

# Interdisciplinary Expressive Arts 3302: Creativity and Leadership in Groups

Course Outline

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# Interdisciplinary Expressive Arts 3302: Creativity and Leadership in Groups

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## Course Intention and Overview

Working creatively with groups is immensely rewarding and uniquely challenging, requiring of the facilitator a particular blend of professional skills and self-awareness that develops only through practice and experiment. This course is designed to offer learners a wide spectrum of both theoretical and experiential approaches to group work, focusing especially on core facilitation skills and creativity. We will examine group dynamics and evolution, interpersonal relationships (e.g. conflicts, giving and receiving feedback), leadership styles, curriculum development, and the role of health and healing practices.

Particular attention will be given to developing effective facilitation strategies through achieving greater self-awareness and active sensing. Participants will also learn about the emerging models of group work which focus on collaboration, community-building and creativity.

## Learning Goals

- To experience and experiment with the group format as a context for personal growth and change.
- To become familiar with current applications and theories of group work, with particular emphasis on the group as a complex, adaptive and creative system.
- To explore multicultural and alternative approaches to group work, with an emphasis on understanding the role of culture within the group format.
- To examine the relationship between facilitation skills and self-awareness.

## Learning Experiences

The course will include a variety of learning experiences contingent upon regular attendance and dedicated participation. Because group work is an interactive process, much of the class time will be devoted to group experiential exercises, individual reflective tasks and practical assignments. An integral aspect of the class process will be the formation of a *class group* which will meet each session. The development of this group will be discussed in class. The intent is to give participants an opportunity to experience a modified form of group work within the class structure. This serves as a

complement to the theoretical material offered. Completion of the group presentations, readings, and final projects (see Demonstration, below) form the balance of the class.

## Readings

- Mindell, A. (1993). *The Leader as Martial Artist*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.
- Zimmerman, Lindberg and Plsek (1998). *Edgework: Complexity Science for Health Care Leaders*. VHA.
- Various readings, articles and handouts throughout the course.

## General Course Guidelines

Perhaps the best way to learn the intricacies of facilitation is to involve yourself in groups in as many ways as possible. This means practicing not only as facilitator but also as participant. If you have not been in facilitated groups before, now is an excellent time to consider the option. If you want to know what group clients need – become one.

The classroom is an artificial setting. As such, personal issues brought by students for exploration in the process sessions should carry a smaller emotional charge than what you might bring to a genuine session with a professional facilitator or counsellor. For example, talking about a small conflict in your group or at work is typically a good practice theme, whereas your experience as the only survivor of a plane crash is not.

Remember to honor confidentiality as regards your practice sessions in the large group (the whole class) and the small group you are in. It is a serious ethical breach to discuss session content outside of the session with others who were not involved. Although session content may come up in class, this material will remain confidential to y/our group. It is very difficult to maintain confidentiality, especially when you hear juicy gossip. It is best to start practicing confidentiality as a skill early in your career, because it requires constant reinforcement. If you are serious about it, others are likely to be as well.

Trust the wisdom of your own resources as you move forward. If you know how to follow your own centre, you will have no trouble. However, none of us is able to be on track all the time, so if you get overwhelmed talk to fellow students or to the instructor. Speak up if something is not working for you. I am especially interested in you bringing forward views, techniques and opinions that are contrary to those presented in class. This adds to the learning experience for everyone involved.

And, finally: have fun.

## Demonstration of Learning

### Weekly Reflections and Responses (20 points)

After each class, write and post a reflection (~200 words) on Moodle. The reflection should be about something relates to your experience of the large group and is connected in someway to your individual project (see below). Respond to at least one other student's reflection each week (~100 words min.). The reflection could be about:

- what you observed happening in class
- how the theory and readings help/hinder your understanding of a particular theme or issue
- what is resonating for you after the class
- questions to the class about your individual project
- what you are finding difficult about the group experience

If for whatever reason you don't feel comfortable sharing a reflection with the group on Moodle, you can bring it to the class or you can share it with me personally.

At the end of the course, please hand in a compiled copy of your reflections and responses with your Individual Project (below).

