SW 624: Interpersonal Practice with Groups

Fall ’03, Section 001
Prof. Robert M. Ortega, MSW, Ph.D.
2796 SSWB O: (734) 763-6576
Office Hours: M & Th: 12:30pm-2:30pm, and Tuesday 9am-11am.
(Other days possible by appointment)
e-mail: rmortega@umich.edu

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.

**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:

(Optional articles: I have included additional articles with citations which can be retrieved in the library. If you cannot locate an article in a journal, please see me)

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% of grade).

(2) One quiz on group dynamics (10% of grade) (*In-class on September 18*)

(3) Three (3) integrative assignments related to essential themes of the course (60%):
   (a) **Assignment #1: Ethics and Cultural Competence (Due October 2)**
       This first assignment has two parts (and then there are “bonus points”). For part one, you are asked to describe at least 10 ways in which the discussion of “ethics” becomes an important and unique aspect of social work practice with groups? For the second part, you are asked to propose at least 5 practice principles critical and unique to *culturally competent* group work practice. For bonus points, discuss how cultural competence and ethics are related.
       *(Paper should be a maximum of 6 pages typed, double-spaced and proofread)*

   (b) **Assignment #2: Forming a Group (Due October 16)**
       Assignment 2 asks you to draft a brief outline of a group that you would consider forming. Four (4) critical categories are identified below that must be addressed in your outline. In addition, you are asked to propose some form of group announcement in order to attract referrals (e.g., a flyer that could be posted on a bulletin board).
(1) Group Name: non-stigmatizing, easy to remember, accurately represents the group's purpose

(2) Purpose: clearly written in one sentence, summarizes need indicated in rationale for the group, accurately reflects expectations in treatment, provides clarity in direction or treatment pathway

(3) Criteria for inclusion: consistent with purpose, consider call for referrals: Is the request for the specific type of referral clear?, clearly articulates rationale for inclusion, rationale is defensible; supported by research or other

(4) Criteria for exclusion: identifies (sub)populations clearly inconsistent with purpose, consider call for referrals, Is the request for the specific type not considered appropriate for referral clear?, clearly articulates rationale for exclusion, rationale is defensible; supported by research or other.

*** Group Announcement:
(a) Design: clear, creatively designed, concise (uncluttered), easily readable, non-stigmatizing
(b) Substantive: realistic, conceptually clear, targeted
(c) Identifying Info: date, place, expected length, cost (optional), contact info

(Paper should be 5 pages (including announcement), typed, double-spaced and proofread)

(c) Assignment #3 – Assessment in Group Work Practice (Due November 6)
For this assignment, you (i.e., not a group project) are asked to observe and assess one group session. The group could be a committee meeting, a staff meeting or a treatment group (e.g., that you either observe or facilitate). Through the observation you are asked to complete the following tasks:
(1) Describe the group's context (e.g., sponsor, physical setting, purpose, composition, size, frequency of meetings (i.e., how often scheduled to meet), length, duration (how many sessions planned), open vs. closed, etc.).

(2) Chart and record each member's frequency of interactions. (See Toseland and Rivas, Figure 8-3. Note: If the group you are observing is not conducive to continuous recording, identify a sampling procedure that best fits Task #2 and briefly explain your rationale for the procedure you selected.). On the basis of your observations, speculate why some members spoke more frequently than others.

(3) Construct a sociogram, indicating the types of relationships between members. (See Toseland and Rivas, Figure 8-4). Were you able to identify distinct subgroups? Did your observations help you identify task and socio-emotional leaders within the group? Were there other roles that could be associated with particular members?

(4) If, in your observation, you were to identify one aspect of the group that appears problematic (focusing on an individual, the group as a whole, or the group in interaction with its environment), describe the problem and concern it raises for group functioning. Using Toseland and Rivas Figure 8-6, select an appropriate intervention to address the level of problem and suggest a plan for intervention.

(The final product is not expected to be more than 5 pages in length, typed, double-spaced and proof-read.)

