

Syllabus
GMIN 5033 – Small Group Ministry
January 18-20 and March 1-3, 2007
Oklahoma Christian University
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

“Higher Learning – Higher Calling”

Oklahoma Christian University seeks to be a premier Christian institution of higher learning and higher calling.

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Texts--Required

Ellas, John. *Small Groups and Established Churches*. Center for Church Growth, 2005.

Texts—Recommended¹

Arnold, Jeffrey. *Big Book of Small Groups*, 2nd ed. IVP, 2004.
Comiskey, Joel. *Cell Church Solutions*. CCS, 2005.
Donahue, Bill. *Building a Church of Small Groups*. Zondervan, 2001.
Donahue, Bill. *Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry*. Zondervan, 2002.
Donahue, Bill. *Walking the Small Groups Tightrope*. Zondervan, 2003.
Ellas, John. *Church Growth Through Groups*. Center for Church Growth, 1990.
Long, Jimmy. *Small Group Leaders Handbook: Next*. IVP, 1995.
Grenz, Stanley. *Created for Community*. Victor, 1996 (or 2nd edition, Baker, 1998).

¹ Several books (Arnold; Donahue, *Building*) are general treatments and good overall resources. There are many other books of this general type. Students may choose to purchase other similar works as resources and for book reviews, reports, and summaries. New books are appearing continuously in this field, some with more emphasis in related areas such as house church, cell church, SIMPLE church, small groups and church planting, emergent church, missional church. Students are encouraged to consider the works of Joel Comiskey as options if they have an interest in cell churches, church planting, and international or mission applications.

The Ellas text will be discussed extensively in class. It has the advantage of being written out of the general church background many class members share. It also integrates the biblical, historical, cultural, religious, and social factors involved in groups. It has the weakness of thinking only about small groups in relationship to established churches.

Every student should read and become familiar with the theology and biblical foundations of community. Students may choose a text other than the Grenz text listed. Other possibilities include the following: Richards and Hoeldtke, *A Theology of Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980); Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994); Longnecker, ed., *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today* (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 2002); or Gorman, *Community That Is Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1993). Richards and Hoeldtke provide some emphasis on group or community dynamics but focus primarily on leadership. Icenogle is a classic in outlining biblical foundations of community. Longnecker's work is a bit more theological, and as a compilation of articles, at times is more disconnected. Gorman provides an excellent handbook, but the theological and biblical treatment is generally limited to the first two chapters.

Course Description

This course is an examination of the scriptural foundations of biblical community in the local church with a primary emphasis on small groups.

“In this course successful students will be able to demonstrate a knowledge of the theological foundations, cultural considerations, and essential characteristics that should form and guide small group ministries. Students will also show an in-depth understanding of the practical strategies for implementation, organization, leadership, training, curriculum, and birthing processes of small groups.”

Course Objectives

1. To acquaint the student with the general area of small group ministry studies and closely related fields. The student will become familiar with the history of the small group movement, will recognize the significance of past studies, and will be able to trace the development of the movement. The student will also understand and be able to describe the significance of the following: SIMPLE church, house church movement, cell churches, church planting, missional church, emergent church.
2. To acquaint the student with the dynamics of healthy churches, an understanding of church development models, and various church typologies based on size, demographics, leadership models, etc. The student will be able to explain church typology relating to small groups, small group typology, and current resources in this field of study, and will develop the ability to converse about and explain the multi-faceted dynamics of small group ministry.
3. To equip the student with the necessary backgrounds to think about small group ministry in the context of contemporary missional and emergent church literature. The student will be able to integrate small group (and other) ministry factors with the missional focus.
4. To acquaint the student with the dynamics of conflict and change as foundation for effectively handling the potential challenges that are often part of planning, implementing, and organizing a small group ministry. The student will understand various sources of conflict and will be able to choose an effective conflict management model to assist in solving conflict.
5. To develop an understanding of the biblical and theological foundations for small group ministry so that the students can help a congregation appreciate the place of small groups in God’s plan for humanity, and can defend small groups as one method of fulfilling God’s plan for community among his people.
6. To identify societal and cultural shifts and factors related to the explosion of small groups in contemporary cultures, and to develop an understanding of how contemporary small group efforts reflect those societal and cultural shifts.
7. To assist the student in integrating the biblical/theological foundations with the applicable cultural factors to arrive at an integrated, practical view of small group ministry.
8. To help the student understand the processes behind practical strategies for implementing and organizing a small group program in a local church, so that the student can develop an effective, focused plan for implementing a small group program in a specific ministry context.
9. To familiarize the student with essential aspects of small group ministry such as leadership, training, and curriculum.
10. To develop the ability to plan, facilitate, lead, and evaluate a small group ministry by modeling an effective small group dynamic.

Course Requirements—Assignments, Assessment, and Grades

1. Class attendance/participation (15%). Note: attendance must be at least 90% to avoid a grade penalty—maximum allowed absence, including tardies, is [4] hours. The grade for this section includes reading exams and homework assignments as assigned.

