

# **The Psychology of the Mob: How and Why Groups Behave the Way They Do**

Psychology 98

[Day and Time, Location]

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## **Course Description**

Why do otherwise good people form online mobs? Why can betting markets predict the future so well? 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 learn since people spend the large majority of their lives embedded in groups of other people. In this class, we will take an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the reasons behind group behavior – drawing from psychology, sociology, neuroscience, biology, mathematics, political science, and business. We will investigate why people form into groups, how groups guide individual attitudes, how groups effectively coordinate members' behavior, and the emergent phenomena that come from the group context. Each student will further develop their understanding of the course content through a research project that explores group dynamics in a particular topic of their choice, such as protests, sports, music, social media, government, 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. **Understand group behavior as unique phenomena:** This course explores group behavior and psychology via the scientific and academic literature in a multitude of disciplines. Each perspective will inform your overall understanding of groups as unique phenomena that are related in some ways, but different in other ways from individual psychology.
2. **Think flexibly about groups in many contexts:** This course also looks at groups in diverse contexts - from small family units, to goal-driven work groups, to spontaneous large crowds. Understanding the research of these different kinds of groups will help you interpret many real world events and apply certain findings to unique situations in your own life.
3. **Critically consume groups science literature:** Scientific literature can be obtuse and difficult to parse or even find, especially across different fields. This course will help prepare you to understand and consume scientific publications more effectively, and help develop your critical eye when reading scientific press.
4. **Effectively communicate ideas:** Effectively expressing yourself is one of the most important skills you will ever develop (indeed, as we will learn, it enables groups to function!) This

course will give you practice parsing good and bad writing techniques and improving your own writing.

5. Implement group dynamics findings: Most people will not become practicing scientists, but everyone uses the products of scientific inquiry every day. Being able to translate scientific findings into personally-relevant results 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.
6. Successfully collaborate with peers: As the course description says, people spend the majority of their time in social company, and that includes how you spend your time in this class. Collaborating well with others will be an important component to succeeding in this class, and in your future pursuits. The course material will be immediately applicable to this, and you will get practice creating and communicating in the group context.

### **Required Texts**

1. Brown, R. (2001). *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Blackwell Publishing.
2. Hogg, M.A. & Tindale, R.S. (Eds.) (2001). *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes*. Blackwell Publishing.
3. Surowiecki, J. (2005). *The Wisdom of Crowds*. Doubleday.

\*Other course readings will be provided in PDF format via CCLE.

### **Course Grading**

This course is a discussion seminar, so your final grade will be partly determined by your completion of class readings, your participation in class discussions/activities, and your cooperation in the peer review process. Writing is also an integral part of this course, so the remainder of your grade will be comprised of writing assignments that will build into a final research paper and group presentation. Below is information on the exact distribution of these grades. There are 100 points total in the course, so adding up your course total will give you your course percentage grade.

Weekly readings responses .....	15 points
In-class discussion/activity participation .....	15 points
2 Peer reviews .....	10 points
Final project .....	60 points
- research topic/implementation ideas –	5 points
- reverse outline –	5 points
- lit review/implementation drafts –	10 points
- final paper –	25 points
- group presentation –	15 points

Final letter grades will be assigned as follows:

A+ = 97 – 100	B+ = 87 – 89.99	C+ = 77 – 79.99	D+ = 67-69.99
A = 93 – 96.99	B = 83 – 86.99	C = 73 – 76.99	D = 63-66.99
A- = 90 – 92.99	B- = 80 – 82.99	C- = 70 – 72.99	D- = 60-62.99

## Assignments

1. **Weekly reading and responses:** Before class every week (except week 1), you will be responsible for completing that week's reading. These readings will consist of an assortment of popular science books, original research articles, and monographs in which experts review a field of research. Our class discussions, the majority of our time spent in class, will build off of these readings, so to prepare you for the week a **1-2 page double-spaced reading response** will be due each week before class. This response should consist of questions you had about the reading, connections you found to other knowledge, conditions under which the reading might not apply, etc. **You may skip this reading response up to twice in the quarter** at no penalty (so you must turn in at least 7 reading responses). Each response is worth 2 points and will be graded for effort. For full credit, turn these in **by 6pm the night before class** (this gives me enough time to collect people's thoughts into discussion prompts for class). Half credit will be taken off if turned in after 6pm but before class. No late responses will be accepted.
2. **Class discussions / activities:** Each week, the majority of our class time will be spent discussing the week's readings. Several weeks will also include class activities such as peer reviewing, group brainstorming, etc. You must actively contribute to these discussions and activities to receive in-class participation credit. In each class weeks 2-9 you can earn up to 2 points of participation credit depending on whether you give your own ideas in class discussion and whether you contribute to your group activity. **You may sit out of up to one class discussion** at no penalty. You may not make up any extra missed participation credit.
3. **The class project:** most of the work you turn in for this course will be different components of the final class project. In this project, your goal will be to apply our understanding of group behavior 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 before class of that week.
  - a. **Due Week 3: choose 3 research topics:** As a first step, simply submit your top 3 choices from the "Research Topics" section that you would like to work on. 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. Your grade for this is pass/fail – you either get the points for turning it in, or not.
  - b. **Due Week 4: topic-specific reading and reverse outline:** After receiving your topic assignment, one of your readings for week 4 will be specifically on your research