### Individual: 3-2-1 Project (40 points)

Identify some aspect of group work, facilitation, personal awareness, creativity and/or leadership that you want to grow in. The idea is to choose particular questions, skills or attitudes that you can reasonably commit to developing over the course. The course materials, classroom discussions, and your own personal reflections can provide you some inspiration, material to work with and direction. Choose something that has personal resonance for you, is a bit outside your comfort zone, and feels appropriate to explore. Here are some topics of potential interest that we will be exploring through the course:

- the development of personal awareness
- groupthink and taking responsibility for thoughts, feelings, desires and fears
- working with and transforming conflict
- awakening the heart: compassion, joy, and empathy
- giving and receiving feedback

- metacommunication => taking up and shifting roles
- personal and social edges in group process
- building trust and safety in groups
- self-disclosure and being witnessed by others
- group as complex adaptive system
- emergence, mystery and the unknown in group development
- embodied skills: grounding, centering and boundaries
- shadows, archetypes and group as sacred mirror
- designing groups

3-2-1 refers to three intertwining dimensions of knowing “reality” that co-exist. 3rd-person knowledge is theoretical, conceptually-oriented and objective descriptions of “reality”. Models, frameworks, theories, observations, and empirical evidence are used. This knowledge is what can be definitively articulated. This 3-2-1 model is itself a 3rd-person description that appeals to the rational, categorizing mind.

2nd-person knowledge is interpersonal and cultural. How we interpret what we read and what others say, how we engage with other people, and how we create is shaped by the kinds of relationships we have with others and the “raw materials” we use. As you read this, there is a relationship between you as reader and me as author where we are engaged in a process of communication and meaning-making. Part of this process is about the need to belong and be connected with others and the world.

1st-person knowledge is about our subjective experience and perceptions. As I write this, I am aware of a sense of excitement and anxiousness about how this course will go. I can feel my heart beating with some vigour in anticipation of meeting you. My interiority is about my my deepest experienced and felt sense of self.

We will explore these three dimensions to group throughout the course. I also invite you to use the 3-2-1 framework to guide your inquiry into the particular area or question you would like to explore in the course. Your project does not have to be divided into the following three sections and I invite you into a creative weaving of the three. The integrative element will likely be whatever potential is wanting to emerge in your life and/or in the group setting. This could be an enduring image, question, pattern or process.

The 3-2-1 project should not be limited to a compositional essay, though it must include the compositional elements above. It should include some works of creative expression that you have made yourself such as drawings and/or poems, etc. The purpose of the project is to give you an opportunity to develop the inner work, interpersonal, and research skills needed to work ethically, sustainably, creatively and systematically in groups.

## Research and Theory (3rd-person)

- What does the literature and research have to say about your topic?
- What is your critical appraisal of the literature/research? What are the strengths of this research? What are its limitations and shortcomings?
- Why is this topic important to creativity, leadership, group development, etc.?
- What is said about how one goes about developing the particular skills, attitudes, etc. that are central to the area you want to grow in?
- What is your plan, strategy, or process for developing these skills, attitudes, etc.?

## Relational Work (2nd-person)

Experiences as a facilitator, leader, and member in a group (formally or informally defined) are excellent opportunities to learn about hidden parts of yourself. Relationships are vehicles for growth, if we can approach them with awareness and skillfulness! To this extent, many of the communities, groups and relationships you are connected to during this course become learning opportunities. You are encouraged to do relational work in context of these relationships as it seems appropriate to you.

The main “laboratory”, if you will, is the class group itself. The expectation is that you will attend all sessions and involve yourself in the class process. Your willingness to engage creatively with the learning process, to take appropriate personal risks, and to participate in group activities are all central to your involvement in this class. Because developing a facilitation and leadership style is very much a process of blending your own personal awareness with skills and practical techniques, your own emotional involvement in the class is as important as your academic knowledge of the material. Some questions you might consider:

- What you have learned about yourself through giving and receiving feedback?
- What roles do you like to take in groups and which ones do you avoid?
- What “metaskills” would you like to develop as a facilitator?
- What are your fears and edges in being in groups? How would you like to work with them? How does your work here also help others who have similar challenges?
- What are the implicit explicit rules and norms of the group?
- Does the group have any shadows?

