



COURSE INFORMATION

Course Number: MGT 531
Course Title: Interpersonal & Group Dynamics
Term: Offered in both Fall & Spring
Class Meeting Time, Day: Tuesday or Wednesday 2:40-5:40pm
Lab follows from 6:30-9:30 pm

CONTACT INFORMATION

Course Faculty	Course Staff	Course Support
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COURSE MATERIALS

Textbook(s): IPD Reader as assigned on CANVAS; subscribe to the [Learning through Experience](#) podcast
Readings: All required readings and other course materials will be distributed on Canvas
Software: None

Please note that students taking this course are required to attend the weekend retreat.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Amidst an epidemic of loneliness and rising levels of burnout—often fueled by interpersonal stressors at work—our capacity to build meaningful connections is essential. Studies have shown that the average manager spends about two-thirds of his or her time interacting with others. In the context of increasing complexity, automation, agitation and polarization, it should be no surprise that skill in interpersonal relationships is one of the most frequent determinants of managerial success or failure. Application to learning extends beyond workplace success with relevance to our mental, emotional and relational well-being.

This course is designed to help students develop more open and effective working relationships. The course aims to increase student understanding of interpersonal and small group behavior. The central focus is to increase students' ability to understand and diagnose interpersonal dynamics as well as to increase personal understanding of how they impact others.

This course is a memory-making, powerful and even transformational experience for many students. While readings and group exercises are used to begin discussion, the core learning material emerges in small group interaction. Students learn how they function in small groups and how they relate to others from feedback and reaction of other class members. As such, students planning to enroll should understand that the course methodologies are likely quite different than most courses you have taken to date. Much of the learning will emerge from a) personal reflection on interpersonal and group dynamics and b) the ability/willingness to learn interpersonally from experience, risk-taking, self-disclosure, and feedback.

The goal of *Interpersonal and Group Dynamics* is to learn, through experience in a small group setting, how:

- To use interpersonal communication skills to influence and lead the building of more open, effective, and rewarding relationships, even with people whom you may initially experience as difficult.
- To identify and pursue personal learning goals aimed at improving interpersonal communications.
- To “learn how to learn” interpersonally via the continuous practice of risk taking, disclosure, and feedback in service of evolving learning goals.
- To learn about group dynamics and your role in groups by observing and exploring conscious and unconscious assumptions, behaviors and feelings.

Personal knowledge and ability in these areas is crucial to becoming a more effective leader for business and society in today’s ever changing, complex, and highly interdependent organizations.

Note: Class meets weekly for three hours. Attendance is required for the first two classes to retain a place in the course or on the waiting list. This course has a mandatory **three-hour weekly lab meeting** most weeks of the course and a mandatory off-campus weekend retreat.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The overall design of this course is different than most. It involves an intensive schedule broken into 3 hours of class work focused on practicing new conceptual knowledge and the behavioral skills necessary to help make the most of the LAB experience, plus 3 hours of Lab. In the Lab, you will be expected to work on your personal learning goals and contribute to creating a learning environment in the lab. An important feature of this course is the retreat, which provides an immersive learning environment in which we can delve more deeply into interpersonal relationships.

Experienced facilitators, whose role it is to help you learn in the Lab setting, will be assigned to the group. However, it is not their responsibility to make things happen; it is **yours**. Your learning will depend on the extent to which you are present and willing to get involved. “Detached observers” gain relatively little from this course. The amount you learn rests heavily on your being open with your reactions and feelings and your willingness to receive feedback from others about your behavior. Taking the personal risk to raise issues dealing with how you feel about 1) what is happening to you; 2) what others are doing; and 3) how the group is going, is fundamental to a successful Lab experience. Sitting back also interferes with the learning of others. In most other courses, it would not be disastrous if a significant portion of the students were silent; in a Lab, it would.

It is very important, therefore, that when you decide to take this course, you realize that you are making an explicit contract to be actively involved. We treat this contract as seriously as we would any other contract — it establishes our expectations for what will be delivered by whom, to whom, and at what standard. The contract for this course is a contract between you, the course faculty, and your fellow classmates.

