



SW 624: Interpersonal Practice with Groups

Sp / Su '12

Prof. Robert M. Ortega, MSW, Ph.D.

2796 SSWB O: (734) 763-6576

Office Hours: M: 12 -2pm & Tues 1-3pm

(Other days and times possible by appointment)

E-mail: rmortega@umich.edu

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):

Toseland, R.W. & Rivas, R.F. (2012) *An introduction to group work practice (7th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Forsyth, Donelson (1999). *Group dynamics (Third Edition)*. Pacific Groves, CA: Brooks / Cole Publishing Co.

Optional articles: As new or previously undiscovered material emerges during the semester I may add it for additional reading because of its relevance to current discussions. I will make every effort to give at least a one-week notice.

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 section of SW624, there are 5 components that add up to 90 points (i.e., full credit will be given once all tasks are met for each component.). Two of the 5 components will be take-home worksheets – one worksheet focuses on group dynamics and another worksheet focuses on leadership. A third component is a structured group analysis (Q&A). The other two components are an essay and a group assessment.

Attendance and participation (A&P) will also be required and will account for an additional 10 points. Receiving 81-85 total 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 assignments, 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.

For each component that is turned in past the due date (except for requested revisions), it will be marked down 5 points for each week. If it is incomplete or insufficient it will be returned with a

written request for specific revisions with a one week turn-around. The final date to turn in any assignments is July 20. Partial credit may be assigned to Optional Assignments turned in on the last day that are incomplete 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 .5 A&P points. Missing more than two class periods requires a meeting with the instructor. You may complete ONE optional assignment to make up for A & P points that are deducted ONE class AND you must clearly designate which optional assignment you want to use to make up for missed class hours.

****Required Take-Home Worksheet on Group Dynamics (Due May 15: 5 points)**

**** Required Assignment #1 (Due May 29): Group Dynamics Analysis Worksheet –** Discussed in Class and on c-tools (Maximum 20 points)

****Required Take-Home Worksheet on Leadership (Due June 5: 5 points)**

**** Required Assignment #2 (Due June 19): “Offer your definition of social justice and present ten practice principles (or “ground rules”) that will guide your social justice perspective in your group work practice?: (The entire paper should not exceed 8 pages typed, double-spaced and proofread. (Maximum 20 points)**

For this assignment your practice principles (or ground rules) must include a reference to the following issues discussed in class:

- (a) A definition (preferably your own with support from the readings) of social justice.
- (b) The four dimensions of group dynamics (discussed in class)
- (c) Social justice as our ethical responsibility (also discussed in class).
- (d) Social justice as culturally responsive.

**** Required Assignment #3 (Due July 10): Assessment in Group Work Practice – Paper should be 6-8 pages in length (including charts, diagrams and graphs), typed, double-spaced and proof-read. (Maximum 30 points)**

For this assignment, you are asked to observe and assess one formal group session of your choice. The group could be a committee meeting, a staff meeting, a treatment group (e.g., that you either observe or facilitate). You are expected to maintain anonymity of participants (i.e., do not use actual client names or initials) and in observing the group, it must be of the kind that will allow you to complete each one of the following required tasks:

- (Task 1) Describe the group's context (e.g., sponsor, full description of physical setting (Hint: a room diagram helps!), purpose, composition, size, frequency of meetings (i.e., how often scheduled to meet), length, duration (how many sessions planned), open vs. closed, session context (what's the session you observed about?).

(Task 2) Refer to Toseland and Rivas Chapter 8 reference on c-tools: (a) chart and record each member's frequency of interactions (i.e., measure communication and interaction); (b) measure the group members' social preferences (i.e., the group's sociometry); (c) comment on your observation of the group's social controls and group culture (Note: If the group you are observing is not conducive to continuous recording, identify a sampling procedure that best fits this task and briefly explain your rationale for the procedure you selected.); (d) comment on the charting and recording used both in terms of strengths and limitations; (e) on the basis of your observations, speculate on relevant aspects of the group's dynamics at the time you made your observations (e.g., were you able to identify distinct subgroups or patterns of interaction based on seating? Did your observations help you identify task and socio-emotional leaders within the group? Were there other roles that could be associated with particular members?)

(Task 3) In your observation, you should have identified aspects of the group that appear as strengths (that contribute to the group's success) and/or that appear problematic. (a) describe the strengths and/or concerns relevant to the group's functioning. If you've raised a specific problem or concern, use Toseland and Rivas Figure 8-6 (p.247) and select an appropriate intervention to address the level of problem or concern. (b) suggest a plan for intervention (focused on the group as a whole, subset of members, an individual or the group in interaction with its environment.

