

**NCLC 375: Leadership & Group Dynamics, Section 006, 4 credits**  
**Spring 2014**  
**New Century College, George Mason University**  
**Fridays, 10:30-1:10, Robinson B Rm 108**

**Course Facilitator**

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**Community Partner**

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**Course Description:**

Leadership effectiveness demands a high-level ability to work with others and respond to change. The complexity of the social issues we face in our world today requires leaders who are able to work with others to create a shared vision and maximize the effectiveness of collective efforts to address human and community needs. This course is an opportunity to strengthen individual and group leadership knowledge and skills through study and engagement in a community-based group project.

Learning in this course is closely tied to direct experience. Rather than examining case studies, we will ourselves become the case being studied. Work on the collaborative group project assignment creates real small group dynamics, which we will examine, analyze and reflect upon. As we discuss course topics in a theoretical, academic way, we will also discuss these issues as dynamics occurring in the small groups themselves. The more open and honest we learn to be together as a class, the more valuable these reflections will be. Learning to share feedback with others in a way that is respectful and truly listens their perspective as well is a critically important leadership skill and will be at the heart of our successful classroom discussions.

**Learning Goals:**

- Develop reflection habits for life-long exploration of self and experiential learning related to leadership and group dynamics.
- Be able to apply collaborative leadership frameworks and scholarship in group dynamics to group and community contexts.
- Strengthen individual and relational leadership skills including communication and teamwork, through participation in a collaborative community engagement project.
- Reflect upon the role of identity, power and privilege in leadership and the leaders' role in creating inclusive, collaborative environments.
- Connect personal experience, reading and community involvement through reflection activities to develop an understanding of one's own leadership philosophy and group roles.

Success in this course requires demonstrated mastery of theoretical concepts, capacity for collaborative work and thoughtful reflection upon and integration of theory and experience. A foundational learning experience of this class will be a community-based group project. Students should expect to spend 45 or more hours in planning and implementing a community-based project.

**NCC Competencies**

This course will address the following NCC competency areas:

- Civic Engagement: practice based on an informed understanding of communities and the roles and responsibilities of individuals within those communities.
- Communication: the process of creating and sharing meaning through human interaction.
- Critical Thinking: a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating a judgment or conclusion.
- Group Collaboration: the process of working toward a shared agenda and/or common purpose while capitalizing on the diversity within the group.

**Principles Grounding this Learning Community**

A learning community differs from most other courses in several specific ways. As YOU are an important part of the learning community, it is important that you understand their basic principles. Learning communities emphasize:

- Learning from experience and reflection
- Collaborative group work
- Valuing multiple sources of knowledge
- Integration of knowledge
- Learning competencies to facilitate self-directed learning
- Learning through evaluation and assessment

**Course Materials:**

Levi, D. (2010 ). *Group Dynamics for Teams* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Other readings will be provided, including excerpts from the following:

- Bolman L. G. and Deal T. E. (2013). *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Heifetz, R. (2009). *Adaptive Work*. From Hickman's, *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for a New Era*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Komives, Lucas and McMahon (2013). *The Changing Nature of Leadership*, in *Exploring Leadership: For College Students Who Want to Make a Difference* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sawyer, K. (2008). *Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration*. Basic Books.
- Wagner, W. (2009). *What is Social Change?* From Komives, Wagner and Associates, *Leadership for a Better World*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Lab Fee and Assessment Instruments:**

The lab fee for this course is \$12 and covers costs for The EDGE challenge course. The fee must be submitted in person to Greg Justice (433 Enterprise Hall), New Century College via cash or check. Greg's walk-in hours are 1-3pm M-F, other times available by appointment (703-993-1740). The lab fee is due by March 7, 2014.

The Student Leadership Practices Inventory 360. Available online, cost is \$20.

<http://www.studentleadershipchallenge.com/Assessments.aspx>

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. Provided in-class free of charge.

## **Assignments**

*Please note all assignments and dates are subject to revision by the instructor.*

### **Active Participation (200 points)**

The learning community will involve classroom activities, simulation exercises, assessments, small and large group discussion, and personal reflection upon experiences and readings. Learning community participants are expected to arrive to class on time, be prepared, and ready to engage in active learning. Being physically present is not the same as active participation and these points will reflect the difference. When you are unable to attend class, notifying the instructor in advance is appreciated.

