THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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School of Social Work

SW 624: Interpersonal Practice with Groups

Fall '02
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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.

RELATIONSHIP TO FOUR CURRICULAR THEMES:

- Multiculturalism and Diversity: Race, gender, SES, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and disability 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. There is renewed interest in working with youth gangs, immigrants, homeless people, HIV/AIDS survivors, and with residents of SRO’s (Single Room Occupancy).

- 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.

RELATIONSHIP OF 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.

COURSE TEXTS

REQUIRED:

ADDITIONAL 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
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: Assume you are engaged in a discussion about this course with a colleague. The colleague is skeptical about the value of groups and makes the comment, “It’s really just like social work with individuals except you have more than one person to work with!” You, of course, respond by arguing that an important distinction of social work practice with groups is knowledge of group dynamics. You even argue that knowledge of group dynamics is an ethical responsibility for social work practice with groups. Your colleague then asks, “What’s group dynamics?” Write your response to this question and discuss why it is an ethical responsibility. (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 11)

(c) Assignment 3: (Detailed handout will be provided.) Identify a target population or target problem for which you might consider developing a group. Identify the group (as if you were proposing a name for it to the members). 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 - Due October 25)

(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 22)

(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
SESSION 2: (September 13): Social Work with Groups: From Theory to Practice
SESSION 3: (September 20): Group Work and Underrepresented Populations
SESSION 4: (September 27): Social Work with Groups: Values, Ethics and Professional Guidelines (Assignment #1 Due)

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

SESSION 5 (October 4): Group Structure and Formation
SESSION 6 (October 11): Group Process and Development (Assignment #2 Due)
SESSION 7 (October 18): Group Leadership: Roles, Functions and Guidelines
SESSION 8 (October 25): Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods (Assignment #3 Due)
SESSION 9 (November 1): Self-Help / Mutual Aid and Focus Groups
SESSION 10 (November 8): Assessment and Evaluation in Groups

III. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE

SESSION 11 (November 15): Pre-Group and Beginning Group
SESSION 12 (November 22): Groups in Transitions (Assignment #4 Due)
SESSION 13 (November 29): *** Thanksgiving Recess ***
SESSION 14 (December 6): Ending Groups
SESSION 15 (December 13): SUMMARY / WRAP-UP (Final Assignment Due)

COURSE OUTLINE

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

I. KNOWLEDGE BASE OF GROUPS AND GROUP WORK

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


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

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):**

C. **Group Work and Underrepresented Populations**

**Toseland and Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 5: Leadership and Diversity**


**SESSION 4: (September 27): (Assignment #1 Due)**

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

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Review Chapter 1: Values and Ethics in Group Work Practice (pp. 6-11) and Appendix A1 Guidelines for Ethics, A2 Ethical Guidelines for Group Counselors and A3 Standards for Social Work Practice with Groups:**


**SESSION 5: (October 4)**

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

A. Group Structure and Formation
**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 6: Planning the Group


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


**SESSION 6: (October 11) (Assignment #2 Due)**

**B. Group Process and Development**

**Toseland and Rivas (TEXT): Review Chapter 3 Understanding Group Dynamics


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


SESSION 7: (October 18)

C. Group Leadership: Roles, Functions and Guidelines

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 4: Leadership and Review Chapter 5 Leadership and Diversity


* Forsyth (TEXT): Chapter 8: Leadership


SESSION 8: (October 25):

D. Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods (*Assignment #3 Due*)

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


SESSION 9: (November 1)

E. Self-Help / Mutual Aid and Focus Groups


**SESSION 10: (November 8):**

**III. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE**

A. Assessment and Evaluation in Groups

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


**SESSION 11: (November 15)**

B. Pre-Group and Beginning

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 7: The Group Begins**


**SESSION 12: (November 22) (Assignment #4 Due)**

C. Group Transitions

**Toseland and Rivas: Chapter 9: Treatment Groups: Foundation Methods and Chapter 10: Treatment Groups: Specialized Methods**


**SESSION 13: (November 29): *** Thanksgiving Break ***

**SESSION 14 (December 6):**

D. Ending Groups

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

Corey and Corey: Chapter 8: Ending a Group


**SESSION 15 (December 13): SUMMARY / WRAP-UP (Final Assignment Due)**
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).


