1. Course Description

In this seminar, students will apply multiple techniques for developing, performing and analyzing client simulations at the individual, family, group, and community level. Through these simulations, students will deepen their understanding of clients’ lives, explore research and clinical literature relevant to the problems and issues of the simulated client systems, apply evidence-based practice methods and analyze the social justice issues implicit in the simulations. This seminar will place these techniques in historical context, critically examining how simulation and role play developed in theater, psychotherapy and other fields. Student's deep engagement with the characters they create and enact in the simulations will provide a forum for self-reflection and professional growth.

2. Course Content

Content of this course primarily centers on experiential learning via client simulation role-plays. First, the foundation for this kind of work in social group work, psychotherapy, and social theater is reviewed. Students are then introduced to techniques for developing client characters, mainly through experiential techniques. Students will also access other sources for development of client characters, including memoir, clinical literature, interviews, and experience with actual clients. Assessment concepts and skills for engagement of clients are then explored, via class simulations and written analysis of the assessment information gathered. In this phase of the work, techniques for analysis of internalized oppression and for promoting empowerment are then examined, primarily through readings by Boal on Theater of the Oppressed. The experiential techniques used to develop and deepen the client simulation performances are introduced in readings and will be reflected upon for both their effectiveness in promoting character development, empathy and awareness skills, and for their application in work with clients at various levels of intervention. Evidence-based practice models are covered, again primarily experientially as students will take part in simulations that apply evidence based practice models, as well as some that do not. This will allow critical reflection on the experience of clients when they encounter these various models, and the relative strengths and problems inherent in their application. Students will independently read literature relevant to their clients social identities, the disorders and problems their client characters face, and the contexts they live within.

3. Course Objectives
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Become familiar with the history of the use of simulation and theater techniques in social work intervention.

2. Conduct an assessment of coping resources and strengths; biophysical, emotional, behavioral and cognitive functioning; intra-personal and environmental systems.

3. Deepen their understanding of the strengths and limitations of diagnostic categories in guiding interpersonal practice interventions.

4. Deepen their ability to communicate empathically, and help enhance the motivation for change, cultivate hope, and address ambivalence and internal and external barriers to change.

5. 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 intervention.

6. 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.

7. Demonstrate their ability to critically analyze how power operates in interpersonal helping efforts.

8. Deepen their ability to reflect on how their own personal histories impact upon encounters with clients in interpersonal practice settings.

9. Develop role-playing and simulation skills that they can use in intervention situations with clients.

10. Critically apply evidenced based practice approaches.

11. Identify common problems that emerge in practice and strategies to resolve these problems.

12. 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 direct social work practice.

**Relationship of Course to Four Curricular Themes**
• Multiculturalism and Diversity: The key diversity dimensions have an impact on direct practice at all levels. In the simulated sessions, these dimensions will be attended to carefully. Processing one’s performance, in the client role and the practitioner will provide numerous opportunities to experience how these dimensions shape practice interactions and in how these dimensions are attended to insure that clients needs are effectively met.

• Social Justice and Social Change: We will draw heavily from techniques developed to use theater and simulation for social justice work—primarily Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed. In addition, the simulations will provide opportunities to reflect on the how power differences impact the provision of service to clients and how the social worker can actively work towards client empowerment and autonomy.

• Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation: Though methods courses tend to emphasize treatment models, and this course is not an exception, the social theater methods and techniques used as pedagogical tools are themselves quite applicable to settings across the continuum of promotion to rehabilitation.

• Behavioral and Social Science Research: The course assignments require students to access and evaluate material on evidence based practice relevant to the client and practitioner roles they play in the simulations. A goal of competency in evidence-based practices is emphasized.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

Ethical issues such as client confidentiality, forced participation, and involuntary treatment are considered as they impact the simulation roles that students play. Since the course asks students to inhabit client roles in a sustained and realistic ways, the simulations will provide unique opportunities for students to explore the ethical issues that arise in practice delivery and to develop increased competency in understanding the client’s standpoint in practice encounters. This will give richness and depth to discussions of ethical concerns in practice.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you need an accommodation for a disability, please make an appointment with me at your earliest convenience. Many aspects of the course including the assignments, class activities, and my teaching methods can be modified to fit your circumstances.

General Grade Information

All papers are due at the time and date specified on the Ctools site. Papers will be marked down 5% for every day late. A paper is considered one day late if it comes in past the due date/time specified on Ctools. Please submit papers on Ctools from the “Assignments” tab.