### **Participation in The EDGE**

The EDGE is located at Mason's Prince William campus, next to the Aquatic Center. There is a free shuttle from the Fairfax campus – schedule available here: <http://shuttle.gmu.edu/pwshuttle.htm>. Participation in this experience will be necessary for class participation that day as well as the associated reflection writing assignment.

### **Completion of Assessments**

The course will make use of leadership assessments, including the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (provided free of charge) and the Student Leadership Practices Inventory 360. Completion of these assessments will be necessary for full participation in class.

### **Group Wiki on Assigned Readings (One entry due at the beginning of each class, 100 points)**

Being prepared for each week's topic essential to a lively learning community discussion. For this assignment, you will work in small groups to create notes on the assigned readings each week. The notes will be collected and stored online using a wiki. Each week's collaborative reading notes should be compiled on a new wiki page, linked to from the "Front Page." You will need a (free) account with PBWorks: [www.pbworks.com](http://www.pbworks.com). Notes on each reading should address:

- What are the most important concepts from this reading? Describe them, including definitions of terms when necessary.
- What assumptions are being made by the author? What are your critiques of the piece?
- Describe some examples of these concepts from your experience and/or describe some potential practical applications of the concepts.
- Each chapter of the Levi text ends with a self-reflective assessment. Those who are comfortable should share the results of that assessment, those who are not should share some reflective comments that arose from taking the assessment.

### **Community-Based Group Project (400 points)**

Groups of 5-6 students will work together on a project to benefit the community partner for this course: Robinson Square, a low-income community located near the Fairfax campus.

Working with Jane Wilson and potentially other members of this community, your team will need to come to a shared vision and implement the project. As we will learn, quality community engagement requires us to learn about social issues and build relationships in the community. To this end, your group should expect to spend time in the community through community service, research the issues involved and interview community leaders so that the project you develop is an informed one. You should each expect to spend at least 45 "contact hours" in the community in service, relationship-building and project implementation.

### **Important assumptions in community-based learning:**

- Your grade in the course is not based on having completed the required hours, but on demonstrated learning, through the course assignments. It is best to think of the experiential aspect of EL courses as a "textbook" for the course. You do not get credit for reading, but for demonstrating what you learned from it.
- Your group should begin work on the project as early as possible. If you delay in getting the project started, you will be challenged to complete it.
- Because this is a group project, all team members are expected to contribute to both the process and the product. Each group member should help research, implement, write about and present the group project.

**Elements of the Community-Based Group Project assignment:**Community-Based Learning Group Action Plan (75 points)

Your group will complete a document that provides a basic outline of your intended project and offers an explanation of why the group chose this project (based on your research into the community and related issues). You should also describe your group roles, a timeline for completion, and other information that will help you to be successful. The plan **MUST** be approved by Jane Wilson before it is submitted.

Mid-term Project Check (25 points)

Four weeks after your project proposal is submitted, your project group will meet with Wendy and Jane. Be prepared to present your progress on implementation and thoughts on adjustments to the plan and next steps.

Group Presentation (75 points)

Your project group will provide a 10-15 minute presentation to Jane Wilson and the rest of the class describing the implementation of your project. It should include an appraisal of what both you and your partner gained from the project, and recommendations for sustaining your efforts and future work. It will also demonstrate connections made between leadership scholarship and your experience on this project.

Evaluation of the Quality of the Group Project (100 group points, 75 individual points)

In addition to the quality of the project based on optimal community impact and professional implementation, individual effectiveness in the community based group project will be based on the quality of your contribution to the 1) group process, 2) group relationships, and 3) goal achievement. A rubric will be provided.

**Individual Reflective Writing (4 reflections, 3 pages each, 50 points each)**

The purpose of these reflections is for students to make connections between scholarly writing, class discussions and experiences in the community based group project. You should explore your own effectiveness in groups in relation to the assigned topics. This writing represents an opportunity to analyze and assess all class activities, group community based learning experiences, as well as document other experiences that contribute to your understanding of leadership and group dynamics (work/job, student clubs or organizations, observation of public leadership, etc).

