SW 624 - Social Work with Groups (Winter, 2002)
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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 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, 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:**

There are numerous texts about working with groups in interpersonal practice. The following list is not exhaustive but represents the types of group texts that will be referred to in this course syllabus. Various articles and chapter from these texts will be collected in a course pack that students can purchased at Michigan Document Services (Excel Testing). A copy of this course pack will be available in the CIRC.
*Barlow, Constance, Blythe, Judith & Edmonds, Margaret, *A Handbook of Interactive Exercises for Groups*, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999. This text is recommended for purchase at Ulrichs Bookstore.


**TOPICAL OUTLINE:**

I. Introduction: Definition of Group, Types of Groups, Why do we form Groups?:

Corey & Corey (TEXT) part of Ch 1, pp. 3-24. (4th - pp. 3-20.)

Reid (TEXT) Ch 1, pp. 1-17. (1st - pp. 2-17.)

*Toseland & Rivas (TEXT) part of Ch 1, pp 11-45.

Hopps & Pinderhughes (TEXT) Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-6, 7-39.


**Ia. On line Groups:**

II. History of Social Work Groups:

* Reid (TEXT) Ch 2, pp. 19-38. (1st - 20-38)

* Toseland & Rivas (TEXT) Ch 2, pp. 47-68.

* Fatout, Marian & Rose, Steven, Task Groups in the Social Services, Ch 1, pp. 3-15.


III. Ethical Considerations of Social Work with Groups:

* Corey & Corey (TEXT), Ch 2, pp. 25-58. (4th - Ch 2)

* Shapiro, Peltz, & Bernadette-Shapiro (TEXT) Ch 7, pp. 158-168.


IV. Factors in "Successful Groups":


Garvin (TEXT) Ch 6, pp. 138-153.


V. Group Planning - The Proposal, Composition, Screening:

Corey & Corey (TEXT), Ch 4, pp. 105-133. (4th ed. Ch 3, pp. 73-104.)

Garvin (TEXT), Ch 3, pp. 50-75.


Shapiro, Peltz, & Bernadett-Shapiro, (TEXT), Ch 2, pp. 11-46.


Toseland & Rivas (TEXT), Ch 5, pp. 143-171.

http://www.lib.umich.edu/cgi-bin/pqissues?36026

http://www.lib.umich.edu/cgi-bin/pqissues?36026


http://www.lib.umich.edu/cgi-bin/pqissues?36026

VI. Group Dynamics: Communication, Norms, Power, Roles, Status, Sociometry, Transference:

Reid (TEXT) part of Ch 12, pp. 232-249. (1st ed., part of Ch 12 pp. 245-260.)

Corey & Corey (TEXT), part of Ch 5, pp. 150-153, part of Ch 6, pp 207-212. (4th ed. part of Ch 4, pp. 123-126)

*Toseland & Rivas (TEXT) Part of Ch 3, pp. 69-86.

VII. Leadership: Attributes and Skills:

*Corey & Corey (TEXT), part of Ch 3. pp. 59-82 (4th- part of Ch 1, pp. 27-36)

Reid (TEXT) Chs 6 & 7, pp. 97-114 & 115-138. (1st ed. Ch 6, pp. 102-120; and Ch 7, pp. 122-146.)


Toseland & Rivas (TEXT) Ch 4, pp. 93-140.

**VIII. Stages of Group Development:**


*Toseland & Rivas (TEXT) Part of Chapter 3, pp. 86-90.

**IX. "Beginnings"- The First Session:**


*Reid (TEXT) Ch 10, pp. 189-208. (1st ed., Ch 10, pp. 198-216.)

Hopps & Pinderhughes (TEXT), Part of Ch 3, pp. 46-58.

Toseland & Rivas (TEXT) Ch 6, pp. 175-200.

**X. Group Process: Problematic Member Behavior and Conflict Resolution:**


Reid (TEXT) Ch 12, pp. 229-245. (1st ed. part of Ch 12, pp 254-257).

**XI. Worker Skills and Techniques in the Middle Phase:**

Corey & Corey (TEXT), part of Ch 6, pp. 184-208; (4th ed. part of Ch 1, pp. 14-17; part of Ch 8, pp. 247-260).


Reid (TEXT) part of Ch 1, pp 12-17; Ch 8, pp. 139-165; Ch 11, pp. 209-228. (1st ed., Ch 8, pp. 148-172; Ch 11, pp. 218-239).
XII. Evaluation:

*Garvin (TEXT) Ch 9, pp. 190-207.
Metcalf (TEXT) Ch 5, pp. 107-134.
Toseland & Rivas (TEXT) Ch 12, pp. 365-389.

XIII. "Endings":

Toseland & Rivas (TEXT) Ch 13, pp. 391-410.

