SW 624: Interpersonal Practice with Groups

Sp / Su ’09
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course builds on the content presented in SW521 and the other foundation courses and focuses on the processes of intervention and individual change groups. Particular attention will be given to the recruitment and composition of group members, leadership structure of small groups, phases of group development, and such group processes as decision-making, tension reduction, conflict resolution, goal setting, contracting, and evaluation. Students will learn how to assess and address group problems such as scapegoating, member resistance, low morale, over-active deviance, etc. They will learn to employ a variety of intra-group strategies and techniques such as programs, structured activities, exercises, etc. Theories and methods consistent with the achievement of social justice through group work practice will be emphasized. The course will also consider how gender, ethnicity, race, social class, sexual orientation, and different abilities will impact on various aspects of group functioning such as purpose, composition, leadership, selection of intervention strategies, and group development.

COURSE CONTENT
The course briefly reviews the history of social group work practice in the United States, and discusses the various kinds of task and individual change groups (e.g. teams, committees, consciousness raising, support, treatment, developmental, social action/social change, self-help, internet, etc.) found in contemporary social work practice. The course will also discuss how groups can be used to promote well-being, to prevent social problems, to treat existing problems, and to rehabilitate clients with severe conditions that are not amenable to more time limited interventions. The various factors associated with group effectiveness in both task and individual change groups will be presented, as well as those factors that have been designed to reduce the potentially negative and deleterious consequences of group interventions.

Various models of stages of group development in both task and individual change groups and in both open-ended and closed-ended groups will be presented. The implications for leadership styles, the kinds of group dynamics, and the kinds of group interventions in each stage will be discussed. Various structural properties of groups such as sociometry, communication, norms, roles, status, power, and geography will be presented as they relate to the stages of group development. Group processes such as decision making,
task achievement, conflict resolution, tension reduction, and contracting will also be related to stages of group development.

All phases of the intervention process from recruitment and composition to assessment, goal formulation, evaluation, intervention and termination will be presented. Special consideration will be given to how these phases may be modified to account for the various diversity identities racial, class, gender, ethnic, sexual orientations, and abilities of clients. Evaluation procedures, designed to determine the effectiveness of various interventions, that can be incorporated into small groups will be presented. Course content will include ethical issues that relate to the practice of social work with groups, and those elements of the NASW code of ethics that especially impact on group practice.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the differences between task, individual change, promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation groups and how these groups are employed in contemporary social work practice.

2. Assess the effectiveness of various kinds of groups and the various interventions that group leaders and facilitators utilize.

3. Critically apply in a practice setting a minimum of two empirically supported group work approaches.

4. Implement specific evaluation measures that can be integrated into monitoring and evaluation of group work.

5. Operationalize various models of group development in both open and closed groups and recognize how these various stages impact on group dynamics.

6. Identify common problems that emerge in group practice and intervene to resolve these problems.

7. Plan and carry out various structured activities and group interventions that take into account the phases of group development and the special needs of group members.

8. Describe the impact of the key diversity dimensions such as ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation on the dynamics of group structure and process in small groups.

9. Identify ways to match group intervention methods effectively and ethically with client problems, across diverse populations, cultural backgrounds, and sociopolitical contexts.

10. Operationalize ethical codes (i.e. the NASW Code of Ethics and other ethical codes such as the ASGW) as they apply to value dilemmas that arise in social group work practice.
11. Conduct an assessment of coping resources and strengths; biophysical, emotional, behavioral and cognitive functioning; intra-personal and environmental systems.

12. Identify the factors that influence group members’ motivation to pursue change.

13. Demonstrate their ability to form worker-group member alliances and collaborations, communicate empathically, and help enhance the motivation for change, cultivate hope, and address ambivalence and internal and external barriers to change.

14. Identify one’s own social and cultural identities and group memberships, and how these relate to working with diverse group members, colleagues, and other professionals.

COURSE DESIGN
The format is lecture, with questions and discussion, as well as organized class discussion, with the latter frequently focusing on the analysis of actual cases.

RELATIONSHIP OF COURSE TO FOUR CURRICULAR THEMES
• *Multiculturalism and Diversity*: The key diversity dimensions have an impact on membership and composition, which in turn, influence various aspects of group dynamics. Leadership, status, sociometry, norms, conflict resolution, and communication in groups are dramatically affected by issues of diversity and must be accounted for by social workers in planning and facilitating various kinds of groups.

• *Social Justice and Social Change*: The history of social group work emerges from that part of social work’s history concerning various reform movements in the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Though therapy groups have emerged as the primary venue in the last two decades, there are efforts to redirect group work to its more traditional roots. We will examine contemporary conceptions of social justice practice in groups and the diverse ways this may be addressed.