Topics:

- Individual Reflection #1: Reflection on the outcome of the Student Leadership Practices Inventory 360
- Individual Reflection #2: How I handle conflict and express/solicit/respond to dissent: connecting scholarship and critical reflection on experience
- Individual Reflection #3: Social identities and group dynamics connecting scholarship and critical reflection on experience
- Individual Reflection #4: Final meaning making on group work: maximizing my strengths and identifying areas for improvement

**Group Reflection Writing (3 reflections, 3 pages each, 50 points each)**

The purpose of these reflections is to require project groups to have discussions with each other in which perspectives are shared related to the group's effectiveness in attending to their process, supportive relationships and achievement of the intended goal(s). It is critical that this writing be collaboratively done and rather than appear as a series of individually written sections.

Topics:

- Paper #1: Leadership theories that resonate with us and reflect our approach to working together this semester
- Paper #2: Our roles in groups and plan for preparing for the stages of group development, including norm setting
- Paper #3: Reflections on our experience at The EDGE: connecting scholarship and critical reflection on experience

**Grading & Evaluation:**

Assignment	Total Points	
Active Participation	200	980 - 1000 = A+
Community-Based Group Project	350	930 - 979 = A
Individual Reflection Writing (4 reflections), <i>submit via email</i>	200	900 - 929 = A-
Group Reflection Writing (3 reflections), <i>submit via wiki</i>	150	870 - 899 = B+
Group Wiki on Assigned Readings, <i>submit via wiki</i>	100	830 - 869 = B
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	800 - 829 = B-
		770 - 799 = C+
		700 - 769 = C
		670 - 699 = C-
		600 - 669 = D
		Below 599 = F

Should you have a concern about the grade you receive on a specific assignment you should contact the instructor within one week of receiving your grade for that assignment.

**Class Policies**

**Professionalism:** You will be representing George Mason University to the staff and community members of Robinson Square. Students are expected to adhere to professional standards regarding appearance, conduct and confidentiality.

**Community-Based Learning and Transportation:** Students are responsible for their own transportation to community-based learning experiences connected to this course. Robinson Square is walking distance from campus, across the street from the Field House.

**Statement on Electronic Communication Devices in the Classroom:** A quality learning experience in this course rests heavily upon interaction and exchange of ideas among students and the instructor. While this issue is currently under debate, be advised that I do not believe quality engagement with each other can occur while simultaneously using electronic devices. Your participation grade WILL be affected when it is clear your engagement with phones, tablets and laptops during class is distracting you from our discussion.

**Commitment to Diversity:** New Century College is an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and strives to have faculty, staff and students that reflect the diversity of our plural society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or physical ability.

**Religious or Cultural Observances:** Some class times are in close proximity to religious or cultural observances. If a class date or assignment creates a conflict, please let me know in advance so we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Office of Disability Services:** If you have a learning or physical difference that may affect your academic work, you will need to furnish appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations for your instructor. In addition to providing your professors with the appropriate form, please take the initiative to discuss accommodation with them at the beginning of the semester and as needed during the term. Because of the range of learning differences, faculty members need to learn from you the most effective ways to assist you. If you have contacted the Office of Disability Services and are waiting to hear from a counselor, please tell me.

**Mason Email:** In keeping with university policy, I will correspond only with your Mason email account.

**Late Work:** Part of working collaboratively with others is following through on your commitments in a timely way. For that reason, turning in your work on time is a critical part of your assignments. Late work may be accepted if a written medical excuse is provided, but generally, there will be no grace period for late work. Assignments will be reduced by a letter grade for each day they are late. Keep in mind that this means work turned in more than one week late will earn no points.

Since most written work in this class is submitted electronically, your work will be considered "on-time" when it is submitted by 11:59pm the day it is due. The Group Wiki on Assigned Readings is due by the start of class each week.