The fine print is for problems that hopefully won’t arise. But just in case, here are the rules: If more than two sessions are missed—whatever the reason—the grade will be lowered five points for each session over two unless the
The Role-Plays

The primary education in this class will take part in the form of 6 Group Therapy role-plays that will take place during class time. Each of you will participate in two distinct “Groups” over the course of the semester, consisting of 3 sessions per Group. We will be working with Rich Tolmans’s IP with Groups class (SW624) in creating these Group Therapy role-plays - with 703 students playing the role of “client” and 624 students playing the role of “practitioner.” You will be developing a single client/character that you can use for each of the two Groups and you also have the choice of creating 2 client/characters if you wish - one for each of the two Groups you will be in.

You will also be providing an assessment session to one of your fellow 703 students, each student both in the role of “client” and in the role of “practitioner.” You will be using one of your “client characters” when you are being “assessed” and then role-playing as “practitioner” when you are “assessing.” During this individual assessment session, you will “refer” your client to one of the Groups that the 624 students will be leading. You may also refer your “client” for individual therapy - regardless, you will also schedule a follow-up session with your client to see how the Group is working for them. All these “sessions” will take place during class time.
Class 1 (Jan. 7)
The Integration of Theater and Social Work

Activities

1. Building Trust Exercises
2. Introduce Simulation Work

Readings


Assignments

Complete Character Profile Sheet (You can find this in the Canvas file for Class 2)

Class 2 (Jan. 14)

Our Role As Practitioners: Critical Consciousness and Self-Reflection

Practice Skill

Awareness of our own judgments, social constructions. How do they impact our “practice?”

Activities

1. Trust, Focus Exercises
2. Character Development Exercises

Readings


Locate and read 5-10 scholarly articles relevant to the disorder/problem your client character will portray. (If you are actually reading a memoir, you only need to read 2-3 articles)

Given your chosen “character,” Read a memoir and/or watch a film about someone with a disorder that your client character might have.

Assignment:

See Assignment Instructions on Ctools in the Schedule Section for Class 3
Class 3 (Jan. 21)

Character Development and Building Empathy I

**Practice Skill**

Attentiveness and Attunement to the client

**Readings**

Taussig, M., Schlechter, R., Boal in Brazil, MIT Press, Drama Review

Given your chosen “character,” read a memoir and/or watch a film about someone with a disorder that your client/character might have.

**Activities**

1. Theater Games focused on the practice skills – presence, focus, attunement
2. Develop “snapshot” roleplays

Class 4 (Jan. 28)

Character Development and Building Empathy II

**Practice Skill**

Understanding how family/cultural history impacts clinical issues

**Activities**

“Snapshot” presentations of client characters.

**Readings**
Zide and Grey, _A Competency Based Approach to Assessment_


Castillo: Chpt 4 “Cultural Assessment”

Please note: You can find the assessment guidelines on the Canvas site for this date.

**Class 5 (Feb. 4)**

**Exploring Mental Health Issues and Character Development: Focus on Assessment**

**Practice Skill**

Assessment and engagement through playing the roles of “client” and “practitioner”

**Readings**

Boal, Games for Actors and Non-Actors – Chapters 1, 2

Continue with your reading of clinical articles relevant to your client/character's diagnosis

**Clinical skill**

Assessment and engagement through in-class assessment improvisations

**Activities**

In-class assessments

**DUE: REFLECTION 1**

**Class 6 (Feb. 11)**

**Exploring Mental Health Issues and Character Strengths Through the Lens of Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice I**
**Coordination with 624**

Last half of class with activities to help 703 and 624 prepare for the Group Work

**Practice Skill**

Assessment and engagement through playing the role of “client”

Raise awareness of the oppressive forces/social constructions alive in ourselves and our characters

**Readings**

Boal, Augusto, Rainbow of Desire

Playing Boal, Theater, Therapy Activism, Daniel Feldhendler

**Activities**

Applying “Theater of the Oppressed” techniques to character development

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**Class 7 (Feb. 18)**

**Exploring Mental Health Issues and Character Strengths Through the Lens of Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice II**

**Group Therapy Role-plays Session 1, Groups A & B**

**Practice Skill**

Group Formation

**Readings**

Jacobs, E., *Group Counseling*, Getting Started: the Beginning Stage and the Beginning Phase

**Due: Client Assessment**

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**Class 8 (Feb. 25)**
Group Therapy - Client Experience of Formation and Composition
Role-plays Session 1, Groups C & D

Practice Skill
Integrating Anti-oppressive practice in a Group Therapy Setting

Readings
Toseland, R., *Handbook of Social Work with Groups*, Group Dynamics

Activities
Exploring Client/Character experiences in Session 1, Groups A & B
Roleplays with 624

Class 9
(March 10)
Group Therapy - Client Experience of Issues Related to Group Process
*Group Therapy Role-plays Session 2, Groups A & B*

Practice Skill
Role of Process in Group Practice

Readings
Corey, B., *Group Process*, Working Stages of a Group

Activities
Exploring Client/Character experiences in Session 1, Groups C & D
Roleplays with 624

Class 11
(March 17)
Group Therapy - Client Experience of Issues related to Leadership

*Group Therapy Role-plays Session 2, Groups C & D*

**Practice Skill**

Group Therapy Techniques - when do ethical issues “show up” and how can they be handled?

