THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
School of Social Work

Course Number: SOWO 851

Course Title: Social Work Practice with Groups, Spring 2009

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12-2 or before or after class on Friday or by appointment

Course Description: The course is designed to enable students to become more knowledgeable and skillful as social group workers. Phases of group development and worker tasks in each phase provide the course framework.

Course Objectives:

It is expected that each student will demonstrate learning in two areas:

1. Theoretical knowledge about frameworks and concepts needed for social intervention with groups.
   a. The theoretical and value base and major concepts of models of social group work, as well as concepts from other group approaches that are relevant to students' practice.
   b. Selected concepts from small group theory and research (e.g., group development, group composition, group norms, group goals, and group dynamics).
   c. Selected content related to race, gender, sexual orientation, poverty, age, and other critical factors.

2. Application of theoretical knowledge to experience with groups.
   a. Ability to select theoretical content as a basis for understanding groups and planning social intervention, adapting the theory as appropriate.
   b. Awareness of own role, as a practitioner and as a member, in various group situations, and of the impact of this role on other group participants and on group processes.
   c. Ability to evaluate group conditions, and on the basis of this evaluation, to facilitate group movement, as a practitioner and as a member.
   d. Ability to perform selected group work practice skills, such as assessing, goal setting, problem-solving, and programming.
   e. Ability to evaluate the effectiveness of own interventions and the usefulness of theory selected.
Expanded Description:
This course is designed to provide students with knowledge and skills relevant to group work practice in both concentrations and across all fields of practice. Students learn basic information through course readings, papers and presentations, and apply this information about social interventions with groups to their specific areas of interest. This course builds on the human behavior and practice foundation courses. It is grounded in ecological and developmental theory and is linked to field work experience through paper assignments, small group classroom assignments and class discussions. As consideration is given to how group work practice takes place with particular client systems and within current societal and professional conditions, the course is linked in direct and indirect ways to concentration courses related to human behavior, social welfare policy, evaluation of practice, and practice at other system levels, including individual, family, organizational and community.

Areas of skill to be developed during the course of the semester focus on: (1) assessment of group structure and processes; (2) interventions in support of individual member goals, group goals, and group development; and (3) evaluation of worker interventions and goal achievement. Particular skills are associated with each segment of the syllabus: composition; group development; group assessment; group dynamics; goal setting and contracting; co-leadership; interventions at individual, group and environmental levels; diversity and cultural competence; programming; problematic group situations; and evaluation.

Readings:
- The text is available through the Health Affairs Bookstore.
- Other required readings will be available on e-reserves or are online through the UNC Library.
- Optional readings may need to be located by individual student

Required Texts:


The following books are useful texts to have for supplemental reading:


**Recommended Journals:**
- *Groupwork*
- *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*
- *Small Group Research*
- *Social Work*
- *Social Work with Groups*

**Group Experiences:** It is preferred that each student be working with a client or task group during the current semester. There are many kinds of group experiences that can serve this purpose. For the class papers, just *observing* a group should be sufficient if the student does not have the opportunity to lead or co-lead a client or task group. These groups will serve as a basis for small group assignments, general class discussion and written assignments. However, if no such group experience is currently available, the “alternate” paper assignments can be followed. (see separate paper assignment handout)

**Teaching Methods:** This course is structured as a seminar; all class members are expected to share responsibility for participating in discussions and for presenting materials needed by the class. Some classroom time will be spent working in small task groups, experiential activities and role plays; therefore, **class attendance is crucial**. Task group experiences are selected to reinforce learning about group processes and issues, including diversity and ethical issues. Assigned and independently selected readings, seminar participation, client group experiences, structured assignments, videos, and the class group itself will provide the material necessary for learning about group operation.

The development of a supportive learning environment is fostered by respectfully listening to the ideas of others, being able to understand and appreciate a point of view which is different from your own, clearly articulating your point of view, and linking experience to readings and assignments.

