SW624: Interpersonal Practice with Groups: Fall 2003

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I encourage you to e-mail, visit my office or telephone for any assistance you might require. Because of all of our very busy schedules, e-mail is a very convenient way to communicate with me.

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, 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 orientation, 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 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 groups.
- **Social Justice and Social Change:** The history of social group work emerges from that part of social work's history concerned with various reform movements in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Though treatment 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 SROs (Single Room Occupancy).

- Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, 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 systems and group dynamics theories 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 textbooks:**
  This textbook provides a basic introduction to group work practice that is quite thorough and empirically based.
  This book provides information about working in task groups.
  This book provides descriptions and examples of skills, along with observations about oppression and empowerment as applicable to the respective skills.

**Available in class:**
  This booklet provides a quickly absorbed overview of the knowledge, values, and tasks of group workers. It is also found as an Appendix in the Toseland and Rivas textbook.

**Reserved readings:**


# Expectations

## Student Evaluation Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Journal</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role Description</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Competence Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Total: 100%

### A. Participation
You must, of course, be present in the classroom for participation to be evaluated. For the instructor-rated portion of the grade I will take into consideration quality of contributions to discussion, quality of contributions to in-class group activities, quality of involvement in roleplays, attitude, appropriate balance between non-participation and dominance, raising of issues, contributions toward content, willingness to share, cooperativeness with fellow students, demonstration of learning, etc. In addition, I will consider the quality of peer feedback (both oral and written) as part of the participation grade. For the peer rated portion of the grade, each member of the small group will anonymously rate the participation of each small group member, including themselves. A mean of the ratings will be calculated and used for that portion of the participation grade.

### B. Learning Journal
Each student will maintain a learning journal. The journal will include at least one entry per week (with the first entry due Week 2 of the class) for a total of eleven regular entries and one final entry. With the exception of the final entry, each submission should consist of a minimum of 750 words. Submissions must be made in electronic format, either as an email attachment (using Word or WordPerfect) or on a disk. Email messages sent with attachments must contain your name and the journal entry number in the subject line of the message. The same information must appear on the entry. Disks must be clearly labeled with the owner's name.

For each week's entry (with the exception of the final entry) you should identify what you consider to be the most significant points of the reading assignments, describe of what value the information is or will be to you as a social worker/group worker, or why the reading lacks value, and provide an example of application of the knowledge. This example can be drawn from class (you are a member of the class-as-a-group, and a member of a task group, and a member of your roleplay group), other academic experiences, or other life experiences where you've been a member of a small group. Each entry should focus on the readings assigned for the day the entry is due. **It is important that you address issues of human diversity, i.e., race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin in your journal entries.** The purpose of the journal is to help you integrate and think about the content and process of your learning and to provide accountability for the reading.
Each journal entry should show evidence of your efforts to critique, evaluate, and analyze what and how you are learning. In each of your journal entries you must discuss connections between reading, class material, role play experiences, task group experiences, or life experiences. You should NOT use these entries for summaries of the readings. Your goal for these journal entries is to demonstrate critical analytical thinking and integration. In addition, you need to demonstrate your awareness and sensitivity to issues of human diversity related to social work with groups.

Evaluation of the assignment will be based upon (1) how well you describe connections between reading and real-life experiences and applications of learning, (2) your skills in critiquing, analyzing and evaluating the knowledge you are gaining and the process of that knowledge acquisition, and (3) your awareness and sensitivity to issues of human diversity related to social work with groups. Grades will be assigned based on completeness, depth, and thoughtfulness.

The final entry should at least 1500 words. This final entry should integrate material from the readings, role-play experiences, and class processing. Evaluation of the final entry will be based upon the thoughtfulness and depth of the integrative analysis as well as the quality of the writing. Integrate means to combine or form parts into a whole. The last entry should provide an intellectual description of how the pieces of your learning process combined into your whole experience. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelop if you turn the assignment in on disk and want the disk returned.

Journal entries are due starting Week 2 of the class. The instructor may not actually actively request during the class that the journal entries be handed in, it is your responsibility to make sure she receives yours. Journal entries submitted via email must arrive by midnight the day they are due. Late entries, for whatever reason, will be subject to the late paper policy. Please review the writing policy on this syllabus for additional information.

DUE DATES: Each day of class, beginning Week Two, Final Entry due last class meeting

C. Role Description: Each student will participate in a group project. Small groups will work as task groups for the purpose of presenting extended role plays of a professionally led mutual aid group of some type. The group will, at appointed times, present segments of an ongoing role-play demonstrating the various phases of group treatment: beginning, middle or working, and ending. An effort will be made to role play groups associated with issues from across the lifespan (childhood/adolescence, young/middle adulthood, older/elder adulthood). Each roleplay will last 50 minutes. Participation in the role plays will contribute to the class participation grade for each student. There is one writing assignment directly associated with the role play activity.