- What are your strengths and resources in group contexts? How do you put them to use and how do they affect the group?

## Self-Awareness Practice (1st-person)

The most proficient facilitators and counsellors are those who demonstrate commitment to self-awareness. They consistently query their own responses, thoughts, and feelings. They ask themselves:

- What am I feeling right now?
- What am I thinking right now?
- Why am I reacting in this particular way?
- What do my thoughts, feelings, and reactions tell me about myself?
- Is there anything about my current behavior that suggests unresolved themes in my life?
- Is my perception of myself consistent with what other people tell me about the kind of person I am?
- When and how do I get stuck, and what am I doing to work on this?
- In what ways do I get overwhelmed, or shut down, or avoid?

These questions, and many others, require the capacity for self-reflection and self-awareness. As we continue in the course, you may wish to consider these questions as they apply to you. At the very least, you might wish to consider what you are currently working on in your life, in which direction your attention is drawn, into which of the innumerable themes of human nature you are now called to delve.

Meditation, dreamwork, autobiographical writing, reflections, and journaling are examples of the many different ways we can examine our subjective experience with some thoroughness. Feelings, thoughts, emotions, sensations, intuitions, and dreams are part of the multi-dimensional human experience. Mindfulness meditation for example, supports one's ability to be aware of the present moment and explore the relationship between mind and body. Dreamwork and active imagination exercises show us the way the unconscious speaks to us through images and movements. Writing about our lives, past and present, begins to reveal particular threads and motifs about the path we have taken. The key here is practice. Looking inward and doing it "well" (that is, there is some authenticity and precision to what we discover) takes effort and guidance. We will explore some modalities in class. You likely already have some practices that support your awareness.



## Assessment Criteria for the 3-2-1 Project

### *Self-assessment (5)*

The individual project is due on the last day of class and will include a written self-assessment of at least 500 words. To this end, the self-assessment should include answers to some of the following questions (answers need not be itemized):

- What went well, where did you struggle, and how do you feel about the process you undertook during this project?
- What were the best and worst moments of this project? What did you learn from these moments?
- How might you have improved this project, of your experience of it?
- What did you learn about groups, creativity and leadership while working on this project?
- What did you learn about yourself while working on this project?
- How does what you learned apply to your studies at Kwantlen and to your sense of your future direction?
- What advice would you give to others who might be undertaking a similar project?
- What did this project mean to you? What might it mean for others?
- Do you plan to continue this project further, or to work on similar projects in the future?
- You learned something crucial in this project which you won't discover for a while. Make a guess now about what that might be.
- **PLEASE ANSWER THIS ONE: Are you proud of this project? Is it your best work? What grade out of 5 would you give yourself?**

### *Facilitator assessment (35)*

I will evaluate your project according to following criteria:

- Commitment to the development of personal and professional self-awareness.
- Awareness of personal strengths and challenges in facilitation.
- Ability to apply themes of personal development to a group setting.
- Originality and creativity.
- Application of new learning from class.
- Quality of composition.
- Clarity and organization.
- References to "scholarly" and/or "credible" materials (at least three are required).

In my role as your facilitator, I will be paying attention to how thoughtful you are in examining and responding to questions like those in the first list above. I will not be analyzing you, but rather noticing what kinds of things you do, what your reactions are to various situations. This is a basic facilitation skill and one which I will demonstrate repeatedly throughout the course. My goal in observing your behaviors and interacting with you is to assist you in developing greater self-awareness. Self-awareness is the most foundational skill of all, and is therefore an aspect of assessment in this course (see below and rubric attached). I will not be evaluating your level of self-awareness but rather your openness to the process of developing your self-awareness. The following elements will be part of self-awareness in this course:

- Willingness to take appropriate risks and to challenge oneself.
- Willingness to speak up and to lead.
- Openness to interpersonal process.
- Willingness to collaborate with other practice co-facilitators.
- Consideration of and responsiveness to others.
- Commitment to enhancing the interpersonal experience of everyone in the group.
- Willingness to examine personal values, beliefs, and judgments.
- Ability to take personal responsibility for learning.
- Willingness to deal with conflicts appropriately if and when they arise.
- Ability to be open and responsive to appropriate feedback.

