10: Group vs. Individual Performance**

*Should we always be in groups? Is the group more wise or more biased?*

<b>Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup></b>
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Course lecture Assignment due: n/a	Reading discussion Readings due
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**Week 11: Group Emotions**

*Are emotions contagious? What enables empathy?*

<b>Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup></b>
Course lecture Assignment due: implementation draft	Reading discussion Readings due

**Week 12: Group Morality**

*Are we more ethical when others are around? Where do group norms come from?*

<b>Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup></b>
Course lecture, presentation skills Assignment due: n/a	Reading discussion Readings due

**Week 13: Peer Review / Thanksgiving**

<b>Tuesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, November 24<sup>th</sup></b>
Peer review discussion, work on presentations with groups Assignment due: implementation peer review	<i>Thanksgiving, no class</i>

**Week 14: Intergroup Interaction & Conflict**

*Why do we have war and conflict? How can we foster more discourse between opposing groups?*

<b>Tuesday, November 29<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup></b>
Course lecture, work on presentations with groups Assignment due: n/a	Reading discussion Readings due

**Week 15: Presentations**

<b>Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup></b>
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Group presentations  
Assignment due: presentation slides

*Reading days, no class*

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### **Finals Week:**

No class meeting!

Due **Monday Dec 12<sup>th</sup> by 5pm**: final paper; extra credit group process analysis

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### **Research Topics**

Below are the possible research topics you may choose for your project, along with the specific readings for each topic you may choose from.

#### **Protests**

- Nassauer, A. (2018). Situational dynamics and the emergence of violence in protests. *Psychology of Violence, 8*(3), 293-304.
- Drury, J. & Reicher, S. (2000). Collective action and psychological change: The emergence of new social identities. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 39*(4), 579-604.

#### **Businesses**

- McGrath, J.E. & Argote, L. (2001). Ch 25: Group processes in organizational contexts. In Hogg, M.A. & Tindale, R.S. (Eds.), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes*, 603-627.
- Birdi, K., Clegg, C., Patterson, M., Robinson, A., Stride, C.B., Wall, T.D., & Wood, S.J. (2008). The impact of human resource and operational management practices on company productivity: a longitudinal study. *Personnel Psychology, 61*, 467-501.

#### **Music**

- Waclawik, K., Watson, S., & Grahn, J.A. (2016). Ch 29: Musical synchronization, social interaction and the brain. In Obhi, S.S. & Cross, E.S. (Eds.), *Shared Representations*, 603-626.
- Loersch, C. & Arbuckle, N.L. (2013). Unraveling the mystery of music: Music as an evolved group process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 105*(5), 777-798.

#### **Sports Teams**

- Collins, D. & Hill, Andy. (2016). Ch 28: Shared mental models in sport and refereeing. In Obhi, S.S. & Cross, E.S. (Eds.), *Shared Representations*, 588-602.
- Eys, M.A., Schinke, R.J., & Jeffery, S.M. (2007). Ch 6: Role perceptions in sports groups. In Beauchamp, M.R. & Eys, M.A. (Eds), *Group Dynamics in Exercise and Sport Psychology*, 99-115.

#### **Neuro-Divergence**

- Cook, J. (2016). Ch 23: Disorders of shared representations. In Obhi, S.S. & Cross, E.S. (Eds.), *Shared Representations*, 480-502.

- Bolis, D., Balsters, J., Wenderoth, N., Becchio, C., & Schilbach, L. (2017). Beyond autism: Introducing the dialectical misattunement hypothesis and a Bayesian account of intersubjectivity. *Psychopathology*, 50, 355-372.

### **Partisanship**

- Van Bavel, J.J. & Pereira, A. (2018). The partisan brain: An identity-based model of political belief. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 22(3), 213-224.
- Landry, A., Schooler, J.W., Willer, R., & Seli, P. (2022). Reducing explicit blatant dehumanization by correcting exaggerated meta-perceptions. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

### **Social Media**

- Brady W., McLoughlin, K., Doan, T., & Crockett, M. (2020). The MAD Model of moral contagion: the role of motivation, attention, and design in the spread of moralized content online. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 15(4), 978-1010.
- Cinelli, M., Francisci Morales, G., Galeazzi, A., Quattrociocchi, W., & Starnini, M. (2021). The echo chamber effect on social media.

### **Mental or Physical Health**

- Forsyth, D.R. (2001) Ch 26: Therapeutic groups. In Hogg, M.A. & Tindale, R.S. (Eds.), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes*, 628-659.
- Holt-Lunstad, J. (2021). The major health implications of social connection. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 30(3), 251-259.