**Assignments and Evaluation:** *In-class and written assignments are intended to facilitate integration of theoretical content with practice skill.*

There are two papers relating client or task group experiences (or alternate group experiences) to course readings. There is an initial paper on composition (20%) and a final paper on group development (25%). There is also a 30 minute presentation on intervention methods (25%) and a mid term exam (20%). Details about these assignments are contained in a separate handout, “Paper and Presentation Assignments.” The in class presentations will begin mid semester and exact dates for presentations will be determined after students have selected their topics.
Class participation counts for 10% of your final grade. Everyone will receive a standard score of 100 for participation, in recognition of a norm of attendance, contributions to small group assignments, and informed participation in class discussion. Points will be deducted from the base score if you miss class, are late, leave early, disappear for long periods on break or are unprepared. Please turn off cell phones during class.

Grading System:

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H &= 94-100 \\
P &= 80-93 \\
L &= 70-79 \\
F &= 69 \text{ and below}
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Policy on Incompletes and Late Assignments: All papers and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates noted on the Schedule, unless a change in date has been announced by the instructor in class. **Five points will be deducted for each day that a paper is late.**

Policy on Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to conduct all academic work within the letter and spirit of the Honor Code of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which prohibits the giving or receiving of unauthorized aid in academic processes.

Please refer to the APA Style Guide, The SSW Manual, and the SSW Writing Guide for information on attribution of quotes, plagiarism and appropriate use of assistance in preparing assignments. All written assignments should contain a signed pledge from you stating that, "I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in preparing this written work."

In keeping with the UNC Honor Code, if reason exists to believe that academic dishonesty has occurred, a referral will be made to the Office of the Student Attorney General for investigation and further action as required.

Policy on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities which affect their participation in the course may notify the instructor if they wish to have special accommodations in instructional format, examination format, etc., considered.
Class Schedule and readings

Jan. 16 - Introduction to the course.

Jan. 23 – History of Group work and therapeutic factors

Toseland text: Chapters 1 and 2
Yalom text: pp. 1-18


Jan. 30- Group Dynamics and Overview of Interventions

Toseland text: Chapters 3 and 4
Yalom text: pp. 117-140

Feb. 6 – Group Development

Yalom text: pp. 309-343


Optional Readings - *(these additional readings may be useful in your final paper on group development which is due at the end of the semester)*


Feb. 13- Planning the Group and Composition Considerations

Toseland text: Chapter 6.


Optional Readings – These readings may be helpful in writing your group composition paper.


Feb. 20 - Beginning the Group, Goal Setting and Contracting

Toseland text: Chapters 7 and 8.

Yalom text: pp. 294-308.

Optional Readings

resources. *Working with children and adolescents in groups.* (pp.60-87). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. ([UNC e-reserves](#))


Feb. 27- Support, Psycho-educational groups and Internet groups

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<th>Group Composition paper due!</th>
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Optional Readings- Read one of the following depending on your interests


March 6- Diversity in groups

Toseland text: Chapter 5.


Additional Reading – (Each student will be assigned one of these articles to summarize and present to the class. I will give you a copy of the article assigned to you if it is not available electronically)


Yellow Horse Brave Heart, M. (1998). The return to the sacred path: Healing the historical trauma and historical unresolved grief response among the Lakota through a psychoeducational group intervention. Smith College
March 13 – NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

March 20- Advanced interventions

MIDTERM EXAM

Toseland text: Chapter 9.

Yalom text: pp. 141-199. (working in the here and now)

**Alternative Reading** *(this reading should be substituted for the Yalom chapter if you are a macro practice student)*

Toseland text: Chapter 11. (Task groups: Foundation methods)

March 27- Interventions with Involuntary clients


**Optional Readings**


April 3 – Selected Advanced Topics

Toseland text: Chapter 10.


**Alternative Reading** (*macro practice students should substitute these readings*)

Toseland text: Chapter 12.


**Optional Readings**


**April 10- NO CLASS, SPRING HOLIDAY (Good Friday)**

**April 17- Dealing with Conflict and Other Challenging Issues**


Alternative Reading:


April 24 - Ending and Evaluation

Toseland text: Chapters 13 and 14.

Yalom text: pp. 382-390.

Optional Readings


**Final paper on group development due Friday - May 1, by 5 p.m.**