- topic. Read this, and then turn in a “reverse outline” – create an outline of this reading, as if you were about to write it yourself. This will help illuminate the structure of good writing and prepare the organization of your literature review for the project. We will talk more in class about how to do this.
- c. **Due Week 5: literature review draft:** Along with your topic-specific reading from the syllabus, find at least 4 other academic sources that, together, give you a good impression of the state of group behavior research in your chosen research topic. Then, write a 6-8 page double-spaced paper that summarizes the important results from these sources and synthesizes an overall message from them. We will talk more in class about how to do this. Note that this will take significantly more time than the last two pieces of the project, so start early.
  - d. **Due Week 7: implementation brainstorm:** Turn in a 1-2 page double-spaced document that describes various ideas you have about what specific way you want to apply the research you’ve done on your research topic. During week 7, you and your topic group will discuss these and choose one idea that you will all collaborate on developing. This will be graded pass/fail – you either get the points for turning it in, or not.
  - e. **Due Week 8: implementation draft:** With your 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, and what limitations there might be to your solution or how generalizable it is. Turn in a 6-8 page double-spaced paper with this implementation plan. Though you are developing this plan with your group, *this paper must be written in your own words*. Major points will be deducted for group members that copy each other.
  - f. **Due Week 10: group presentation:** Your group will be responsible for producing a 15 minute presentation of your implementation. This should summarize the important information from your collective literature reviews and communicate your implementation in such a way that important details are included, but use language that is understandable by non-topic experts (since the rest of the class won’t be as knowledgeable about your topic as you – think of it like a TED talk!). We will discuss in the class the features of a good presentation. It is you and your group’s responsibility to turn in one joint slide deck of your presentation, so make sure you give yourselves plenty of time to meet and collaborate on the presentation before this due date.
  - 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.
4. **Peer Reviews:** Twice during the quarter (week 6 and week 9) you will benefit from peers reading drafts of each component of your final paper and giving comments. Thus, you will need to give this to 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 to more clearly communicate their ideas**. These should be constructive, but kind. Don’t focus on little things like spelling and punctuation – focus on larger ideas such as paper

structure, clarity of language, feasibility of implementation idea, etc. We will discuss how to give a good peer review in class. There is no adversarial curve in this class, which means we should all want each other to do the best job possible.

5. **Optional Extra Credit: Group Process Review:** For up to 2 extra points toward your final grade, you may write a **3-5 page double spaced paper analyzing the experience you had in your research topic group** during the quarter, using concepts we learned in class. **This is not required.** Grades will always be available on myUCLA 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 6pm [week day of class] of finals week. No late extra credit will be accepted.

## **Course Policies**

### **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 one class discussion 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 reverse outline, etc.

### **Late Work**

Because this class depends heavily on discussion and incremental writing, late or missing assignments will hold back you 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. This means that something like the reverse outline will be worth 0 points if it is 3+ days late (since it is worth 5 points total).

### **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 these for one 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.

### **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 be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action, following Regulation A-306 (C)

## **Resources**

### **Second Language Learners**

Multiple courses for English as a second language learners are available over the summer (see <http://wp.ucla.edu/esl/courses>). If I use words that you are not familiar with, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification.

### **Center for Accessible Education**

This is an equal opportunity classroom. If you need accommodations, please contact CAE as soon as possible (<https://www.cae.ucla.edu/>, (310) 825-1501). I will work with the CAE to provide equal access for all students.

### **Bruin Resource Center**

The BRC supports transfer students, students with children, veterans, undocumented students, and former foster youth. 310.825.3945, [www.brc.ucla.edu](http://www.brc.ucla.edu)

### **Writing Center**

Writing consultation appointments are available to all students at the undergraduate writing center (<https://wp.ucla.edu/wc/>, or 310.206.1320). These appointments can help you at any stage of the writing process, from structuring your ideas to editing your final copy. They can also provide information about certain types of writing, like literature reviews. I highly encourage you to make an appointment here at some point in your academic career.

