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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
School of Social Work

Winter 2017
S.W. 624: Interpersonal Practice with Groups
Thursdays 9-12
Professor Richard Tolman
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Office hours: to be determined with class

1. 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.

2. 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.
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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.

3. 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.
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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 onempirical 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.
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I want to do what I can to make the class a good learning environment for every student. If you believe that you may need an accommodation for any sort of disability or learning issue, please feel free to make an appointment to see me to discuss that.

SESSION OUTLINE

Week 1-Jan. 5
Session 1

Group Work History

Dynamics

Development

Week 2-Jan. 12
Jan. 12—no class session

Society for Social Work Research Conference

Week 3-Jan. 19
Session 2

Ethics


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**Group Leadership**

Toseland and Rivas (2009) Leadership, Chapter 4, 92-127.

**Week 4-January 26**
**Session 3**
**Group work Models**


**Week 5-Feb. 2**
**Session 4:**
**Planning; Composition**


**Week 6-Feb. 9**
**Session 5-**
**First sessions—Early stages of groups**


**Week 7-Feb. 16**
**Session 6:**
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**Group Simulations begin—**
*First half preparation, 2nd half simulations-First sessions A*

**Week 8-Feb. 23**
**Session 7**
**Groups for Children and Adolescents**

*First sessions, B*


**Winter Break—relax and enjoy**

**Week 9-March 9**
**Session 8- February 25**
**Later stages of groups/Problem Behavior in Groups**

*Second sessions A*

Corey & Corey, Ch. 7 Working Stage


**Week 10**
**Session 9- March 16**
**Working stages, problems continued.**

*Second session B*
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**Week 11—March 23**
**Foregrounding social justice**
**Session 10**
**Third session A**


Theater of the Oppressed notes—see canvas.

**Week 12—March 30**
**Session 11**
**Ending the Group—Termination phase, presentations**
**Third session B**
Corey & Corey, Ch. 8


**Week 13—April 6**
**Guest lecturer--TBA**

**Week 14—April 13**
**Session 14—July 21—Presentations+Celebrations**
Completing previous material; Reflections; Student Presentations-final rituals, wrap-ups

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.
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Assignments
See CANVAS for Due Dates. They will vary depending on your simulated group facilitation team.

Simulation Pedagogy—
• The core pedagogy for this class will be the development and implementation of simulated groups.
• Members will be students in social work 703, who will devote themselves to developing realistic client characters suitable for the group you develop. Each member of class will also be a member for one simulated group.
• Facilitation teams will be comprised of approx. 3-4 students, who will share the active facilitation of the group sessions.
• Each group will meet for three sessions of approximately 1 hour in length. The members will be consistent across the three sessions.
• Sessions will be video recorded. Annotation of these videos form the core assignments for the class. Technology for accomplishing this will be further discussed in class.

1. Simulated Group Portfolio: 20 Points

This will be a group assignment with your facilitation team.

Write a proposal that describes the simulated group you will facilitate in class. Include the following elements. You can add more or modify as needed:

1. Describe the purpose for the proposed group.
2. What agency is sponsoring the group. Specify here the “imagined” context of the group.
3. What model(s) will be used to conduct the group?
4. What is the evidence-base for the group model/techniques/processes you propose? This should be a rigorous search of the research and clinical literature and include at least 5-10 references.
5. What resources does the agency have available for the group?
6. Who will be the members of the group?
7. What methods will be used to recruit?
8. What criteria will be used to include or exclude members?
9. What composition issues need to addressed?
10. Will the group be open or closed? Structured or unstructured? How many sessions will the group meet, for how long, and at what interval?
11. Give a description of the types of activities planned for the group.
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12. Include a detailed agenda for the first group session.
13. Detail your plan for taking and recording notes for the group sessions. What would go in the client member files?

The following six individual assignments will be completed based on the simulated group sessions. Due dates will vary depending on what simulated group you are facilitating, but generally, the annotation of the recorded group session that you facilitate will be due on the Tuesday prior to the next class. This will give me time to review and comment and help you in planning for your subsequent group session. You will need to plan work time to review and annotate your videos in a relatively narrow window of time. Generally, observer annotations will be due one week after the facilitators complete their annotations, in time for them to review feedback prior to their next session. Grading will NOT be based on your performance in the videos but rather on the quality of your annotation and reflection.

2. Group Worker Session 1 Annotation and Reflection: 15 points
   A detailed rubric will be distributed and posted for the completion of this reflection. On the video of your group, you will label and reflect on your facilitation. You will also give feedback to your co-facilitators and note issues of group dynamics and development. You will also write a personal reflection on the session.

3. Observer Reflection 1: 5 points
   A more detailed rubric will be distributed. On the video of one other class group, you will give feedback to the facilitators. You will observe the same group for all three sessions.

4. Group Worker Session 2 Annotation and Reflection 2: 15 points
   A detailed rubric will be distributed and posted for the completion of this reflection. On the video of your group, you will label and reflect on your facilitation. You will also give feedback to your co-facilitators and note issues of group dynamics and development. You will also post a brief personal reflection on the session.

5. Observer Reflection 2: 5 points
   A more detailed rubric will be distributed. On the video of one other class group, you will give feedback to the facilitators. You will observe the same group for all three sessions.

6. Group Worker Reflection 3: 15 points
   A detailed rubric will be distributed and posted for the completion of this reflection. On the video of your group, you will label and reflect on your facilitation. You will also give feedback to your co-facilitators and note issues of group dynamics and development. You will also post a brief personal reflection on the session.

7. Observer reflection 3: 5 points
   A more detailed rubric will be distributed. On the video of one other class group, you will give feedback to the facilitators.
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**Additional Assignments**

8. **Contribution to Class: 10 Points**
   With your own learning goals in mind, create a contribution to learning for the whole class. This can take the form of a blog, a video, demonstration, presentation or performance. Creativity is encouraged.

9. **Final Reflection: 10 Points**
   To inform evaluation of your engagement and participation in class answer the following.
   a. Sessions attended
   b. Participation in class sessions (see guidelines for active participation on syllabus and at the bottom of this assignment)
   c. Participation between classes (e.g. video work, team meetings, reactions to other students learning contributions, any additional relevant work)
   d. Reflect on your learning overall in the class. A list of reflection questions will be posted on CANVAS.

**Active Engagement**  
**Class attendance is required.** If you are unable to come to class on a specific day, please contact me (via email or e-tool message to create a written record) with the reason for the absence. If you miss more than one class session, we will need to meet to discuss a plan for making up missed class material to adequately complete the course.

**Active participation** in class is expected. Active participation can be demonstrated in several ways, some examples are: participation in discussion, 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, giving thoughtful feedback to your colleagues on their videos and learning contributions.

**Note on use of technology in the classroom:** Laptops are to be used only for taking notes, or for specific other uses as directed in class. Personal use of laptops, phones and other technology is not allowed during class.

You will reflect on your attendance and participation in your final reflection paper and that will provide a basis for evaluating and crediting your class participation.

**Notes on Grading**
All assignments earn points, which total to 100. The final grading scale is:

A+ = 98-100, A = 93-97, A- = 91-92, B+ = 89-90, B = 84-88, B-= 82-83, C+ =80-81, C = 73-79, C-=70-73,
not passing = <70

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
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feedback about why an assignment didn’t get a perfect scores, say a 19 (~an A) instead of 20 (an A+). A paper needn’t have any major flaws to earn an A-. But if you ever have any questions or concerns about the grading, please contact me to talk more about it.