• *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation*: Though methods courses tend to emphasize treatment models, this course will examine at least one promotion and prevention model of groups and at least one rehabilitation model of groups. This course will also describe the similarities and differences between these kinds of groups.

• *Behavioral and Social Science Research*: This course will rely on group dynamic theory and empirical research on the effectiveness of various group interventions and models. A goal of competency emphasizes evidence-based group work practice.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO SOCIAL WORK ETHICS AND VALUES
Social workers must understand when groups are contraindicated for particular clients and must be able to assertively intervene in group processes when group experiences are harming group members. Ethical issues such as client confidentiality, forced participation, and involuntary treatment are considered as they impact social work with groups.

ACCOMMODATIONS
If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Many aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities and the way that the course is taught can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress.
throughout the semester. The earlier that you make me aware of your needs the more
effectively we will be able to use the resources available to us, such as the services for
Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site, and the like. If you do
decide to disclose your disability, I will (to the extent permitted by law) treat that information
as private and confidential. Also, please notify me if religious observances conflict with class
attendance or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

COURSE TEXTS
This summer we will be drawing on literature listed on c-tools for each designated
week. I have included the specific articles with citations in the syllabus outline. If
you cannot retrieve the article, please e-mail or see me immediately.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS (ON RESERVE):

Brooks / Cole.

Publishing Co.

(Optional articles:

RELEVANT JOURNALS
The following journals are oriented primarily toward group research, practice and education:
*Group, The Journal of the Eastern Group Psychotherapy Society*
*International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*
*Journal for Specialists in Group Work*
*Small Group Research* (A combination of two journals: *Small Group Behavior* and *International
Journal of Small Group Research*)
*Social Work with Groups*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
In this summer section of SW624, there is one major assignment containing eight (8) tasks
designed to culminate into a specific group design. Collectively, the tasks add up to 75 points
(i.e., full credit for each task will be given once it is complete). If a task is incomplete or
insufficient it will be returned with a written request for specific revisions. Attendance and
participation (A&P) will also be required and will account for an additional 10 points.
Receiving 85 points is assessed as demonstrating **MASTERY** of the material and will be
recorded as a “B” grade for A&P and assignments according to the University and SSW
grading policies. If your goal is to demonstrate above mastery level achievement, you can do
so by **first**, completing the required major assignment, and then completing optional
assignments outlined below. Optional assignment points are only counted in addition to
course requirements. In this section, an “A”= 96-100 pts.; “A-“= 91-95 pts.; “B+”= 86-90
pts.; “B”=81-85 pts.; “B-“= 76-80 pts.; “C+”= 71-75 pts.; & “C”=70 pts. or below.

In this section, the policy for late assignments is as follows: Assignments that exceed the due
date must not overlap with the next assignment due date. In order to receive full credit, you
will have up to the due date for the next assignment to turn in a previously required assignment, including revisions. The final date to turn in Assignment #4 and Optional Assignments is April 20. Partial credit may be assigned to incomplete Optional Assignments turned in on the last day since no opportunity can be provided for revisions.

** Required - Attend and participate (A&P) in each session. (Maximum 10 points).**
In this interpersonal practice course, in-class discussions and participation in exercises are considered an essential part of your learning experience. In addition, some of the material considered essential to achieving the objectives of the course will only be presented in class. If unanticipated circumstances arise that prevent you from attending or cause you to arrive late or leave early, you must notify me as soon as possible. Each clock hour of class missed (whether excused or unexcused) results in the loss of 1 A&P point. Missing more than two class periods requires a meeting with the instructor. If you miss up to two classes you can complete ONE optional assignment to make up for A & P points that are deducted. You will only receive a maximum of 5 points through optional assignments to make up for missed in-class time and you must clearly designate which optional assignment you want to be used to make up for missed class hours.

**Group Design Project (Maximum 75 points)**
This assignment challenges you to demonstrate knowledge of the steps necessary to propose a group that you will design in order to fill a service need in a community-based human service organization. It must be completed as an individual project and should reflect upon a real-life problem or situation. The following tasks serve as a guide to the final product:

**TASKS:**

(1) **Background / Rationale:** Justify the need for the proposed group. The main questions in framing the need for the group are: (a) What is the problem or situation that requires immediate attention (consider the MOST RECENT data relevant to prevalence, incidence, other relevant statistics, etc)? (b) What makes this problem or situation, and the urgency in addressing it at this time so crucial? Is there local data to support the need? and (c) What makes group work relevant. Is (or are) group intervention(s) relevant? In what way(s), has/have group intervention(s) demonstrated effectiveness relevant to your identified concern? Is there already an exemplary group work model that you can draw from with demonstrated success? (Note: Remember to cite relevant recent literature that supports important points you have presented in this section (i.e., use resources dated 2000 or more recent). You should include at least five citations, one of which may be the course text)