*Students should come to class prepared to discuss their past experience in small groups and to creatively think about the goals and outcomes of the course.

*Students will divide into groups during class time, participate in small group experiences, and evaluate the experience and progress.

*Because of the nature of the small group experience, it is vital that the student be present for the class experience. Students should expect to be present for every class session in the short course with no absences.

2. Examinations (40%)

*20% The first exam will be given at the beginning of class on the second weekend, and will cover materials previously presented in class and other assigned readings.

*20% The final exam will be comprehensive and will be given on the last day of class.

3. Class Projects (45%)

*Students will submit three class projects as described in the class. Students may, in addition to the projects suggested by the instructor, suggest a project of interest to them. Each of the projects will count for 15% of the final grade in the course. One of the three projects must be a book review. The book review and the first project will be due March 1, 2007. The second project will be due March 30, 2007. One of the projects must be a term paper or research project.

Research project or term paper. Students must complete a research project on some aspect of small group ministry. The subject chosen must be approved by the professor. The following guidelines apply to the research paper.

This paper should be at least 15 pages in length and not longer than 18 pages (not counting title page, appendices, or bibliography; endnotes are included in the page count). Students must use a 12 point font, footnotes are preferred to endnotes, formatted according to Turabian 6th edition, bibliography of at least 10 sources (not counting Bibles). Sources should be thoughtfully chosen from recent and current materials—Internet and electronic media, books, professional and scholarly periodicals, and general reference works. Students should attempt to access the most pertinent and relevant materials, and not simply to pad the bibliography to the required level. Papers turned in early will be graded and returned within one week, and will be eligible for improvement and resubmission up until the deadline. Papers should not be resubmitted more than twice. *Any paper submitted should not have been previously submitted for any other undergraduate or graduate class. If a student uses material from previously submitted research, such should be footnoted appropriately.*

Grading Scale

The student is encouraged to consult the following web page for a description of the criteria used in assigning grades: www.bobyongresources.com/academics/gradetable.htm .

The following numerical values apply to this class, rather than those reflected in the table: A = 92+, B=83-91, C=74-82, D=65-73; [<65=failing]

An “I” (incomplete) is available to the student who cannot complete work by the end of the semester due to an emergency. Procrastination is not an emergency. A student who sees that he or she cannot complete work timely should communicate with the professor as soon as possible concerning the difficulty. Work should be completed as soon as possible after the end of the

semester. Incomplete grades will not be allowed to remain for extended periods of time unless the student can demonstrate that work is being done and progress is occurring.

Attendance Policy

Studies show that the probability of success in academic endeavors is directly proportional to the regularity of class attendance and involvement. Therefore, evaluation criteria are generally weighted in favor of regular class attendance and participation. Unexcused absences in this class may lower the student's final grade up to a grade point. All students are expected to attend every class session. This is especially important in a graduate seminar class with smaller enrollments and increased opportunities for discussion. Preparation for class and participation in the class are essential. Participation in the discussions requires awareness of the issues and topics covered and the ability to think critically concerning the application of the concepts. Therefore, students are generally quizzed at each class meeting over the readings for that class period.

Students whose unexcused absences exceed 10% of the class will be penalized a grade point. Students whose unexcused absences exceed 15% of the class will be dropped. Students dropped are required to meet with the professor and submit their written plan for maintaining attendance and progress in the class before reinstatement. Reinstatement does not "restart the clock," and further absences will again result in the student being dropped from the class.

The student should be aware that much learning takes place during class. Participation and quiz grades cannot be recorded for absent students. Students with excessive absences may not perform successfully on exams. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor in writing or by phone in advance or no later than 24 hours after an absence which should be excused. The student is responsible for obtaining all assignments and completing any work missed.

Classroom Conduct and Participation

Students must arrive at class on time. Quizzes are usually administered at the beginning of class. A student who must arrive at class late is expected to enter class without being disruptive and wait until after class to explain the reason for his or her tardiness. Learning occurs when we ask questions about concepts and words unfamiliar to us, when we explore cross-disciplinary applications, and when we actively participate in the learning process. Involvement in the class interaction will be the primary gauge of your class participation grade. Disruptive behavior will lower the class participation grade.

Late Assignments

Homework must be turned in on time or early. If you cannot turn work in on time, you must ask for permission to turn the work in late. Students should realize that such is not consistent with the general expectations of graduate studies. In some cases, late homework cannot be accepted since the answers are given in class. Late homework, if accepted, will be accepted only during the next class period following the date the homework was due with one letter grade reduction (10%). The grade reduction will be waived for excused absences. Daily in-class work and quizzes cannot be made up. Major assignments must be produced and submitted on the timetable set forth in class. Students who do not follow the timetable for identifying topics, researching sources, outlining, and producing an acceptable paper cheat both themselves and other students. Major assignments that are to be presented in class must be presented on the day scheduled. Students who see that they will be unable to submit or present major assignments as scheduled

must, no later than one week before the due date, ask for permission to submit or present the work late.