The assignment will be a 750 word paper describing the role the individual will undertake in the group role play. The “client’s” presenting problem, life circumstances and history and personality characteristics will be included. Include also information related to human diversity and/or discrimination or oppression, either of or by the
client. Evaluation of the paper will be based upon how well the person described can be pictured by the reader and the quality of the writing. You may use the format of your choice to present this information, e.g., first person, third person, as a psychosocial assessment, as a diary entry, and so on.

DUE DATE: Class 4, September 26, 2003

D. Paper: What competencies must one obtain in order to be a culturally competent group worker? Using Chapter 5 of T & R as your guide (and any other resources of your choice), make the case that developing cultural competencies is an ethical responsibility. Paper should be 1250 to 1300 words in length and written in accordance with policy on writing located elsewhere on this syllabus.

DUE DATE: October 24, 2003

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: I ask any student who because of a disability may need special arrangements or accommodations to meet the requirements of this course to inform me as soon as possible.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is very important given the interactive nature of the instruction for this course. Participation grades will reflect your attendance record given that participation can only be judged if you are present in the classroom.

WRITING: All writing assignments must demonstrate acceptable writing style including the use of standard English, good organization, acceptable punctuation and grammar, and the use of current APA (American Psychological Association) style reference citation if references are used. All assignments, except any specifically noted by the instructor, must be word processed or typewritten, using double-spacing with one inch margin on all sides in a 12 point font. Late papers will result in a penalty of a decrease of one letter grade for each day late.

CLASSROOM POLICIES: Please turn mobile phones and pagers off or to a non-audible mode during class. Professional behavior is expected, especially courtesy and respect.

Course Outline: The following outline is provided as a guide, however variations may occur. Reading assignments are made in such a way to try and spread them somewhat evenly. Therefore, class content and reading content may not always be congruent for the same class. For example, you may have read the section on a certain skill before in-class practice actually takes place, or some topic may be the focus of a lecture before you actually read about that topic. Usually, lectures and class activities will be intended as supplemental to the reading. This means that it is assumed you complete the reading and bring any questions or concerns to class assertively (in other words, request the opportunity to ask questions, if necessary). It would be impossible to discuss all of the reading that you will be doing. Class time will supplement this knowledge, but class content will not and is not intended to replace the knowledge you gain through reading.
The following content areas cut across the entire semester and you may expect the content to be alluded to or focused upon repeatedly:

- Group Dynamics Theory
- Systems Theory
- Empowerment Perspective
- Mutual Aid Perspective
- Use of self
- Content and Process
- Research findings related to social work with groups

Week 1 September 5, 2003

**Content Area Focus:**
- Group Purpose and Goal
- Contracting
- Content and Process
- Types of Groups
  - Task
  - Treatment

**Class Activities:**
- Introductions
- Syllabus Review

**Videotape:** The Power of the Situation

Week 2 September 12, 2003

**Content Area Focus:**
- Group Purpose and Goal
- Contracting
- Content and Process
- Types of Groups
  - Task
  - Treatment
- History of Group Work

**Required Reading:**
- Toseland & Rivas Chapters 1 (Introduction) & 2 (Historical Developments)
- Fujishin Chapter 1 (Working in a Group)
- Bertcher, Chapter 1 (Introduction: The Effective Group)

**Due** First journal entry

Week 3 September 19, 2003

**Content Area Focus**
- Group Dynamics Theory
- Systems Theory
- Mutual Aid Perspective
Ethics and Group Work

**Videotape:** Groups and Group Dynamics

**Required Reading**
- Toseland & Rivas Chapters 3 (Understanding Group Dynamics) & 4 (Leadership)
- Toseland & Rivas Appendices A1 and A2
- Fujishin Chapter 2 (Discovering Yourself)

**Due** Second journal entry

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**Week 4 September 26, 2003**

**Content Area Focus**
- Empowerment Perspective and Social Justice
- Small Group Behavior and Problems
- Group work in the Pre-Group Phase
  - Assessing the Context
    - Organizational mission and function and influence on group’s work
    - Social and institutional barriers and influence on group’s work
  - Group composition issues
    - Composition: Heterogeneity and homogeneity
    - Individual and social problems that lead to a need for a group
  - Recruitment
  - Member Assessment
    - Competency based assessment
    - Member contexts (e.g., familial, social, cultural) and influence on group work

