

Things to consider when organising a Critical Realism Reading Group

1. **Organisers** – one person, or at most two who keep in touch with each other, should be responsible for sending out details of meetings to the group. They don't have to take responsibility for organising everything – encourage members to volunteer to help out.
2. **Kick off meeting** – make this longer to allow time to discuss the 'housekeeping' (such as meeting duration, frequency, options to share / store readings, data storage and security (i.e. GDPR - is everyone ok with sharing email addresses and where will documents be stored for people to access later?), roles and responsibilities (who will send out invites?), etc. For example, a monthly meeting on the 4th week of the month, with rotating speakers, for one hour duration, documents to be stored in a shared folder, etc.
3. **Admin** – send out an email with reading reference and link to the online video conferencing at least two weeks before the meeting. This allows people time to read, digest and make notes.
4. **Mix** – consider approaching established academics in your field or location and asking them to be part of the group. Having a mix of people with different levels of experience is ideal for a productive reading group.
5. **Meetings** – for a one hour meeting via MS Teams or Zoom try 20 minutes of speaker time to explain and discuss an article, with 40 minutes of discussion. The speaker does not have to be the authority on the article! They present, give a critique, raise any observations they have and then let the group discuss it.
6. **Speakers** – rotate speakers each month from within the reading group. As the group becomes more established, consider inviting external speakers to attend and discuss their work. You will know who might be suitable from reading their work – be confident about your ability to identify suitable speakers and approach them. Most are happy to discuss their work.
7. **Topics** – the first few meetings will be articles/readings that the speaker wants to talk about. But as you go on, get opinions from the group about what topics/authors they would like to focus on. This can help you schedule a rota of readings and speakers to meet the needs of the group.
8. **Publicity** – one person, or at most two, should act as a contact point for enquiries, particularly from possible new members. You can use social media to let people know your group exists and how to get in touch. The CR Network has a Twitter account, a Facebook page, a 'Groups' page on the website and a blog, all of which can be used to publicise your group and/or meetings. Contact criticalrealismnetwork@gmail.com to make use of these (it may take a few days to respond).
9. **Review** – about every three months check in with the group – are they getting what they want from it, what more do they need, what's working/not working?
10. **Lifecycle** – reading groups need not last forever! Sometimes the circumstances that brought a group together change, and sometimes that leads to groups ending. Celebrate what you achieved together and consider moving on to other groups.

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