(2) **Purpose / Goals of the Group**
   a. **Purpose:** clearly written; summarizes need indicated in rationale for the group, accurately reflects expectations in treatment, provides clarity in direction or treatment pathway
   b. **Goals** should be realistic, time-limited, observable and measureable
   c. Consider a Group Name: non-stigmatizing, easy to remember, and that accurately represents the group’s purpose

(3) **Functional characteristics such as how the group operates, (e.g., Consider if task or therapeutic, process oriented, skills development, psycho-educational, etc.)**
(4) Structural characteristics such as whether the group is open, closed or has a homogeneous or heterogeneous make-up (e.g., consider criteria for inclusion: consistent with purpose, consider call for referrals: Is the request for the specific type of referral clear? Does your criteria clearly articulate rationale for inclusion? Is the rationale defensible (i.e., Is the criteria supported by research or other evidence-based practice examples?) and exclusion: identifies (sub)populations clearly inconsistent with purpose, consider if your request for referral is specific enough to determine who not to consider. Is the criteria for referral clear? Does your criteria clearly articulate rationale for exclusion? Is the rationale defensible (i.e., Is it supported by research or other evidence-based practice examples?)?

(5) Group leadership skills needed for the type of group described

(6) Group-level and/or individual-level techniques utilized as essential to the delivery of relevant assistance.

(7) Expected benefits and outcomes from using the model (evidence of effectiveness).

(8) Plan for monitoring and evaluation. Consider what aspects of group progress will be monitored and evaluated. How will those aspects be monitored and evaluated?

(9) Abstract: Refers to a brief statement focusing on the major points of the group. When the design is completed, this task will be moved to the page after the title page.

(10) PRESENTATION TO CLASS – This involves a summary of the group you have focused on for this assignment.

(11) Extra-Credit (5 points) In addition to completing the following tasks, you might consider some form of group announcement in order to attract referrals assuming one doesn’t already exist or if so, assume you have a more effective announcement. Develop a flyer that could be posted on a bulletin board; letter or memo to school counselor, teacher or parents of a minor child. The flyer should consist of the following: (a) be clearly written, creatively designed, concise (uncluttered), easily readable, non-stigmatizing; (b) be substantively focused (i.e., target audience is clear), realistic, conceptually clear; (c) have clear identifying info: name of group, some idea of its purpose, date, place, expected length, cost (optional), contact info

Optional Assignments:
The following assignments are optional accompanied by the assigned maximum points possible. Optional assignments turned in during the last week will receive points commensurate with how much it conforms to the assignment tasks; partial points may be assigned if the assignment is incomplete.

**Optional Assignment #1: “What’s so important about groups in social work practice?”: (The entire paper should not exceed 8 pages typed, double-spaced and proofread. (Maximum 10 points) Assume you are engaged in a discussion about our Groups course with a colleague. The colleague is skeptical about the value of group work practice and makes the comment, “I’ve run groups and it’s easier than it’s made out to be. You just have to make sure everyone’s on board and they all work together.” You, of course, respond by arguing at least four important distinctions of social work practice with groups that we’ve discussed thus far: (1) That different groups are designed for different purposes (& types), (2) Knowledge of group dynamics is essential, (3) There are unique
ethical issues when working in groups, and (4) That diversity (and/or cultural humility) matters in group work practice. Keeping in mind that your colleague will not be interested in listening to all our lectures in which we discuss the relevant content, write a concise presentation of your response that clearly delineates the meaning of each of your four important distinctions.

** Optional Assignment #2: “12 Angry Men” Worksheet (Maximum 5 points)**

**Optional Assignment #3: Cultural Competence and Social Work Practice with Groups. Paper should be a maximum of 5 pages typed, double-spaced and proofread. (10 points)**

For this assignment you are asked to summarize an experience you had either as an observer or member of a community-based group, that had implications for social work practice with diverse group participants. Attending a group-focused cultural event would be an excellent way to complete this assignment! From that summary, identify at least 5 practice principles that will help you to achieve and maintain cultural competence and humility in group work practice.