XIV. Programs and Structured Group Activities:


XV. Applications - Children’s Groups:
Corey & Corey (TEXT), Ch 9, pp. 295-320.(4th Ch. 9) 10, 11, 12; pp. 281-430 (5th - Chs 9-12, pp. 293-444.)

XVI. Applications - Adolescent Groups:

XVII. Applications - Adult Groups:
Corey & Corey (TEXT), Ch 11, pp. 359-405.

**XVIII. Applications - Groups for the Elderly:**

Corey & Corey (TEXT), Ch 12, pp. 406-443.


**XIX. Applications – Theoretical Orientations:**


**XX. Applications – Populations at Risk:**


**Grading Mechanisms:**

This course will employ three grading mechanisms – log assignments, participation in COW, and a final, in-class test. 50% will be determined by the final test, 40% of the final grade will be determined by logs and 10% will be determined by feedback in COW. The log assignments are graded by the number completed and submitted into COW – the course conferencing system. Students will receive an A for submitting 4 logs, a B for submitting 3 logs, a C for submitting 2 logs, a D for submitting 1 logs, an E for submitting no logs. The average log is between 2-3 pages in length and describes the student’s efforts to operationalize and discuss group experiences outside of class. The deadlines for logs are that at least one log will be completed in each month of the semester. Therefore the first log will be due before the end of January, the
second will be due before the end of February, the third by the end of March and the fourth by the end of April. The descriptions of potential log assignments are presented below:

**Log Assignments**

1. **CURATIVE OR THERAPEUTIC FACTORS:** For this log assignment you need to analyze a treatment group in your agency, or you need to locate a support group or self-help group in your local community and get permission to attend a session. Briefly describe how many members attended and what generally transpired in the session. Observe how the group functions and assess how successful this group is by referring to the list of curative/therapeutic factors that we discussed in class. What variables of a successful individual change group can you see operating in the group that you visited? Operationalize these variables with examples from this group. Do you think these variables truly reflect the success or failure of this group? Explain your conclusion.

2. **EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNET SUPPORT GROUPS:** In this assignment you are to locate a support group on the internet. The following resources may help you locate an internet group: http://www.psychwww.com/resource/megalist.htm http://www.psychwww.com/resource/selfhelp.htm These resources will direct you to many electronic support groups. Choose one that interests you or could even be of support to you or might be helpful to clients with whom you are working. If you can locate an active group, and they will let you sign on, follow the group for at least three weeks so that you can get a sense of how effective this group might be for its members. See if you can recognize any of the effectiveness variables at work in this group. What are the upsides and downsides to internet support groups?

3. **ROOTS OF GROUP WORK:** In this assignment you are to visit a settlement house or "Y" in a "rust belt" city (the older the agency the better!). On winter break, those of you who live in NYC might visit Henry Street Settlement, or those of you who live near Chicago might visit Hull House or Erie Neighborhood House, or those of you who live in or near Detroit might visit Franklin Wright Center. There are many settlements scattered all over the East and Mid-West, even a small city like Toledo has its Friendly Center. If you can't locate a settlement then look up a "Y" or "community center" for this assignment. Try to get an appointment with the program director in the settlement or "Y" and interview this person to discover the kinds of group programs and services that are provided. How many "group" oriented services are in operation? If you discover that there are few group services, ask the program director to explain how an agency that "spawned" social group work has so few group oriented services.

4. **PLANNING FOR A GROUP -- THE GROUP PROPOSAL:** Long before the first session of a group, there is a lot of planning activity that must go on in the agency to assure the success of a group service. The Reid (TEXT) outlines 12 considerations that would inform a proposal (see pp.168-169). Using this outline or the one handed out in class, write up a specific proposal for a group service that you could implement in your field placement. Also discuss in this assignment
the organizational considerations that you would have to take into account in your agency. For example who on your staff would be favorable, indifferent, and opposed to the idea of your group? Who must approve your proposal and who must you get support from in order to implement your group? What kinds of strategies would you employ in order to win support for your proposal -- demonstration, collaboration, persuasion, conflict? How would you avoid such pitfalls as “turf protectionism,” “hoarding clients,” and “sabotage”? On a scale of 1-10, what is the feasibility of this group being implemented by you in your present field placement?

5. TEAMS: The two most common task groups for social workers are "teams" and "case conferences." Unfortunately these common group experiences are sometimes the most negative of group experiences for practitioners. If you are placed in an agency setting that utilizes interdisciplinary teams or frequently holds case conferences about clients, then you will have an opportunity to apply your knowledge of group dynamics to analyze the effectiveness of these kinds of professional groupings. In this assignment I want you to analyze those aspects of group structure (e.g. leadership, norms, status, sociometry, communication, and roles) and group process (e.g. decision making and conflict resolution) that may clarify some of the struggles that this group experiences when it tries to function. If your assessment uncovers some structural or process problems in this group, then suggest how you might go about intervening in this group to improve its functioning.