Learning in this course derives largely from your interactions with other people; hence, what you learn and get out of this course is very interdependent with what others are learning. Failure to prepare for classes, and

especially to attend the Lab meetings and actively participate not only reduces your learning, but it also inhibits group development and compromises the learning of others.

On our end, we (the faculty and facilitators) are dedicated to building the right type of group and class atmosphere, honoring the start and finish times for class and Lab meetings, and providing timely and thoughtful feedback on both your participation and your written work.

On your end, you are expected to attend every class, all Lab meetings and the weekend retreat. No exceptions will be made for recruiting trips. Lab group meeting times are not to be rescheduled. If you don't think you can be at all of the classes, Labs and the retreat, this is not the time for you to enroll in this course.

Second, you are expected to be a contributing and punctual member of all the learning structures provided for the purpose of learning about yourself: class group, Lab, and various sub -groups that you will be asked to participate in throughout the term. This means that you will need to come to class fully prepared, since small and large group discussions require some forethought and written work. It's important to come on time since we often start with an exercise (Please note that several LATE arrivals count as an absence).

Third, your responsibilities also include your willingness to take risks in the service of your own and others' learning. This means pushing yourself to say things you might not ordinarily say and raise uncomfortable issues that are true and important but may not make you look good to others. Admittedly, this can be difficult, and everybody will make mistakes (including the faculty and facilitators). But, if we don't experiment and try things that are new to us, little will be learned.

Lastly, by enrolling in the course you acknowledge that it can be a demanding experience in terms of time, energy and emotional resources. Although the course can be quite intense and, at times, involves strong emotions, it is not therapy. It deals with interpersonal issues, not intrapersonal. If you are currently in a situation where you cannot tolerate stressful or emotional interactions amongst members of your Lab without significant risk to your health, this might not be the right time for you to take the course. If you are in therapy, check the advisability of taking this course with your therapist to make sure the fit is right. This is not to scare you. This course is mainly exciting, stretching, personally satisfying, and even fun! You will likely find this course to be one of the most rewarding courses in your SOM experience.

Meetings

1) Class Sessions

The first portion of class will focus on introducing concepts through interpersonal exercises, short lectures, and video. The second portion of class will often be spent in interaction with smaller groups, including your lab. Because of the heavy experiential orientation, you have to be there to learn. You won't get much out of someone else's notes. This is why we place such heavy emphasis on class attendance.

2) Labs

It is also a course requirement that you attend all Lab meetings.

3) Course retreat

It is a course requirement that you attend our Course Retreat in Litchfield, CT, scheduled for Nov 3-5, 2023.

Readings

The goal of the readings is to introduce you to concepts and research that can be applied to interpersonal and group dynamics. In addition, there is a course "reader" that speaks specifically to applying some of the

concepts to labs. Please read the assigned articles prior to class. Please keep up with the readings; they will help you understand what is going on in your group and assist you in making that a more productive learning experience. We use the Reader written for and used by the course creator at Stanford GSB, so you will see references to Stanford GSB culture.

Written Work

This course involves two types of written work:

1) **Assignments**

Assignments primarily consist of reflection questions in preparation for class. Assignments must be submitted electronically through Canvas prior to the beginning of class in order to receive credit for them. However, since you may sometimes use this material in class activities, you may wish to have a device to access your assignments with you in class.

2) **Reflection Journal**

The Reflection Journal is meant to help you reflect on the week's Lab session and derive learning from your experience. Such reflection brings closure, integration and learning to the various activities. Otherwise, this course can seem like only a string of events, each perhaps exciting, but without the underlying meaning that could serve as a solid foundation for future action. With increased awareness comes a greater number of choices about our behavior. **Each journal entry should answer the following week-in-review questions:**

Reflection Journal Questions

1. **DO - What happened?** Identify 1–3 moments from class or lab that felt meaningful to your learning this week. These are your “data points.” Describe briefly what occurred—especially any risks you took or considered taking.
2. **REFLECT (part 1) – What were your responses?** Focus on your internal and external reactions to the moments above.
 - What did you feel, say, or do?
 - What did you hold back from saying or doing—and why?
 - What assumptions were you making about others or the group?
 - What was the group's response (if any) to your action or inaction?
3. **REFLECT (part 2) – What are you learning?** This section invites meaning-making:
 - What are you learning about yourself and your impact on others?
 - What are you learning about group behavior and interpersonal dynamics?
 - How do these insights connect to your readings, class themes, or learning goal?
 - Which concepts are helping you grow? Which challenge you? Why?
4. **APPLY - What's next?** Translate your reflections into action. Be specific.
 - What will you try in next week's Lab or class?
 - What interpersonal risk do you want to take?
 - What practice supports your learning goal?