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### **Course Schedule:**

(readings with a \* can be found on CCLE)

#### **Week 1: Introduction - What is a Group?**

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

- Readings:**
- Reicher, S. (2001). Ch 8: The psychology of crowd dynamics. *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd) pp. 182-208
  - Brown, R. (2001). Ch 1: The reality of groups. *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, pp. 1-22

**Assignment Due:** N/A

**Class Activities:** Course overview; Discuss how-to topic - understanding human data research

#### **Week 2: The Why and How of Group Formation**

*Why are humans such social creatures? What groups do we join? Can groups appear spontaneously?*

- Readings:**
- \*Lieberman, M.D. (2013). The brain's passion. *Social: Why Our Brains are Wired to Connect* (pp 14-36). New York: Crown Publishers
  - Brown, R. (2001). Ch 2: Elementary processes in groups. *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, pp. 23-66
  - Worchel, S. & Coutant, D. (2001). Ch 19: It takes two to tango: Relating group identity to individual identity within the framework of group development. *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd) pp. 461-481.

**Assignment Due:** N/A

**Class Activities:** Discuss readings; how-to topic - searching for and critically reading research publications

### **Week 3: Structure and Roles in Groups**

*How important are leaders? How does social network structure impact group behavior?*

- Readings:**
- Brown, R. (2001). Ch 3: Structural aspects of groups. *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, pp. 67-122
  - Ridgeway, C.L. (2001). Ch 15: Social status and group structure. *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd) pp. 352-375.

**Assignment Due:** choose top 3 research topics from end of syllabus

**Class Activities:** Discuss readings; how-to topic – writing tips and reverse outlining

### **Week 4: Types of Groups and Group Members**

*Does the purpose of a group change its function? Is diversity a boon or a hindrance?*

- Readings:**
- \*McGrath, J.E. & Kravitz, D.A. (1982). Group research. *The Annual Review of Psychology*, 33, 195-230.
  - \*Knippenberg, D. & Chippers, M.C. (2007). Work group diversity. *The Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, pp. 515-541.
  - Research topic specific readings (see list of readings at end of syllabus)

**Assignment Due:** reverse outline of topic readings

**Class Activities:** discuss reverse outlines with topic group; discuss readings; how-to topic - writing a literature review

### **Week 5: How the Group Context Influences Group Members**

*Why do people follow orders? How does group membership change personal attitudes? Is intentional social influence ethical?*

- Readings:**
- \*Osherow, N. (2012). Making sense of the nonsensical: An analysis of Jonestown. In J. Aronson & E. Aronson (Eds.) *Readings about the Social Animal*, pp. 80-97. New York, NY: Worth.
  - \*Moscovici, S. & Zavalloni, M. (1969). The group as a polarizer of attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 12(2), 125-135.
  - Brown, R. (2001). Ch 4: Social influence in groups. *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, pp. 123-166

**Assignment Due:** literature review draft

**Class Activities:** Discuss readings; how-to topic - peer review; mid-quarter course evaluation

### **Week 6: The Group vs. Individual – Which Performs Better?**

*Is the crowd inherently more wise, or more biased? Are you more creative alone or with a brainstorming group?*

- Readings:**
- \*Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), pp. 1146-1151.
  - Brown, R. (2001). Ch 5: Individuals versus groups. *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, pp. 167-192
  - Surowiecki, J. (2005). Ch 2-4 in *The Wisdom of Crowds* (pp. 23-83)

**Assignment Due:** peer review of literature review drafts

**Class Activities:** Discuss readings; discuss peer reviews

### **Week 7: How Groups Make Decisions**

*Are group decisions an average of opinion, or something more complex? Can group decision processes be modeled like individual decision processes?*

- Readings:**
- Tindale, R.S. et al. (2001). Ch 1: Shared cognition in small groups. *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd) pp. 1-30.
  - Stasser, G. & Dietz-Uhler, B. (2001). Ch 2: Collective choice, judgment, and problem solving. *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd) pp. 31-55.
  - Hinsz, V.B., Tindale, S., & Vollrath, D. (1997). The emerging conceptualization of groups as information processors. *Psychological Bulletin*, 121(1), pp. 43-64.