6. GROUP COMPOSITION: Many problems that emerge in groups can be traced to "compositional/membership imbalances." If you have composed a treatment group in your practice or been involved in helping others compose such a group, describe how you made decisions about including or excluding potential group members. Briefly describe the purpose and membership of your group. Did you do screening interviews and take into account the impact of age, gender, race, ethnicity and social class (or any other significant variable) on the composition of your group? Describe any problems that may have emerged because of membership imbalances. This log may also be done on an existing group that you did not compose. Describe the purpose and membership of the group and then analyze any problems that seem to be related to membership imbalances. Your log should reflect your understanding of how demographic variables impact group functioning.

7. GROUP DEVELOPMENT: This log gives you a chance to apply what you know about group development to a group in which you were a member. Briefly describe the purpose and membership of your group and how long they have been meeting. Was this an open-ended or closed group? Using one of the models of stages of group development, describe how this group moved through successive stages of development. Were there any stages that were significantly difficult for this particular group? What impact did the leadership have on the success or failure of this group to move through different stages?

8. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES: In the course we will be learning about a number of structured activities that group workers may employ at various phases of group development and with various kinds of client populations. For those of you who are running a group, this assignment encourages you to try out one or several structured activities that you have considered fits the
needs of your group. Describe how you operationalized it in your group and its impact on group members. What is your reaction to using such structured activities?

9. GROUP GEOGRAPHY: All groups have to meet in some kind of physical setting. The setting and how members arrange themselves have implications for group functioning. In this log you are to analyze the setting, room, seating arrangements, and use of space by group members in a particular group. Briefly describe the purpose of this group and draw the seating arrangements for its members. How do geographical arrangements reflect or impact on this particular group's functioning?

10. SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE: This course covers general knowledge about groups which is generic to most groups that social workers will be leading or facilitating. In the practice world there are many specific kinds of knowledge that group workers must know in order to run a successful group. This specific knowledge may relate to the age or gender of the members of the group (e.g. children, adolescent, or elder groups etc.) or to the particular kinds of problems that group members are struggling to resolve (e.g. substance abuse, trauma, grief, etc.) The profession of social work is committed to working with “Populations-at-Risk,” and some of you may be working with such specific populations.

In this log you are to explore some of the special kinds of knowledge that are important to running the particular group that you discussed in Log 4 – Planning for a Group or another group that you are likely to find in your field placement. Locate some articles or chapters from books that address specialized knowledge of the group in question. Present some of the main points of these articles and chapters and show how these main points are operationalized or manifested in the groups in your agency. This log will take a little research on your part (i.e. check out chapters in Corey & Corey, Gitterman & Shulman, Greif & Ephross, McKay & Paleg, Shapiro, Pelz, & Bernadett-Shapiro, etc.) and will be most educational if you actually have a chance to run one of the groups in question. It will also be helpful to your classmates to learn about specialized knowledge.

11. INTERVENTION STYLE: This log is designed to teach you something about your personal intervention style with groups. Get permission to audio tape a group session (not an early screening session) with one of your groups. Some agencies may not let you audio tape interviews, so you will have to make as complete a verbatim record of the interview immediately after it happens. Categorize (statement by statement) all of your verbal and non-verbal interventions on the coding sheet developed in class. Don’t be distressed if some of your interventions do not fit into categories (it is not your interventions but the categories that are problematic). Analyze these data and see if any patterns seem to emerge. Do these patterns fit what you consider to be your general intervention style in most group sessions? For example do you tend to be reflective rather than directive?

12. ETC: If you are not particularly thrilled by the selection of log assignments that I have presented above, then I want you to feel free to develop your own learning experiences that relate course concepts to your professional practicum or life experiences. I only ask that you check out your Etc. log with me before you do it. This not only gives me some warning but also allows me to react and be helpful to your ideas before you expend energy doing it.
**Final Test**

The final test will be conducted during the scheduled test day at the end of the semester in December. This in-class test will be composed of short answer questions and multiple choice questions. The test is not designed to test a student’s memory, but instead is designed to test a student’s ability to apply course concepts to group examples. Before the final test, a study guide will be handed out in the class that lists the various concepts and readings that may be covered by the final test. In past tests, excerpts from the movie “The Breakfast Club,” examples from in-class group simulations, and examples from student logs have been used to generate examples of groups that are then used in the final test.

**Feedback in COW:**

COW is our class conferencing system: http://calypso.rs.itd.umich.edu/COW/ Not only will you be posting your completed logs in COW, but you are also expected to comment and give feedback to your classmates’ logs. Feedback is an important part of group process and past experience with COW has demonstrated that it significantly increases the educational experience of the course. 10% of your grade will be reflected in your feedback to your classmates. In order to receive all 10% you will be expected to make at least 35 responses to your classmates’ logs during the semester.