**Optional Assignment #4 : Reading Summaries**

Provide a 2-3 page summary of a required or optional reading from the ones listed on the syllabus, for 5 different sessions (i.e. a total of five reading summaries from different weeks). ALSO, provide a one-paragraph synthesis of the readings in terms of lessons learned or “take-away” points (5 points)

**Optional Assignment #5: Media / Book Review – Worksheet (See C-tools site for further explanation) (5 points)**

**Optional Assignment #6 : Annotated Bibliography of 5 articles relevant to your specific interests. (See C-tools site for further explanation) (5 points)**

**Optional Assignment #7: Group Work Practice in the Community (See C-tools site for further explanation) (5 points)**

**Optional Assignment #8: Special Topic.** You may identify a target population, target problem or group related matter that will enhance your learning about or practice with groups. Examples of special topics include an annotated bibliography focusing on disaster relief using the group modality, crisis intervention using groups, a reference list of targeted activities for special populations, group work practice in rural areas, group work with delinquent youth, and so on. You must consult with me for approval prior to engaging in and submitting your special topic assignment for credit. (5 points)
SESSION SUMMARY

I. KNOWLEDGE BASE OF GROUPS AND GROUP WORK

WEEK 1 (May 12): Introduction to Social Work with Groups

WEEK 2 (May 19): Group Dynamics, Values, Ethics and Professional Guidelines

WEEK 3 (May 26): Group Dynamics in Action; “12 Angry Men” / Group Work Practice and Diversity

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

WEEK 4 (June 2): Group Structure, Formation, Process and Development

WEEK 5 (June 9): Leadership: Roles, Functions and Guidelines;

III. GROUP PRACTICE CONTEXTS

WEEK 6 (June 16): Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods

WEEK 7 (June 23): Group Work for Treatment, Support and Mutual Aid

IV. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE

WEEK 8 (June 30): Launching the Group

WEEK 9 (July 7): Pre-Group Formation and Beginning Group

WEEK 10 (July 14): Groups in Transitions / Ending in Groups

WEEK 11 (July 21): Assessment and Evaluation / Summary / Wrap-Up (Optional Assignments Due)
COURSE OUTLINE
In the following outline, I have indicated required reading as a double asterisk (***) and recommended readings by a single asterisk (*). Articles designated (e) can be retrieved electronically.

I. KNOWLEDGE BASE OF GROUPS AND GROUP WORK

WEEK 1: (May 12)
Discussion Questions:
(1) What is a group?
(2) Are groups “real”?
(3) What are “group dynamics”?
A. Social Work with Groups: The Dynamics of Practice
**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 1: Introduction; Chapter 2: Historical Developments; Chapter 3: Understanding Group Dynamics
*Forsyth (TEXT): Chapter 1: The Science of Group Dynamics (pp. 2-23) and Chapter 2: Studying Groups

Additional Readings:

WEEK 2 (May 19):
(1) What ethical issues are unique to groups?
(2) What makes diversity important to consider in group work practice?
(3) Discuss the ways in which “evidence-based practice” is relevant to groups?
B. Group Work Values, Ethics and Professional Guidelines / Group Work and Diversity
**Toseland and Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 3: Understanding Group Dynamics, and Chapter 5: Leadership and Diversity
**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): REVIEW Chapter 1(pp. 6-11): Values and Ethics in Group Work Practice and Appendix A1 Guidelines for Ethics, A2 Ethical Guidelines for Group Counselors and A3 Standards for Social Work Practice with Groups

Additional Readings:


Week 3 (May 26): Group Dynamics in Action: “12 Angry Men” and continued discussion of diversity in groups
(Note: We will be following a worksheet outline essential concepts and issues relevant to social work practice in groups.)

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

WEEK 4 (June 2): Group Structure, Formation, Process and Development
** Forsyth (TEXT): Chapter 3: Group Formation (pp. 51-73), Chapter 4: Development and Socialization (pp. 75-99), and Chapter 5: Group Structure (pp. 109-133)

Additional Readings:

WEEK 5 (June 9): Leadership: Roles, Functions and Guidelines;
**(Review) Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 4: Leadership; REVIEW Chapter 5 Leadership and Diversity; READ Chapter 11: Task Groups - Foundation Methods and Chapter 12: Task Groups - Specialized Methods


### Additional Readings:


* Forsyth (TEXT): Chapter 8: Leadership


III. GROUP PRACTICE CONTEXTS

WEEK 6 (June 16): Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods

WEEK 7 (June 23): Group Work for Treatment, Support and Mutual Aid

Group Work for Treatment, Support and Mutual Aid


**(e) Toseland and Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 9: Treatment Groups - Foundation Methods; Chapter 10: Treatment Groups - Specialized Methods


Additional Readings:


**IV. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE**

**WEEK 8 (June 30):** Launching the Group
Ortega, R.M. *Interpersonal Practice with Groups: A Role Play Workbook*

**WEEK 9 (July 7):** Pre-Group Formation and Beginning Group
(Individualized Reading)

**WEEK 10 (July 14)** Groups in Transitions / Ending in Groups
(Individualized Reading)
WEEK 11 (July 21): Assessment and Evaluation / Summary / Wrap-Up (Optional Assignments Due)

(Group Assignment Presentations)