**The 3-2-1 project is due in the second-to-last session.**

### *Group Presentation (40 points)*

Each participant will help develop, with two or three other class members, a practice facilitation exercise to be completed in one of the last 6 sessions of the course. The schedule will be determined in class. Selecting a modality, performance, exercise or approach, and with prior instructor approval, each group will practice facilitation (with the class as a practice group) for between 45 minutes. The practice facilitation exercises must provide an experiential component, a group discussion component, and an informational/theoretical component. Additionally, each practice facilitation group must provide approximately equal practice facilitation time to each of its members. Each group will also prepare a one page summary of their modality or exercise (with short reference bibliography, as required) to present to each member of the group.

## Assessment Criteria for the Group Presentation

- Were considerate of and responsiveness to others
- Could deal with conflicts appropriately if and when they arise.
- Ability to be open and responsive to appropriate feedback.
- The presentation was original and creative
- The techniques and practices were well explained, appropriate and effectively used
- Facilitators created warm, responsive and alive connections with group
- The purpose for engaging in the group experience was clearly communicated (either verbally or through other means)
- The facilitators were attentive to what arose in the present moment (ie. feedback from group, some unexpected or challenging situation)
- The facilitators worked well as a team

### *Self evaluation (5)*

You will complete a self-evaluation form after your group presentation, due the day after.

### *Group evaluation (10)*

Your group members will evaluate you using an evaluation form, due the day after.

### *Class evaluation (10) and Instructor evaluation (15)*

After each presentation, the instructor and the class will evaluate your group. We will discuss the qualitative and substantive components immediately following your presentation.

## Assessment Philosophy

Unlike many other fields, in which competence and skill may be measured objectively, using replicable and consistent means (tests of factual knowledge, for example), group facilitation depends almost entirely on the interpersonal skills of the practitioner. Computer programmers can be assessed by their ability to write code; chiropractors can be evaluated based on their skill at manipulating the human skeleton; race car drivers can be clocked around a track. But for group facilitators there are no such fixed measures. Interpersonal skills are subtle, difficult to quantify, and complex beyond any measurement scheme.

And yet we can identify those who possess exemplary personal skills. They are relaxed, open, responsive, kind. Often they exhibit skills that we tend to assign to the social sphere: personal warmth, consideration of others, hesitancy to judge, sensitivity

to emotions. To some extent, these features – which are aspects of temperament more than they are learned skills – can be evaluated using rating scales based on observation. Empathy rating scales are often used for this purpose in counselling training programs. Such scales, or other, similar assessment measures, are useful as baselines, or starting points; but they cannot replace the interpretations of peers and colleagues – of regular people, in other words – in assessing the interpersonal skills of a facilitator. There are simply far too many factors in interpersonal communication for any standardized evaluation procedure to measure.

Practicing facilitators are assessed by their clients and to a lesser extent by their colleagues. In all large-scale studies that have examined satisfaction and success in group work, clients consistently report that their trust of the facilitator and their feelings of good will in the relationship were the most important factors in contributing to growth and change. The actual approach of the facilitator appears to be irrelevant, essentially, with regard to the progress clients make.

Facilitators in training have few (if any) opportunities to be assessed by actual clients. Instead, they must be assessed by their student peers and by their instructors. The process of this assessment works best when it takes into account the subtle interpersonal factors described above.

## Grade Inflation

Almost every semester there are students who do well on the assignments, complete all the associated learning goals of the course, participate well, and wonder why they do not receive a grade of one hundred percent (or 98, anyway). Here is the reason: almost every semester there are students who demonstrates a level of commitment that goes beyond the course requirement. Such students complete extra work, or hand in exemplary assignments, or undertake a significant amount of personal development in addition to the course expectations. Such students typically receive the highest grades.

