S.W. 624: Interpersonal Practice with Groups

Fall 2013
Thursday 9-12 PM Room 2816
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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. NASW Code of Ethics and other codes such as those espoused by AASWG, Inc.) as they apply to value dilemmas that arise in social work practice with groups.

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.

**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 concerned 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 on empirical research on the effectiveness of various group interventions and models. A goal of competency is evidence-based group work practice is emphasized.

**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
CTools will house most required readings taken from the books listed below. Any other required readings will be provided in class. Although buying these books are unnecessary, consider owning them if you expect to work with groups


If you are interested in activity/adventure/experiential-based group work, I strongly recommend that you purchase this manual

Assignments for the course

1. **Active Engagement** (2 points per class session)
   In my classes, I use many adventure and experiential activities to teach the lessons to be learned. Hence, **class attendance is important**. If you are unable to come to class on a specific day, please contact me (via email or c-tool message to create a written record) with the reason for the absence. If you miss any class sessions, it will most likely lower your grade. We could work on a plan for making up missed class material to adequately complete the course (This might mean an extra paper that covers material from that class). **Active participation** in class is also really expected. This can be demonstrated in several ways like: participating in discussions, staying on top of readings, volunteering for in-class exercises, bringing experiences or problems from real life groups to class discussion, sharing group activities or techniques with class members, thoughtfully processing classroom experiences, taking risks in sustaining dialogue on difficult issues that arise in class, and sharing things you know that may help others learn about group work practice.

2. **Observe an ongoing group in the community** (15 points)
   a. For this assignment, arrange for a visit to an agency and sit in on an ongoing group
b. The group you will observe cannot be one you are running yourself or being run in your field agency.
c. An option- I help run a program at Fraser High School and there are monthly gatherings. You can come to one
d. The group could be a task group (committee meeting, Board meeting, Staff meeting, City Council meeting) or a treatment group (AA, NA, Social Skills group, Support group, etc)
e. Observe the following:
   i. Logistics (setting, membership, purpose, frequency, etc)
   ii. Process (communication patterns, record keeping, power dynamic, group culture, roles, - Refer to Toseland chapter 3)
   iii. Strengths and areas for improvement (Include here thoughts on actions you might take if you had the power to help this group become more functional)
f. Write a 5-6 page paper and submit to me (via CTools) on Session 5.

3. **Facilitate a session of the class** (15 points)
   a. In pairs or groups of three, you will (given 30 minutes)
      i. Choose a date when you will facilitate our class
      ii. Choose what you will do. Run it by me. Plan it. Do it!
      iii. As a group, submit your rationale for choosing what you did, the agenda you created, and your intentions. In addition, individually, reflect on your experience and submit a 3-page reflection paper that considers lessons learned from the experience, including what it was like to co-facilitate with your peers, how the group managed the distribution of tasks, etc.; speak also to the learning you experienced in engaging in this exercise. Submit the week following your facilitation.
      iv. 15 points. You will receive 5 points each for the group submission, the individual reflection and the overall implementation of your plan.

4. **Join a group** (10 points)
   You will join a small group and throughout the term, when invited, will engage in group work membership. For some, we may offer opportunities for the group to address a task; for others perhaps offering a treatment approach. We will discuss this in class.

5. **Reading Journals** (16 points)
   Complete two journals pertaining to the class readings. Each journal must:
   1. Choose two class sessions- one from sessions 1-6, the other from 7-12.
   2. Summarize each required reading for the class session you select (1-2 paragraphs)
   3. In addition, read and summarize a non-required reading for that session
   4. Summarize salient points from the readings altogether, including lessons learned, questions that may have been triggered by the readings, and any applicability of the lessons to your group practice
   5. Submit the 3-5 page journal entries by Session 6 and 10
6. **Curriculum for a 6-8 week group** (20 points)
   1. Choose a preferred population
   2. Imagine that you will be working with this group for 6-8 weeks. What might be your purpose for working with them? What type of group might you offer them?
   3. Create a 6-8 week curriculum for this population with this goal in mind.
   4. Consider sequencing, the ebb and flow of the group.
   5. Support your design with readings, class lessons, research, etc.
   6. Submit by **Session 11**.

**Notes on Grading**

All assignments earn points, which means you could earn up to 100 possible points.

- Attendance: 24 points
- Observing a group: 15 points
- Class facilitation: 15 points
- Join a group = Participation in group: 10 points
- Reading Journals: 16 points
- Group Curriculum: 20 points

The final grading scale is:

\[
A+ = \text{over 100}, \quad A = 94-96, \quad A- = 91-93; \quad B+ = 88-90, \quad B = 85-87, \quad B- = 82-84, \quad C+ = 79-81, \quad \text{not passing} = <78
\]

I strive to give substantive feedback on each assignment, and to use my comments as a way to continue to have a dialogue about what you are learning in the class. I may not give specific feedback about why an assignment didn’t get a perfect score, say a 13 of 15. A paper needn’t have any major flaws to earn less than a perfect mark. But if you ever have any questions or concerns about the grading, please contact me to talk more about it.

**SESSION OUTLINE**

Note: As a general rule, the first four articles (numbered) are required readings for the session. There may be additions to this required list. The rest are there for your perusal. Also, depending on class flow, this outline may need refining as the semester progresses.

**Session 1- September 12**  **Introduction**

This session will provide us the opportunity to learn more about who we are and what we expect from participation in this course. Also our opportunity to begin the process of creating the desired environment for us to do our best work!

**Session 2-September 19**  **History; Dynamics; Ethical Considerations**

In this session, let us explore the history of, and the tradition that is group work! Let us also begin to converse about the factors of group work that drive it!
1. Ch 1: The group work tradition in SW- Furman & Rowan & Bender
2. Ch 1: Constructing Reality in groups- Ringer
3. Ch 1: Group Dynamics- by Toseland et al in Handbook ...

Ch 1: Generalist SWP with Groups- Yanca & Johnson

Session 3-September 26 Models; Purposes; Structure
Why group? For what reason? Let’s explore the different models available to practitioners as well as reasons when a group is the intervention of choice
1. Kurland & Salmon: Purpose
2. Rose: CB GW Ch 7
3. Roffman: Psychoeducational groups
4. Wright- Use of Purpose in activity groups

Ch 2: Foundations of Generalist SWP- Yanca & Johnson
Chapters 11-12: The Empowerment Approach- Lee

Session 4-Oct 3 Beginning of Group
3. Ch 4 & 6: Leadership/Planning- Toseland and Rivas (2009)

Session 5- October 10 Group evolves

1. Ch 2: Internal Working Models- Ringer

** Assignment due

Session 6- October 17 Squiggles!
Later stages of groups/Problem Behavior in Groups
1. Corey & Corey, Ch. 7 Working Stage

** Assignment due

Session 7 –October 24 Guest Speaker
More of middle sessions; Conflict; getting the work done:

October 31 No Class Session

Session 8- November 7 Groups for Children and Adolescents

**Session 9- November 14  Social Justice**


**Session 10- November 21  Ending the Group; Transitions**
1. Corey & Corey, Ch. 8

** Assignment due**

**Session 11- December 5  Final rituals, Evaluations**
Hallas, V. (2006) You don’t always have to pick up your mess right away: How being messy can be really neat! *Social Work with Groups, 29 (2/3), 175-194*

** Assignment Due**