**Assignment Due:** brainstorm research topic implementations

**Class Activities:** Discuss readings; topic groups discuss implementation ideas

### **Week 8: How Groups Coordinate Members' Behavior**

*How do we get on the "same wavelength" as someone else? Why do we mimic others? How does mimicry enable interpersonal understanding?*

- Readings:**
- Surowiecki, J. (2005). Ch 5: Shall we dance? Coordination in a complex world. *The Wisdom of Crowds* (pp. 84-107)
  - Lakens, D., Schubert, T., & Paladino, M-P. (2016). Ch 13: Social antecedents and consequences of behavioral synchrony. In *Shared Representations* (Obhi, S.S. & Cross, E.S., Eds.) pp. 254-279.
  - Obhi, S.S. (2016). Ch 9: Neurocognitive explorations of social mimicry. In *Shared Representations* (Obhi, S.S. & Cross, E.S., Eds.) pp. 171-194.

**Assignment Due:** implementation draft

**Class Activities:** Discuss readings; how to topic – making a good presentation

### **Week 9: How Groups Interact with Other Groups**

*Why do we have war and conflict? How can we foster more discourse between political parties?*

- Readings:**
- Brown, R. (2001). Ch 6: Intergroup conflict and cooperation. *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, pp. 225-262
  - Brown, R. (2001). Ch 8: Social identity and intergroup relations. *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, pp. 309-356

**Assignment Due:** peer review of implementation drafts

**Class Activities:** Discuss readings; discuss peer reviews

### **Week 10: Emergent Phenomena in Social Groups**

*Is there an overarching "group mind?" Do groups operate like single biological systems?*

- Readings:**
- \*O'Connor, T. (1994). Emergent properties. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 31(2), pp. 91-104
  - \*Coman, A., Momennejad, I., Drach, R.D., & Gaena, A. (2016). Mnemonic convergence in social networks: The emergent properties of cognition at a collective level. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(29), pp. 8171-8176.
  - \*Meyers, L.A. et al. (2005). Network theory and SARS: Predicting outbreak diversity. *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 232(1), pp. 71-81.



- \*Chatel-Goldman, J., Schwartz, J-L., Jutten, C., & Congedo, M. (2013). Non-local mind from the perspective of social cognition. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 7, pp. 1-7.
- \*Lewis, S., Pea, R., & Rosen, J. (2010). Beyond participation to co-creation of meaning: Mobile social media in generative learning communities. *Social Science Information*, 49(3), pp. 351-369.

**Assignment Due:** group presentation

**Class Activities:** group presentations

**Finals Week:**

**No Class Meeting!**

**Assignment Due:** final paper; extra credit group process analysis

**Research Topics**

Below are the possible research topics you may choose from for your project, along with the specific reading that accompanies each topic. \* indicates that reading can be found on CCLE.

**Protests**

- \*Drury, J. & Stott, C. (2011). Contextualizing the crowd in contemporary social justice. *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences*, 6(3), 275-288.

**Businesses**

- McGrath, J.E. & Argote, L. (2001). Ch 25: Group processes in organizational contexts. *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd) pp. 603-627.

**Music Groups**

- \*Waclawik, K., Watson, S., & Grahn, J.A. (2016). Ch 29: Musical synchronization, social interaction and the brain. In *Shared Representations* (Obhi, S.S. & Cross, E.S., Eds.) pp. 603-626.

**Sports Teams**

- \*Collins, D. & Hill, Andy. (2016). Ch 28: Shared mental models in sport and refereeing. In *Shared Representations* (Obhi, S.S. & Cross, E.S., Eds.) pp. 588-602.

**Dance**

- \*Orgs, G., Caspersen, D., & Haggard, P. (2016). Ch 30: You move, I watch, it matters: Aesthetic communication in dance. In *Shared Representations* (Obhi, S.S. & Cross, E.S., Eds.) pp. 627-654.

**Neuro-Atypical Group Members**

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

### **Traffic**

- Surowiecki, J. (2005). Ch 7: Traffic: What we have here is a failure to coordinate. *The Wisdom of Crowds* (pp. 145-157)

### **Markets**

- Surowiecki, J. (2005). Ch 11: Markets: Beauty contests, bowling alleys, and stock prices. *The Wisdom of Crowds* (pp. 224-258)

### **Social Media**

- \*Pfeffer, J., Zorbach, T., & Carley, K.M. (2014). Understanding online firestorms: Negative word-of-mouth dynamics in social media networks. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 20(1-2), pp. 117-128.

### **Democracy**

- Surowiecki, J. (2005). Ch 12: Democracy: Dreams of the common good. *The Wisdom of Crowds* (pp. 259-272)

### **Therapy**

- Forsyth, D.R. (2001) Ch 26: Therapeutic groups. *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd) pp. 628-659.

### **Juries**

- Tindale, R.S. et al. (2001). Ch 24: Procedural mechanisms and jury behavior. *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd) pp. 574-602.