If you do reasonably well in the course you will receive a reasonable grade. Very high grades are intended for extra or exemplary work. Unfortunately, over the past thirty years the post-secondary educational system in North America has participated in a process of grade inflation. Since the 1980's, the average grade for typical course work has been increasing by about 25 per cent each decade. Elevated assessments do not accurately reflect the work of most students. Even worse, grade inflation has caused many students to expect high grades for average work. I am not a particularly stringent assessor; but I will not inflate grades artificially.

If you are uncertain about your assessment for a given assignment, or if you wish to know where, roughly, you are along the distribution curve of the class, or if you would like suggestions for how to improve your grade, please ask me for clarification.

If you wish to achieve a good grade, please do the following:

- Show up for class – every class. This course depends on student engagement. (This becomes especially important during the final weeks of the semester.)

- Be attentive and mindful to the various criteria listed for each of the projects and the course overall.
- Take the initiative to plan and develop your projects and presentations. This course is (very likely) more fluid and spontaneous than you are used to. Your ability to manage your time, commitment, and energy is crucial.
- Speak up in every class (review the criteria for group engagement and presentations).
- Don't look for the right answer to a question or challenge. Instead, find the answer that is meaningful to you.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Commit to your projects in a substantial way. Good projects take time. Rushed projects are obviously rushed.

Finally, please be attentive to the Kwantlen policies on academic honesty and plagiarism, which can be found at the following URLs:

Academic Honesty: [http://www.kwantlen.ca/\\_\\_shared/assets/Honesty1432.pdf](http://www.kwantlen.ca/__shared/assets/Honesty1432.pdf)

Plagiarism and Cheating: <http://www.kwantlen.ca/policies/C-LearnerSupport/c08.pdf>

## Assessment Forms

The following forms are used by me to assess your involvement in the class. The rankings, from 0 to 3, represent the following:

0: Failed to complete the given criteria

1: Approaches course goals for the given criteria; some work still needed

2: Meets expected course goals

3: Exceeds course goals

## Attendance and Participation

Assessment Criteria	Level
Attendance	/10
Commitment to the development of self-awareness	1 2 3
Openness to interpersonal process	1 2 3
Ability to participate in appropriate self-disclosure	1 2 3
Consideration of and responsiveness to others	1 2 3
Willingness to take appropriate risks and to challenge oneself	1 2 3
Commitment to enhancing the interpersonal experience of all class members	1 2 3
Ability to take personal responsibility for learning	1 2 3
Willingness to deal with conflicts appropriately if and when they arise	1 2 3
Ability to be open and responsive to appropriate feedback	1 2 3
Willingness to speak up, to join conversations, and to contribute	1 2 3

## Group Presentation

Assessment Criteria	Level
Willingness to take appropriate risks and to challenge oneself	1 2 3
Willingness to speak up and to lead	1 2 3
Openness to interpersonal process	1 2 3
Willingness to collaborate with other practice co-facilitators	1 2 3
Consideration of and responsiveness to others	1 2 3
Commitment to enhancing the interpersonal experience of all class members	1 2 3
Willingness to examine personal values, beliefs, and judgments	1 2 3
Ability to take personal responsibility for learning	1 2 3
Willingness to deal with conflicts appropriately if and when they arise	1 2 3
Ability to be open and responsive to appropriate feedback	1 2 3

## Appendix: The IDEA Skill Set

Perhaps it's most helpful to come at interdisciplinarity in terms of a skill set. Thinking and acting in an interdisciplinary way is really a matter of looking at the process of learning. Instead of focusing on the "content", we might ask questions about how we are identifying, interpreting, using, creating, and communicating this content. These are process questions.

### Asking/Forming/Creating a "Good" Question

The questions we ask tell us a lot about how we think, the assumptions we make and what we're willing to accept as answers.

- What is a "good" question?
- How do questions emerge? Where do they come from?
- How does a question evolve?
- How do we hold space for our questions and how do they "work" on us?