Optional Assignments:

The following assignments are worth 5 points each. Optional assignments are designed to reinforce learning objectives. They can be turned in any time during the semester with an opportunity for revisions if necessary. No revisions will be expected if turned in during the last week of class. Instead they will receive points commensurate with how much they conform to the assignment tasks (i.e., partial points may be assigned if the assignment is incomplete). **All Optional assignments must be turned in no later than Friday, July 20.**

Optional Assignment #1: Reading Summaries

Provide a 2-3 page summary of required readings 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 #2 : Annotated Bibliography of 5 articles relevant to your specific interests. (See C-tools site for further explanation) (5 points)

Optional Assignment #3: 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 8): Introduction to Social Work with Groups

WEEK 2 (May 15): Group Dynamics / Values, Ethics and Professional Guidelines / Group Work Practice, Diversity and Social Justice (**Required Take-Home Worksheet on Group Dynamics Due)

WEEK 3 (May 22): Group Work Practice, Diversity and Social Justice (cont.) / Group Dynamics in Action; “12 Angry Men”

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS & GROUP PRACTICE CONTEXTS

WEEK 4 (May 29): Group Structure, Formation, Process and Development & Implications for Assessment and Evaluation (Note: Required Assignment #1 Due)

WEEK 5 (June 5): Leadership: Roles, Functions and Guidelines / Group Typologies & Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods (Note: Take-Home Worksheet on Leadership due)

WEEK 6 (June 12): Group Work for Treatment, Support and Mutual Aid / Launching the Group / Pre-Group Formation

III. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE

WEEK 7 (June 19): Beginning the Group (Note: Required Assignment #2 Due)

WEEK 8 (June 26): -Beginning the Group (cont.) / Groups in Transition

WEEK 9 (July 3): Groups in Transition (cont.)

WEEK 10 (July 10): Ending in Groups (Note: Required Assignment #3 Due)

WEEK 11 (July 17): Ending in Groups (cont.) / Summary / Wrap-Up

(All Revised Required Assignments & Optional Assignments Due July 20)

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 8): Social Work with Groups: The Dynamics of Practice

Discussion Questions:

- (1) What is a group?**
- (2) Are groups “real”?**
- (3) What are “group dynamics”?**

Andrews, J. (2001). Group work's place in social work: An historical analysis. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 28(4): 45-65.

Forsyth (TEXT): Chapter 1: The Science of Group Dynamics (pp. 2-23) and Chapter 2: Studying Groups

WEEK 2 & WEEK 3 (May 15 & May 22): Group Dynamics / Group Work Values, Ethics and Professional Guidelines / Group Work, Social Justice and Diversity (Required Take-Home Worksheet on Group Dynamics Due May 15)**

Discussion Questions:

- (1) What makes social justice and diversity important topics to consider in group work practice?**
- (2) What ethical issues are unique to groups?**
- (3) Discuss the ways in which “evidence-based practice” is relevant to groups?**

WEEK 2 Required:

Barsky, A.E. (2010). Practice, values and ethics – Social work with groups. Chapter 7 in A.E. Barsky, *Ethics and values in social work: An integrated approach for comprehensive curriculum*. New York: Oxford University Press, 131-164.

Burnes, T., & Ross, K. (2010). Applying social justice to oppression and marginalization in group process: Interventions and strategies for group counselors. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 35(2), 169-176.

Ratts, M., Anthony, L., & Santos, K. N. T. (2010). The dimensions of social justice model: Transforming traditional group work into a socially just framework. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 35(2), 160-168.

Roysircar, G. (2008). A response to “Social privilege, social justice, and group counseling: An inquiry”: Social privilege: Counselors' competence with systematically determined inequalities. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 33(4), 377-384.

Smith, L.C. & Shin, R.Q. (2008). Social privilege, social justice, and group counseling: An inquiry. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 33(4), 351-366.