Each week's Journal entry is due 48 hours after the end of Lab. Journal entries must be submitted through Canvas. You will get your Journal back at least once, with comments, roughly halfway through the course. Only the course faculty and reader-coach will read your Reflection Journal.

Your Reflection Journal grade depends on the quality, timeliness, and thoroughness of your journal. Please note that we are looking for quality, not quantity. Thoughtful self-reflection, asking yourself good questions, expressing new insights and demonstrating integration of concepts and experience are what make a good journal — not a blow-by-blow retelling of who said what. The summary of what went on (minus your reactions and responses) should be the shortest portion of the entry; it is there simply to provide context and/or jog your memory.

Grading

- 1/3 of your grade will be based on the quality of your written work (Assignments & Reflection Journal).
- 1/3 of your grade will be based on your personal risk-taking in the Lab.
- 1/3 of your grade will be based on the extent to which you help the group develop and others learn.

You will discover that the best way to help others and help the group is through your own risk-taking (raising difficult issues, talking about your feelings about what is going on in the group, confronting others with your feelings about their behavior, etc.). Thus, focusing on the final 1/3 will cost you on the second; however, focusing on the second will also produce the third.

The following is an approximation of what each grade requires:

HH	Exceptional performance in pushing yourself. Takes a lot of risks in the group. One of the key people in making the group successful. Excellent, thoughtful written work.
H	High involvement. Can be counted on to consistently raise issues, take risks, and help the group be successful. Thorough and timely job on all written assignments.
PR	Moderate level of involvement in the group, writings and class. May periodically raise issues but doesn't consistently take risks or help things progress. Adequate and timely job on written work.
P	Low level of involvement in the group, writings and class. May occasionally raise issues but doesn't consistently take risks or help things progress. (Taking one "big risk" in one session is a P, not PR). Inadequate and untimely job on written work.
F	Cumulative result of absence and non-involvement. Significant missing written work. Doing bare minimum. "Cooling it" by being an observer in the Lab and not taking risks; being mostly an observer; doing the "bare minimum" and/or late submissions on class assignments and Reflection Journal.

Missing class, a Lab session or being late for several classes, drops your grade down one level (for each absence). Without an excused absence from the Office of student affairs, it is not possible to miss the retreat and pass the course.

Note that we are using behaviors as markers for what you have personally learned. Others who have taught this course have found that behaviors are correlated with learning but are not an exact replication. In a few cases, students have gotten a great deal without active verbal involvement, but this is the exception.

The process for determining the grades is as follows: at the end of the semester, we will ask you to evaluate your own risk-taking and your peers will evaluate your contributions to the lab. We will also get input about the extent of your risk-taking and contribution to the group's learning. We will put these together with faculty impressions of your performance (the extent to which you demonstrated you were prepared for class and what you have done in your written work) and facilitator input to determine the grade. Penalties for tardiness and absences, should there be any, will then be deducted from the grade.

Please see the Yale SOM Grading Policy at <http://portal.som.yale.edu/page/grading-policy>

YALE SOM POLICIES

Please see the Yale School of Management Bulletin at <http://www.yale.edu/prINTER/bulletin/htmlfiles/som/rights-and-responsibilities-of-students.html> for Rights and Responsibilities of students and for information on requesting a course recording.

Laptop/Device Policy

Usage not allowed without the express permission of the instructor

Generative AI:

Students are permitted to use GenAI to support learning.

