COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course builds on the content presented in the IP platform course, and focuses on the processes of intervention in task 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 scape-goating, 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, 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 treatment process from recruitment and composition to assessment, goal formulation, evaluation, intervention and termination will be presented with special consideration of how these phases may be modified to account for the various 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 that also take into account the special needs of clients. 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. Operationalize various models of group development in both open and closed groups and recognize how these various stages impact on group dynamics.
4. Identify common problems that emerge in group practice and intervene to resolve these problems.
5. 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.
6. Describe the impact of race, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, special abilities, and privilege on the dynamics of group structure and process in small groups.
7. Operationalize the NASW Code of Ethics as it applies to value dilemmas that arise in social group work practice.

**COURSE TEXTS**


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
- The Group (Ceased publication in 1955)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attend each session: absences may lower your grade since some of the material considered essential to achieving the objectives of the course will only be presented in class. In addition, class discussions and participation in exercises are considered an important part of your learning experience. (5%).

2. Four (4) integrative assignments related to essential themes of the course (60%):
   (a) Assignment 1: Knowledge of group dynamics is essential to effective group work practice. Explain what is meant by “group dynamics”? (Paper should be 5 pages typed, double-spaced and proofread – Due September 27)
   (b) Assignment 2: What competencies must one obtain in order to be a culturally competent group worker? Make the case that developing cultural competencies is an ethical responsibility. (Paper should be 5 pages, typed, double-spaced and proofread – Due October 18)
   (c) Assignment 3: Identify a target population or target problem for which you might consider developing a group. Identify the group (as if you were naming it). Define the group’s purpose. Identify and justify criteria you consider essential for inclusion and exclusion? Provide an announcement for your group. Paper should be 5 pages (including announcement), typed, double-spaced and proofread. Refer to Appendix C in Toseland and Rivas and in-class handout – Due November 1)
   (d) Assignment 4: Group Assessment. Details to be discussed in class. Paper should be 5 pages in length, typed, double-spaced and proofread (Due November 29)

3. Assignment 5: Group Proposal. Outline to be handed out in class (35%). Paper should be 6-8 pages in length, typed, double-spaced and proofread – Due December 13)
SESSION SUMMARY

I. KNOWLEDGE BASE OF GROUPS AND GROUP WORK

SESSION 1: (September 6):
Introduction: Definition of Group
**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 1: Introduction; Chapter 2: Historical Developments;

SESSION 2: (September 13):
Social Work with Groups: From Theory to Practice
**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 1: Introduction; Chapter 2: Historical Developments; Chapter 3: Understanding Group Dynamics

SESSION 3: (September 20):
SSW 80th Anniversary Celebration (Participation Required)

SESSION 4: (September 27):
Social Work with Groups: Values, Ethics and Professional Guidelines

SESSION 5: (October 4):
Group Work and Underrepresented Populations

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

SESSION 5: (October 11):
Group Structure and Formation

SESSION 6: (October 18):
Group Process and Development

SESSION 7: (October 25):
Group Leadership: Roles, Functions and Guidelines

SESSION 8: (November 1):
Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods

SESSION 9: (November 8):
Self-Help / Mutual Aid and Focus Groups

III. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE

SESSION 10: (November 15):
Pre-Group and Beginning

SESSION 11: (November 29):
Group Transitions and Ending / Ending Groups

SESSION 12: (December 6):
ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN GROUPS / SUMMARY / WRAP-UP

COURSE OUTLINE

In the following outline, I have indicated required reading as a double asterisk (**) and recommended readings by a single asterisk (*).

Forsyth (TEXT): Chapter 1: The Science of Group Dynamics (pp. 2-23) and Chapter 3: Group Formation - The Value of Groups (pp. 49-62)


**SESSION 3: (September 20): SSW 80th Anniversary Celebration (Participation Required)**

**SESSION 4: (September 27):**

C. Group Work and Underrepresented Populations


**SESSION 5: (October 4)**

D. *Social Work with Groups: Values, Ethics and Professional Guidelines*

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 1: Values and Ethics in Group Work Practice (pp. 6-11) and Appendix A2: Ethical Guidelines for Group Counselors


SESSION 5: (October 11)

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

A. Group Structure and Formation

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 5: Planning the Group


* Forsyth (TEXT): Chapter 3: Group Formation (pp. 51-73) and Chapter 5: Group Structure (pp. 109-133)


SESSION 6: (October 18)

B. Group Process and Development

**Toseland and Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 3 - review


* Forsyth (TEXT): Chapter 4: Development and Socialization (pp. 75-99)


**SESSION 7: (October 25)**

C. **Group Leadership: Roles, Functions and Guidelines**  
   **Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 4: Leadership**


   * Forsyth (TEXT): Chapter 8: Leadership*


**SESSION 8: (November 1)**

D. **Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods**  
   **Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 11: Task Groups: Foundation Methods and Chapter 12: Task Groups: Specialized Methods**


SESSION 9: (November 8)

E. Self-Help / Mutual Aid and Focus Groups


SESSION 10: (November 15)

III. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE

A. Pre-Group and Beginning

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 7: The Group Begins and Chapter 8: Assessment Chapter 9: Treatment Groups: Foundation Methods and Chapter 10: Treatment Groups: Specialized Methods


SESSION 11: (November 29)

B. Group Transitions and Ending

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 14: Ending the Group's Work


SESSION 12: (December 6)

IV. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN GROUPS

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 8 - review and Chapter 13: Evaluation


SUMMARY / WRAP-UP
GROUP WORK PROGRAMS AND STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES
The following references are provided to assist you in designing activities for your groups (compliments of Professor Brett Seabury).


