

EXAMPLE OF STUDENT HANDOUT ON STUDY GROUPS

WOMEN AND SOCIETY: SOCIAL SCIENCE 1185

Professor Linda Briskin

2004-2005

INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDY GROUPS

As part of this course's focus on self-directed and collaborative learning strategies, study groups of 3-4 students will be set up to meet one hour a week outside of class. The groups have a five-fold purpose:

- i) to discuss course readings in order to prepare for tutorials;
- ii) to discuss course assignments and prepare for tests and exams;
- iii) to raise questions about lectures and share notes; you may find it useful to go over your notes collectively and fill in parts you missed, ask for clarifications etc;
- iv) to discuss personal issues related to course material; and
- v) to act as a buddy system, that is, if one of you misses a class, a study group partner can share her notes and pick up copies of handouts. If you notice that a member of your study group has missed several classes, you may want to give her a call.

Past evidence suggests that students who take full advantage of these study groups achieve much higher grades and enjoy the course more. At least once a semester, some tutorial time will be allocated for feedback on how the groups are doing.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE GROUP WORK

1. Plan your time. At the beginning of the session, decide how you will spend the hour. Monitor the use of time.
2. Balance personal discussion with a focus on the course material. Spend some time checking in and talking about personal issues, but also discuss course material.
3. Share time. Encourage everyone to participate. Do a round. Everyone should take responsibility for monitoring and supporting participation.
4. Plan for next meeting. At the end of each session, take the last five minutes to plan your next meeting. For example, you may assign each person to write questions or prepare a summary on one of the readings.
5. Utilize members' strengths and work together on areas that need development. For example, if one member is very experienced using email, she can share this expertise.

DISCUSSION STRATEGIES

[Adapted from "Study Group Guide for Students" by Katie Caldwell at
<<http://www.math.yorku.ca/new/undergrad/sgGuide.htm>>

1. Listen carefully. Try not to interrupt. Respond to, or at least acknowledge, comments made or questions asked by other group members.
2. Do not accept confusion passively. If you do not understand what someone has said, try to paraphrase it or ask someone to help you paraphrase it.
3. Make a habit of explaining your reasoning, that is, thinking out loud, and ask others to do the same. The process of constructing and refining explanations increases the depth of your learning.

FIRST MEETING

At your first meeting, do a round where each person introduces herself and talks a little about her interests and her background. Be sure to exchange phone numbers and email addresses.

WHERE TO MEET

The Scott library has 'quiet discussion rooms' which students can book on-line at
<http://delta.library.yorku.ca/mrbs/>.

Many of the colleges have quiet spaces where study groups can meet, especially Junior Common Rooms and study halls. The Computing Commons also has three rooms that can be booked for student meetings.

USING EMAIL AS AN ALTERNATIVE VEHICLE

These study groups will be organized at times that permit your attendance. But you should also consider using email as a vehicle for continuing conversation.

STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For the first five meetings of your study group, please discuss these questions for part of your hour together. Your tutorial leader will be interested in feedback on these discussions.

WEEK ONE QUESTION

How do family and friends react to your taking a course entitled "Women and Society"? How would you explain their reactions? How do you respond to them?

WEEK TWO QUESTION

We are surrounded by images of women on billboards, in print advertising, in the movies and on TV. What are the common characteristics of the images of women? Are these images realistic? How do these images/women make you feel? Do you think they present positive role models for women?

WEEK THREE QUESTION

Imagine an ordinary weekend. You spend time with friends, go shopping, maybe go out to a club or dancing. Maybe you have dinner at a restaurant and see a movie with your partner. On Sunday you and your partner have brunch with your parents. You use public transportation. On one occasion, you meet someone that you work with and introduce your partner to this person.

Imagine this weekend as a heterosexual couple. Imagine this weekend as a lesbian couple. Discuss the differences.

WEEK FOUR QUESTION

Describe one way you have experienced or witnessed inequality in your own life, or in the lives of families, friends and/or community. What conclusions can your group draw based on these experiences?

WEEK FIVE QUESTION

In your view, what is a feminist? How would you define feminism? Try to identify how you came to have these views. On what basis and from where did you develop these views?

Would you call yourself a feminist? Why or why not? Do you see any risks or rewards from identifying yourself as a feminist?