(4) Assignment 4: Group Proposal. (25%, Due December 4)
This assignment is designed to demonstrate knowledge of the steps necessary to propose a group that you believe would fill a service need in a community organization. It must be completed as an individual project and should reflect upon a real-life problem or situation. The following outline serves as a guide to the final product:

(a) Abstract: (Refers to a brief statement focusing on the major points of the group.)
(b) Introduction and Rationale: Justify the need for the proposed group. The main questions to be addressed are:
   WHAT? What is the problem or situation that requires immediate attention?
   SO WHAT? What makes this problem or situation, and the urgency in addressing it at this time so crucial? Is there data to support the need?
   NOW WHAT? Given the answers to the above questions, what must be done? Offer justification for the direction you have chosen in order to address the problem or situation. Is there already an exemplary group work model that you can draw from with demonstrated success?
   (Note: Remember to cite relevant (recent) literature that supports important points you have presented in this section.)
(c) Purpose: Stated briefly, what is the purpose of the group? (In stating the purpose, does it lend itself to observation and measurement?)
(d) Procedure: How will the group conduct its work? What will the worker do to assist the group in achieving its purpose?
(e) Agency Sponsorship: Who is the sponsoring agency? (What is the mission of the agency and is the purpose of the group consistent with the agency's mission?) What resources does the agency have available to the group?
(f) Membership: What specific target population will be selected and why? What methods will be used to recruit members? What criteria will be used to include and exclude members and what practical considerations are taken into account in group composition (e.g., size, race/ethnicity, gender, age, other demographic characteristics, open vs. closed, voluntary vs. involuntary).
(g) Contact: How many sessions are planned? How often will the group meet each week? How long will each session last? When will sessions be held (i.e., time of day)?
(h) Environment: What physical (i.e., room, space, materials), fiscal (budget) and other special arrangements (e.g., transportation, childcare) will be made to accommodate the group?
(i) Member Orientation: What specific procedures will be used to prepare members for membership?
(j) Monitoring and Evaluation: What aspects of group progress will be monitored and evaluated? How will those aspects be monitored and evaluated?

(Proposal must be typed, double-spaced, and proofread. It should not exceed 8 pages in length.)
SESSION SUMMARY

I. KNOWLEDGE BASE OF GROUPS AND GROUP WORK

SESSION 1: (9/4):
Introduction: Definition of Group

SESSION 2: (9/11):
Social Work with Groups: From Theory to Practice

SESSION 3: (9/18):
Group Work and Underrepresented Populations (In-class Quiz)

SESSION 4: (9/25):
Social Work with Groups: Values, Ethics and Professional Guidelines

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

SESSION 5 (10/2):
Group Structure and Formation (Assignment #1 Due)

SESSION 6 (10/9):
Group Process and Development

SESSION 7 (10/16):
Group Leadership: Roles, Functions and Guidelines (Assignment #2 Due)

III. GROUP PRACTICE CONTEXTS

SESSION 8 (10/23):
Treatment Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods

SESSION 9 (10/30):
Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods

III. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE

SESSION 10 (11/6):
Pre-Group and Formation (Assignment #3 Due)

SESSION 11 (11/13):
Beginning Group

SESSION 12 (11/20):
Groups in Transitions

SESSION 13 (12/4):
Ending Groups, Assessment and Evaluation (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 4):
A. Introduction: Definition of Group

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 1: Introduction; Chapter 2: Historical Developments;


SESSION 2: (September 11):
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 18):**

**C. Group Work and Underrepresented Populations**

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


SESSION 4: (September 25):

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 2):

II. ACHIEVING CHANGE THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

A. Group Structure and Formation (Assignment #1 Due)

**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 9)
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 16) (Assignment #2 Due)
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


III. GROUP PRACTICE CONTEXTS

SESSION 8: (October 23):
A. Treatment Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods
   ** Toseland and Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 8: Assessment; Chapter 9: Treatment Groups - Foundation Methods; Chapter 10: Treatment Groups - Specialized Methods
   ** Shapiro, Peltz and Bernadett-Shapiro Chapter 2; and Chapters 6-9


SESSION 9: (October 30):
B. Task Groups: Foundation and Specialized Methods
   **Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 11: Task Groups - Foundation Methods and Chapter 12: Task Groups - Specialized Methods


SESSION 10 (November 6): (Assignment #3 Due)
A. Pre-Group and Formation
   **Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 7: The Group Begins
   ** Shapiro, Peltz and Bernadett-Shapiro Review Chapter 2;


**SESSION 11 (November 13):**

B. **Beginning the Group**

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

Corey and Corey (2002) Chapter 5 Initial stage of the group


**IV. PHASES OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE**

**SESSION 12: (November 20):**

C. **Group Transitions**

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


**SESSION 13: (December 4): (Assignment #4 Due)**

D. **Ending Groups, Assessment and Evaluation**

**Toseland & Rivas (TEXT): Chapter 8 - Assessment and Chapter 13: Evaluation Chapter 14: Ending the Group's Work**


Corey and Corey (2002) Chapter 8: Ending a Group


**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).