**Activities**

Group Therapy Role-plays
Exploring Client/Character experiences in Session 2, Groups A & B.

**Readings**

Toseland, R., *An Introduction to Group Work Practice*, Leadership

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(March 24)
Group Therapy - Client Experience of Ethical Issues/The Intersection of Individual and Group Therapy

**Activities**

First Follow-up appointment with Assessment practitioners to process experience of 1st two Group Sessions

Processing of Role-play from last week

**Readings**


Brabender, V., The Ethical Group Psychotherapist, International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Oct 2006; 56, 4; Research Library pg. 395
Class 12  
(March 31)

**Group Therapy - Client Experience of Issues related to Termination**

**Practice Skill**

Group therapy techniques

**Activities**

Roleplays with 624

**Due: Reflection 2**

Class 13  
April 7

**The Intersection of Individual and Group Therapy**

**Activities**

Processing Group roleplays from last week

Integrating learning points about practitioner role from the client perspective

2nd follow appointment with Assessment practitioner - exploring the intersection of Group and Individual Therapy

**Readings**

Friedman, Robbi, Individual or Group Therapy: Indications for Optimal Therapy, Group Analysis, Vol 46(2): 164–170 - unable to upload - please find on Library Database

Class 14  
April 14

Wrap-up
Final Reflection Due
Assignments

I. Reflection 1: Character Development (20%), Due: Feb. 4

In this initial reflection, consider what you have learned during the actual process of developing your character.

In this initial reflection, consider what you have learned during the actual process of developing your character.

1. Please detail and discuss the sources that you used to develop your client/character - memoirs, movies, clinical articles, etc. Please be specific about this, referencing at least 5 current articles that explore/examine either a DSM diagnosis or set of life circumstances which are relevant to your client/character. Also, please be precise in connecting which examples from your articles, memoirs, etc influenced and were useful in character development.

In choosing your "life circumstances," please incorporate contexts which speak to the complexity of our work in the social work field - might your "character" be struggling with the loss of a home, the loss of a job, the challenges of "foster-care" parenting, fears around being adjudicated for a DUI...Please choose circumstances that you can legitimately "play" AND which might add richness to our set of "clients."

2. Consider what you have learned about your client/character's diagnosis or problem. You might ask yourself if there is any one diagnosis that is truly accurate for your client/character? Would a clinical diagnosis limit how a clinician might view your client/character? Would a clinical diagnosis help your client/character better understand her or his life experiences? What other frames or ways of looking at your client would be helpful?

3. What Group will you be attending? What issues do you think your character might bring to the Group? What life experiences has your character had that are relevant to the themes of the Group? How do you imagine your client's interpersonal experiences (throughout life) may impact interpersonal interactions in the Group?

4. Consider what you have learned about your character from the classroom exercises, paying particular attention to issues of privilege and oppression.

5. Incorporate a discussion of what personal and professional experiences you called upon to develop your client/character, both respecting client confidentiality and only sharing personal material that you feel comfortable sharing. We certainly welcome the kind of personal reflection that helps you to integrate how this character exploration impacts you in your personal and professional lives.

PLEASE HOLD ONTO THE ASSESSMENT PORTION OF THIS REFLECTION AS THE STUDENT YOU ARE ASSESSING WILL NEED THIS ASSESSMENT FOR THE FINAL REFLECTION
II. Reflection on In-Class Client Assessment (25%). Due: Feb. 18

Using the assessment format on C-tools, or another one of your choosing, you will interview one of the characters in class in a simulated intake interview.

After interviewing a simulated client in class, write an abbreviated assessment from your perspective as the social work practitioner. As this is not a class focusing on writing professional assessments, you can summarize your findings (even using bullet points from the assessment itself) in 2-3 pages, and include an integration of your findings that incorporates an understanding of WHY you recommended this person for Group Therapy. This integration piece should NOT be in "bullet points" and should demonstrate a deeper understanding of the client that goes BEYOND diagnosis and a simple restatement of what your client said.

Your assessment report should be submitted on Canvas by Feb. 18 along with your reflections (3-4 pages) on the interview process. You will find the reflection prompts below.