Students who do not produce and submit timely work will fail the class. An exception is made for work which is late due to uncontrollable circumstances such as illness or family emergencies. When such circumstances occur near the end of the semester and prohibit the student finishing the course requirements timely, an I (incomplete) may be given to allow the student time to complete the work.

Make-up Examination Policy

Make-up exams are available only in extreme emergencies. Arrangements for make-up exams should be made with the professor prior to the exam.

Academic Honesty

Cheating. Cheating on an examination or an assignment undermines the ethics of the academy and the specific Christian purposes of Oklahoma Christian University. Accordingly, students who cheat on examinations or assignments will face serious consequences, as outlined in the policy below.

Plagiarism. One particular form of cheating is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the transmission of another's ideas, words, or materials as one's own and/or the failure to credit accurately the ideas, words, or materials of another. Plagiarism also includes passing off another's work (a friend, a parent, a website) as one's own. Plagiarism undermines the ethics of the academy and the specific Christian purposes of Oklahoma Christian University. Accordingly, students who engage in plagiarism in papers submitted will face serious consequences, as outlined in the policy below.

Penalties for Academic Dishonesty

1. On the first offense, the student will receive a 0 for the examination or assignment. Professors shall send documentation of the first offense to the appropriate chair, the dean of the appropriate college, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Dean of Students.

2. On the second offense, the student will receive an F in the course. Professors shall send documentation of the second offense to the appropriate chair, the dean of the appropriate college, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Dean of Students.

3. If the student receives an F in two courses for cheating and/or plagiarism, he or she will be suspended from the university.

Professors should maintain the highest standards of academic honesty both in and out of the classroom. Professors must report and apply the rules regarding cheating/plagiarism to the appropriate channels.

Written papers, essays, book reviews, and research projects

Materials to be handed in for grading should be prepared according to exacting standards. Samples of books reviews and a suggested grading template are available online. Papers should follow the general rules of Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* (Sixth Edition), with special attention to details often considered irrelevant by students, e.g. margins, spacing, and similar mechanics. A writing guide developed by the professor is available online and is referenced below. The University also provides help with writing skills and techniques through the Writing Lab. Students should submit all assignments in hard copy (not by email).

Reading Examinations

Reading exams employ short answer formats (completion, multiple choice, or matching). Exams must be taken with the rest of the class and generally cannot be made up.

Withdrawal Procedure

Class withdrawal procedures as set forth in the catalog must be followed. The student must initiate an official process involving their advisor and the chair of graduate Bible. Non-attendance does not constitute official withdraw. The student who neither attends nor drops the class will ultimately receive a failing grade.

Policy regarding computers and electronic devices; laptop etiquette

Students are not allowed to bring any electronic device with memory or communication capability to an exam, including but not limited to cell phones, calculators, pagers, etc. to examinations. It is requested that cell phones brought to class be turned off or be set to signal incoming calls silently. A student who must take a call should leave the classroom.

Students are allowed to bring laptops to class exclusively for class related activity during the class period, e.g. taking notes and viewing online materials suggested by the professor. Laptops are not to be used during class for any activities that do not pertain to the current class activity and discussion. The professor may at times instruct students to close laptops to give full attention to a class project, discussion, or presentation. If in the opinion of the professor, the student is not following this policy the procedures on academic honesty will be followed. Any student who brings a laptop to class agrees to use it in class only for legitimate class activities and according to this laptop policy.

Blackboard

Insofar as practical, the professor will use Blackboard to communicate with the students, especially after the class has concluded. Students are expected to check Blackboard regularly to supplement instructions received in class.

Email Policy

Students may feel free to consult the professor by email with concerns, questions, or comments that were not addressed in class. Emails should accurately indicate the subject in the subject line. The professor will read and reply as soon as possible. Students needing a rapid reply are encouraged to call. Please do not use the mailing lists you have from this class, faculty and students, for spamming.

Papers and Presentations

Students should note that materials may be submitted early with the possibility of improvement and resubmission, according to the guidelines outlined below. Papers will be graded according to the professor's published guidelines, using the following percentages to weight the grading process: content 70%, organization and style 20%, grammar and literary mechanics 10%.

Students can find assistance in evaluating the various aspects of their paper at

www.bobyongresources.com/academics/researchguide.htm.

Course Schedule

This class will meet January 18-20 and March 1-3. The class will generally meet from 5-9 on Thursday evening, 8-5 on Friday, and 8-12 on Saturday. This schedule may be altered with class approval to meet the needs of the students. [A more detailed course calendar appears below.]

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement (ADA/504)

If you have a diagnosed disability and need special accommodations, please notify Amy Janzen (425-5907) before or immediately after your first scheduled class meeting. After your disability has been verified, your instructor will work with you, with Amy Janzen, and with the Office of the Vice President of Academic affairs to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that you have a fair opportunity to perform in the course.

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