Week 3 (May 22): Group Dynamics in Action: “12 Angry Men” and continued discussion of social justice and diversity in groups

(Note: For today's session we will continue to discuss readings not covered last week. For the activity, we will be following a worksheet located on c-tools outlining essential concepts and issues relevant to group dynamics and social work practice in groups. Please bring a hard copy of the worksheet to today's class and be prepared to discuss readings)

WEEK 3 Required:

- DeLois, K. and Cohen, M. (2002). A queer idea: Using group work principles to strengthen learning in a sexual minorities seminar. *Social Work with Groups*, 23(3), 53-69.
- Diaz, T. (2003). Group work from an Asian Pacific Islander perspective: Making connections between group worker ethnicity and practice. *Social Work with Groups*, 25 (3), 43-60.
- Garrett, M.T, Brubaker, M., Torres-Rivera, E., West-Olatunji, C., & Conwill, W.L. (2008). The medicine of coming to center: Use of the Native American centering technique – Ayeli – to promote wellness and healing in group work. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 33(2), 179-198.
- Gilbert, M.C. (2000). Spirituality in social work groups: Practitioners speak out. *Social Work with Groups*, 22(4): 67-84.
- Ortega, R.M. & Faller, K.C. (2011). Training child welfare workers for cultural humility. *Child Welfare*, 90(5), 27-49.

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

WEEK 4 (May 29): Group Structure, Formation, Process and Development & Implications for Assessment and Evaluation (Required Assignment #1 Due)**

- (1) What is the difference between structuring a group and group structure?***
- (2) What makes group formation important to the group's development?***
- (3) What is "group process"?***

Required:

- Bonsaken, T., Borge, F., Lerdal, A., Hoffart, A., Sexton, H. (2010). Group climate development in cognitive and interpersonal group therapy for social phobia. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 15,1,32-48.
- Forsyth: Chapter 3: Group Formation (pp. 51-73), Chapter 4: Development and Socialization (pp. 75-99), and Chapter 5: Group Structure (pp. 109-133)
- Johnson, J. E., Pulsipher, D., Ferrin, S.L., Burlingame, G.M., Davies, D.R., Gleave, R. (2006). Measuring Group Processes. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 10,2,136-145.

WEEK 5 (June 5): Leadership: Roles, Functions and Guidelines / Group Typologies & Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods (Note: Required Worksheet on Leadership Due)

- (1) What do we mean by "leadership styles" and why is your leadership style important to know?***
- (2) What makes diversity and social justice important to consider in discussions of group leadership?***
- (3) Discuss the ways in which leadership in task groups differ from treatment groups?***

Required:

- Dewall, C., Mead, N., Baumeister, R., Vohs, K.(2011). How leaders self-regulate their task performance. *Interpersonal relations and group process*, 47-65.
- Forsyth: Chapter 8: Leadership
- Miles, J., & Kivlighan Jr. D. M. (2010). Co-leader similarity and group climate in group interventions. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 14, 2, 114-122.

- Rubel, D.J. and Kline, W.B. (2008). An exploratory study of expert group leadership. *The Journal of Specialists in Group Work*, 33(2), 138-160.
- Shechtman, Z., & Toren, Z. (2009). The effect of leader behavior on processes and outcomes in group counseling. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 13, 3, 218-233.

III. GROUP PRACTICE CONTEXTS

WEEK 6 (June 12): Group Work for Treatment, Support and Mutual Aid / Launching the Group / Pre-Group Formation

Required:

- Classen, C., Palesh, O., Cavanaugh, C., Koopman, C., Kaupp, J., Kraemer, H., et al. (2010). A comparison of trauma-focused and present-focused group therapy for survivors of childhood sexual abuse: A randomized controlled trial. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*,
- Harpine, E. C., Nitza, A., & Conyne, R. (2010). Prevention groups: today and tomorrow. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 14, 3, 268-280.
- Lietz, C. A. (2007) 'Strengths-based group practice: Three case studies', *Social Work With Groups*, 30: 2, 73 — 87.
- Rose, S. and Chang, H. (2010). Motivating clients in treatment groups. *Social Work with Groups*, 33(2), 260-277.
- Steinberg, D.M. (2010). Mutual aid: Contributions to best practice social work. *Social Work with Groups*, 33(1), 53-68.

III. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE

WEEK 7 (June 19): Beginning the Group

(Note: Required Assignment #2 Due)

WEEK 8 (June 26): -Beginning the Group (cont.) / Groups in Transition

WEEK 9 (July 3): Groups in Transition (cont.)

WEEK 10 (July 10): Ending in Groups (Note: Required Assignment #3 Due)

WEEK 11 (July 17): Ending in Groups (cont.) / Summary / Wrap-Up ***(Revised Required Assignments & Optional Assignments Due July 20)***