DETAILED OUTLINE OF CLASS SESSIONS

Session	CONTENT	CLASS and LAB Notes
1:	Getting Started : WELCOME! This week focuses on orienting students to the course and lab experience. It's ok if you are brand new or quite experienced - IPD is rich learning if you immerse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course overview• Hopes and fears about IPD• NO LAB until next week• Introductory Experiential Exercise• Debrief
2:	Learning through Experience: This week focuses on building the mindset and practice of learning from interpersonal experience, directing your own learning and understanding how to work the course goals to advance your personal learning goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning in IPD• Prep for 1st Lab• First lab review exercise• How to journal for IPD• LAB
3:	Interpersonal Communication: This week we focus on the essential communication tools that can help or hinder your interpersonal effectiveness. Listen to/Read the material in advance and come to class ready to practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toxic & Masterful Interpersonal Interactions• Listening Skills• Communication exercise• LAB
4:	The Power of Vulnerability: It's time to think about and practice letting others know you. Expressing vulnerability is a pathway to that outcome. We will build tools for choiceful self-disclosure and building psychological safety in groups. It may sound personal - it is AND it's highly work-relevant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-Disclosure• Ramone/Lab video• Index card exercise• LAB
5:	Feelings and Feedback: Each of these topics is important: Emotional intelligence is a key skill for management effectiveness and feedback is a core part of any manager's role. These topics combine well to create effective and meaningful interpersonal and group dynamics. Readings and class will show you how practicing well will deepen your capacity to enact the skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small group discussions by emotion cluster• Tapping Exercise*• Building Psychological Safety in Groups• Emotional Agility• Mood meter, Self- Regulation• LAB
6:	Courageous Conversation: Students in this course have the chance to go far beyond transactional & ineffective feedback and frustrating workplace tension to turn key moments into courageous	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark and Nancy/Lab video• Courageous Conversation• LAB

	conversations that build connection, collective effectiveness and integrity.	
7:	Connecting Across Difference: As you have learned in the course to date, people see and think about the same situations in widely varying ways. In this session, we will focus on some of the reasons we see things differently based on background, personality, culture and other factors. How to connect across difference is an urgently needed skill in a divided world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of demographics • Perspective-taking and perspective-giving • Othering and Belonging • Cross demographic group meetings • LAB
8:	Power, Influence & Authority: In this segment of the course, we take on stretch topics that ask students to use the best of what they have learned in the course. Talking about power and authority tends to be challenging and tap into interpersonal and group tensions. With wise practice, you can learn to be more effective and graceful in the face of challenging moments and issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power & Authority • Support Group Formation Exercise* • Support Group Meeting • LAB
9:	<p>The IPD retreat is designed to be a demanding experience (in terms of time, learning effort and attention) as well as a rewarding experience. This time gives you a chance to immerse in experiential learning in this special format.</p> <p>Group Roles and Dynamics: In this session we bring attention to different types of group roles, norms and stages. We aim to improve the ability to make purposeful choices in groups that support both individual and group learning.</p>	<p>Please reserve the weekend - offsite: Wisdom House, Litchfield CT</p> <p>DRAFT RETREAT SCHEDULE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday dinner 5:30-6:30pm and the program starts at 7p • Saturday 9-12; 2-5; 7-10. (Class, small group and LAB) • Sunday 9-12; 1-3 (LAB and retreat closing)
10:	No class this week. Tuesday this week is the last OPEN FORMAT LAB. OK to begin FINAL FEEDBACK in LAB	NO CLASS, LAST OPEN FORMAT LAB
11:	Transferring Across Contexts: In this session we will talk about how to apply your IPD learning to other contexts. Hear about how Yale SOM alums continue to use their IPD learning for greater effectiveness and meaningful engagement at work and beyond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real Life Cases • Alumni Guest visitor • Lab Closure & Final Feedback
12:	Synthesis & Course Close: In this session, we will engage in some meaningful ways to summarize your personal learning & hear the same from others across labs. We will also have some course closing conversations, and talk about the future of your learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post IPD Options • Key Learning • Closing Circle • NO LAB
	FINAL 1-1 Meetings with Professor: You are invited to a conversation about your IPD experience and next steps beyond the course. I look forward to talking with you!	Congratulations! You are an IPD ALUM!

The instructor reserves the right to modify the course syllabus as needed during the course.