**Required Reading**
- Toseland & Rivas Chapters 6 (Planning the Group) & 8 (Assessment)
- Fujishin Chapter 3 (Expressing Yourself Clearly)

**Videotape** Skills and Techniques for Group Counseling with Youth (Part I)

**Due** Role Description Paper

**Due** Third journal entry

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**Week 5 October 3, 2003**

**Content Area Focus**
- Beginning Stage
  - Group dynamics in the beginning stage
  - Leadership skills and tasks of beginning stage
  - Group Purpose and Goal
  - Contracting
Group 1 Beginning Stage Roleplay
Required Reading
Toseland & Rivas Chapters 7 (The Group Begins)
Fujishin Chapter 4 (Listening for Understanding)
Bertcher Entire book should be completed by this date
Due Fourth journal entry

Week 6 October 10, 2003
Content Area Focus
Issues of Diversity in Group Work
Beginning Stage
  Group dynamics in the beginning stage
  Leadership skills and tasks of beginning stage
  Group Purpose and Goal
  Contracting

Group 2 Beginning Stage Roleplay
Required Reading
Toseland & Rivas Chapter 5 (Leadership & Diversity)
Fujishin Chapters 8 (Leading a Group) & 9 (Building a Cohesive Group)
Videotape Skills and Techniques for Group Counseling with Youth (Part II)
Due Fifth journal entry

Week 7 October 17, 2003
Content Area Focus
Beginning Stage
  Group dynamics in the beginning stage
  Leadership skills and tasks of beginning stage
  Group Purpose and Goal

Group 3 Beginning Stage Roleplay
Required Reading
Toseland & Rivas Chapter 9 (Treatment Groups: Foundation Methods)
Fujishin Chapter 6 (Preparing for Discussion)
Due Sixth journal entry

Week 8 October 24, 2003
Content Area Focus
Group Work in the Middle Phase
  Group dynamics in the middle phase
  Leadership skills in the middle phase
  Use of activities
  Communication theory as it relates to verbal and nonverbal group interaction
  Member interactions as manifestations of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so on

Group 1 Middle Stage Roleplay
Required Reading
Toseland & Rivas Chapter 10 (Treatment Groups: Specialized Methods)
Fujishin Chapter 10 (Managing Conflict)
Due Cultural Competence Paper
Due Seventh journal entry

Week 9 October 31, 2003
Content Area Focus
Group Work in the Middle Phase
  Group dynamics in the middle phase
  Leadership skills in the middle phase
  Use of activities
  Communication theory as it relates to verbal and nonverbal group interaction
  Member interactions as manifestations of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so on

Group 2 Middle Stage Roleplay
Required Reading
Toseland & Rivas Chapters 11 (Task Groups: Foundation Methods) & 12 (Task Groups: Specialized Methods)
Due Eighth journal entry

Week 10 November 7, 2003
Content Area Focus
Group Work in the Middle Phase
  Group dynamics in the middle phase
  Leadership skills in the middle phase
  Use of activities
  Communication theory as it relates to verbal and nonverbal group interaction
  Member interactions as manifestations of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so on

Group 3 Middle Stage Roleplay
Required Reading
Toseland & Rivas Chapter 13 (Evaluation)
Due Ninth journal entry
Week 11: November 14, 2003

**Content Area Focus**
Group work in the ending Phase
- Group dynamics in the ending phase
- Leadership skills and tasks of ending phase
- Maintaining changes achieved in and/or by the group
- Losses and separations in lives of members and leaders as they affect group's ending
- Evaluation techniques

**Group 1 Ending Stage Roleplay**

**Required Reading**
Toseland & Rivas Chapter 14 (Ending the Group's Work)

*Due* Tenth journal entry

Week 12: November 21, 2003

**Content Area Focus**
Group work in the ending Phase
- Group dynamics in the ending phase
- Leadership skills and tasks of ending phase
- Maintaining changes achieved in and/or by the group
- Losses and separations in lives of members and leaders as they affect group's ending
- Evaluation techniques

**Group 2 Ending Stage Roleplay**

**Required Reading**

**Videotape** Group Procedures with Older People

*Due* Eleventh journal entry

Week 13: November 28, 2003

Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 14 December 5, 2003

Content Area Focus
Group work in the ending Phase
  Group dynamics in the ending phase
  Leadership skills and tasks of ending phase
  Maintaining changes achieved in and/or by the group
  Losses and separations in lives of members and leaders as they affect group's ending
  Evaluation techniques

Group 3 Ending Stage Roleplay

Termination of Class-As-A-Group

Required Reading (Please bring to class with you.)

Due Final journal entry

Social Work with Groups

Selected Bibliography