Honor Code: The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

### **Campus Resources for Students**

George Mason University offers a wide range of support to help students be successful. You should take advantage of the professionals who are here to support you while you are here. Please consult this webpage for a list of links to campus support services, ranging from academic assistance to opportunities for new experiences, to support with personal issues. <http://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus/>

Class	Topic	Reading/Assignments Due
1/24	<b>Welcome, let's get started</b> - Overview syllabus and course expectations - Community building - Framing of initial attitudes and beliefs about leadership and working in groups - Intro to using a wiki	
1/31	<b>Site visit to Robinson Square</b> Guest speaker, Jane Wilson, to introduce us to the Robinson Square community, it's population, programs, potential areas for projects there.  Issues in Community Engagement Introduce the LPI 360 process	CLCE's Community Engagement Values Statement  Wagner, "What is Social Change?"
2/7	<b>Situating our study of groups in the context of leadership theory</b> Common assumptions undergirding the industrial leadership theories Common assumptions undergirding post-industrial or "reciprocal" leadership theories	Komives, Lucas and McMahon, "The Changing Nature of Leadership"  SKIM: Levi Ch 10
2/14	<b>The nature of groups and group development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classifications of teams and foundations of group dynamics research</li> <li>How do you define a "successful" group?</li> <li>Stages of group development</li> <li>Team beginnings: norms and socialization</li> </ul> <i>Critical reflection of these dynamics in relation to project group work.</i>	Levi Ch 1,2 & 3  Group Reflection Paper #1
2/21	<b>Group processes and roles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivation</li> <li>Group cohesion</li> <li>Roles in groups</li> <li>Task roles/social roles</li> <li>Cooperation and competition</li> </ul> <i>Critical reflection of these dynamics in relation to project group work.</i>	Levi Ch 4, 5 & 6  Group Project Action Plan Due
2/28	<b>Decision-making in groups. Examining power and influence.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conformity, obedience and influence</li> <li>The bases of power</li> <li>Empowerment</li> <li>Approaches to collective decision-making</li> </ul> <i>Critical reflection of these dynamics in relation to project group work.</i>  Return outcomes of LPI 360	Levi Ch 8 & 9  Due: Group Reflection Paper #2
3/7	<b>Creativity and Groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating safe spaces for experimental, adaptive approach to change</li> <li>When group norms kill creativity</li> </ul> Improv activities for skill-building related to one's ability to listen and expand upon the ideas of others. <i>Critical reflection of these dynamics in relation to project group work.</i>  Discuss the outcomes of the LPI 360 responses Assign the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Assessment	Levi Ch 12 Sawyer, Group Genius  Individual Reflection #1
3/14	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	

3/21	<b>Problem solving and managing conflict</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approaches to collective problem-solving</li> <li>Descriptive, functional and prescriptive approaches to problem solving</li> <li>Understanding the sources of conflict</li> <li>Facilitating and negotiating conflicts</li> <li>Adaptive leadership and “doing the work”</li> </ul> <i>Critical reflection of these dynamics in relation to project group work.</i>  Self-reflection on our own conflict mode – discuss results of the Thomas-Kilmann instrument	Levi Ch 7 and 11 Heiftetz  Schedule mid-term Group Project Check for this week
3/28	<b>Teams in Context</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dimensions of international culture, intercultural dynamics</li> <li>Navigating cultural differences in an inclusive way</li> <li>Virtual teams</li> </ul> <i>Critical reflection of these dynamics in relation to project group work.</i>	Levi Ch 14 and 15  Individual Reflection #2
4/4	<b>Social identity and diversity in groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Navigating differences based on social identities</li> <li>Creating an inclusive environment</li> <li>Understanding power, privilege and marginalization</li> </ul> <i>Critical reflection of these dynamics in relation to project group work.</i>	Levi Ch 13
4/11	<b>The EDGE, Excel Series</b> Prince William Campus, 10am-4:30pm. Please pack a lunch.	Individual Reflection #3
4/18	<b>No class</b> Use this time for group work.	Group Reflection Paper #3
4/25	<b>Teams in the Organization Context</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizations as groups of groups.</li> <li>Organizational culture</li> </ul> Organizational Dynamics: Bolman and Deal’s Four Frameworks	Bolman and Deal, Reframing Organizations
5/2	<b>Group Presentations: Project Presentations</b>	
	Exams Week, Due: Individual Reflection #4	