### Critical Thinking and Crap Detecting

We are often quick to believe what we read and what we hear, especially when it comes from sources that we deem "authoritative". Teachers, journal articles, media, books, professors, parents, and peers all have their own take on what is correct and true. Who is right? How do we know what we're hearing is not false or misconstrued?

- Is this true? From what perspective is it true? What other perspectives can be taken that are also true?
- What evidence is being used to support the claim? Is the evidence appropriate for the kind of claim being made?
- What ideologies, assumptions and beliefs are at play? How do they impact the interpretation of "facts"?



## Finding, Using and Evaluating Resources

Resources are what we use to accomplish something. We have internal resources such as courage, compassion, mindfulness and so on to help us create, learn and work with the challenges of life. People in our lives such as teachers, peers, mentors, and guides have skills, experience, and knowledge that can potentially help us accomplish a goal. As well, the internet, books and other sources of information are valuable resources.

- How do we know what resources we need to accomplish a goal? Are they internal, interpersonal, or codified? What are the means by which we access these resources?
- How do we know if the sources we're accessing are good or the right ones for our goal? How do we evaluate their quality?

## Communication (speaking, listening, writing, performing)

Language is expressed verbally and non-verbally in a particular relational context of culture, values and past experience. Our ability to translate ideas into words and actions, move an audience into a compelling dialogue, or simply be present to someone else, requires an awareness of these contexts and good communication skills.

- How does a mindful and embodied presence shape how we speak and listen?
- How do we write articulately, persuasively, and with accuracy and authenticity?
- How do our values shape the way we communicate?

## Working in a Group

Groups offer invaluable opportunities for personal development, creating knowledge and performances that can transcend the efforts of any one individual, and developing interpersonal skills. The following elements are some of the important capabilities required for healthy group process.

- building trust and a culture of collaboration
- attending to individual needs and the needs of the group
- sharing responsibility
- giving and receiving feedback

- embracing and resolving minor conflicts

## Following Through on a Process

Any creative process that generates new forms of knowledge (arts, sciences and otherwise) typically has a number of phases. These phases don't always happen in order and are not necessarily discrete events, but it's helpful to think about the ecocycle of creative work. First, there is the discovery of interest or passion. The question or idea may not even be fully formed at this point, but there's a spark that feels like it's worth following. Next, we immerse ourselves in the topic. We read, have conversations, mess around with different approaches. Basically, we commit to learning as much as we can about our passion. At some point we have consciously consumed as much as we can about the topic that we need a break from thinking about it. We let the questions incubate and trust that they are working under the surface in the dark soil. "Spring" eventually comes, perhaps after a long "winter" and some insights and breakthroughs emerge. Little shoots pop up out of the soil. We are careful to not jump to conclusions and create space for ideas and insights to slowly emerge through a process of articulating and capturing. In the last stages, we bring all the elements together in a creative synthesis and share the bounty of our harvest.

- What is happening at each stage of the creative process? What are the challenges of each stage? How do we support the work that needs to be done in this phase?
- How do we manage our time in such a way that we are able to do creative work sustainably? Doing the preparatory work, looking for and taking opportunities, experimenting, being realistic about time, taking care of mind/body/heart/soul, and attending to other responsibilities all require good skills in managing our time.

## Self-Evaluation

Growing personally and professionally is a process that has no end point. Although growth is challenging, and at times painful, it is critical to finding a new sense of meaning and vitality in our life and work. Living systems that come to an equilibrium with their environment, stick with the status quo and are content with living in their comfort zone do not live for very long! Self-evaluation involves looking at our strengths and weaknesses, consider the evidence and feedback in these areas, identifying where we wish to grow, creating a game plan for how we plan to address our weaknesses, and celebrating our successes.

- Looking at the skill set above, what areas am I strong and weak in? What's the evidence that this is the case?
- Are there places where I wish to grow? What's involved in growing in this area?

- What opportunities can I find and/or create to grow? How do I take responsibility for working on myself?
- How does the feedback from others and the "results" of our attempts to develop a skill tell us how we're doing? How do we decide if the feedback means we should maintain our course of action or take a different path?
- Can I celebrate the journey and allow myself to appreciate where there is growth and change?