Reflection prompts:

(If time, get some feedback from your client after the roleplay. If not, “clients” please send an email with some reflections to your “practitioner” or try to arrange for a time to chat after class.)

1. What did you learn about yourself as a practitioner? What strengths did you note? What areas did you identify for improvement?

2. Did you feel prepared to respond to the particular context in which your client is embedded? What might have helped you be MORE prepared?

3. What would you need to learn more about to more effective in this assessment role?

4. What learning goals might you now set for yourself, given your experience of the assessment?

5. Other thoughts or feedback about this experience.

Approx. 6-8 pages. (This includes both the Assessment and the Reflection piece)

III. Group Therapy Reflection: Experience as Client
As you reflect upon your experience in the Group, please, address the following questions:

1. Having now experienced 2 group sessions, what insights have you gained about your client/character. Please articulate what particular "group" experiences inspired these insights.

2. What social justice issues have come up in the Group and how did the Group/Group Leader handle these issues? How was you client/character either directly or indirectly affected by these issues ad the handling of these issues

3. What have you discovered about your client/character and family dynamics based on your experiences of the Group's interpersonal dynamics? What specific "group" experiences led to these insights?

4. AND: (at least 2 pages exploring) What have you discovered about the practitioner role from your experiences as client?

Length: 6-8 pages

Points: 25

IV. Reflection 3: Client Transfer/Final Reflection (30%) Due Final Day of Class

Part I: Client Transfer

Please imagine that you are the supervisor at the agency where your client/character is being seen. The practitioner who is running the “Group” is leaving the agency and it is your job to determine what the next step is for your client/character. You will be making a referral to another resource, either within or outside the agency. To do this, you can imagine that you have the following resources at hand:

a. The initial assessment done for the client character (please get this from you fellow 703 student) as well as notes from your (imagined) conversation with the assessing clinician about the client transfer.
b. Practitioner notes on the sessions that have occurred (includes both Group and the “follow-up” individual sessions).
c. An “interview” with the client/character to discuss the transition and to add additional assessment information to guide the referral.

(To be clear: The above are all “imagined” except that you will have an actual assessment that a classmate wrote about the client.)

Write a summary that will guide the practitioner who will work subsequently with this client. This can include updating assessment information (see outline used for the assessment), a description of
the progress of the work that has gone on so far, and a discussion of issues/concerns of which the new practitioner should be made aware. This may include an evaluation of the fit between the client and the previous practitioner, the client’s experience in the Group, and suggestions for addressing any issues in the transfer process. Consider group or family options as possibilities in your transfer/follow-up recommendations.

In making your recommendations, you can also consider the articles examining how Individual and Group therapy can be integrated, when one modality is more appropriate than the other, etc., etc. You do not NEED to incorporate this discussion into this Reflection, but you certainly may. Might be interesting!

You can imagine the agency setting to be whatever best fits for your paper.

This section should be 3-4 pages

**Part II: Final Reflection**

Please reflect on what you have learned in the class and what you learned about the Practitioner Role. Your previous reflections and other papers will be good sources for your final reflection. You are welcome to integrate/combine the two parts of the assignment, but I have separated the prompts into two parts. Among the key areas to discuss:

*The overall classroom experience:*
(A reflection on your participation over the semester)

1. How did you contribute to the class learning environment? What might have improved your participation this semester?
2. What you learned from the client role that you will apply in the future to your own practice.
3. How well did you meet your learning goals this semester? What main objectives did you accomplish? What learning experiences most contributed to your learning? What barriers did you encounter? What would have improved the learning experience for you?
4. What recommendations would you make overall for future seminars using the simulation techniques we applied this term?

*The Practitioner Experience*

1. In the 703/703 assessments, your follow-up interviews (in the “practitioner” role), the in-class improvisations, what qualities did you bring to the role of practitioner that you and your clients found most helpful?
2. What parts of the client-interviews and the in-class improvisations were the most revealing or challenging for you? What was revealed? Why did you find them challenging? What did you learn about yourself and about the practitioner role from these revelations and challenges?
3. Given your experiences over the course of the semester, what advice would you have for practitioners?
APA FORMAT AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

Please refer to the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (often called the APA Style Manual) in the preparation of your writing assignments. The current edition is the fifth, but using an earlier edition is acceptable. I think you will find having your own copy a valuable resource over the next two years. You can find out more at http://www.apastyle.org/pubs-manual.html.

It is critical to reference all sources of information or ideas you use in your writing, to do otherwise is academic dishonesty. Direct quotes in particular should be identified as such. Situations of apparent plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be reported and handled according to University policy.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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