

*Instructor’s Resource Manual*  
*for*  
**An Introduction to Group Work Practice**  
**Eighth Edition**

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# SAMPLE SYLLABUS

[INSERT UNIVERSITY NAME HERE]

[INSERT COURSE NAME HERE]

[INSERT COURSE NUMBER HERE]

Professor:

Professor Phone:

Office Number/Location:

Professor Email:

Office Hours:

Course Meeting Times:

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an introductory course in group work practice. Its objective is to teach students the knowledge and practice skills which are necessary for group work practice. The course emphasizes basic theory about groups and group process, demonstrates the skills necessary for effective practice, and gives students the opportunity to discuss and practice these skills. In addition, the course is designed to acquaint students with the many uses of task and treatment groups in a broad range of settings with diverse client groups.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To educate generalist social workers to have the tools to work in various settings with a variety of client groups, addressing a range of personal and social problems and using skills to intervene at practice levels ranging from the individual to the community.
- Understanding of the historical and the current use of groups in social work practice.
- Ability to understand, assess, and use group properties and group processes occurring in a group.
- Ability to understand and work with diversity in groups.
- Ability to assess the need for a group.
- Ability to plan for, begin, and conduct a group.
- Understanding of and ability to use group processes to achieve the goals and objectives of the group.
- Ability to evaluate the outcome of a group and to use the information to improve group practice.
- Knowledge about resources available to plan for and establish specific treatment and task groups which may be needed in specialized fields of practice and in specific social work settings.

## **STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES**

In this course, didactic material will be presented in lecture and through homework assignments. This material will expose the student to different approaches to group work. The emphasis will be on developing generic skills, and the differential uses of specific skills for particular problems which are frequently experienced in treatment and task groups.

## **REQUIRED TEXT(S)**

Toseland, R., & Rivas, R. (2011). An Introduction to Group Work Practice (6th Ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION**

Below, you will find the grading scale and percentages.

### **Grading/Evaluation**

#### *Assignment*

Class Participation	20%
Midterm	30%
Final	50%
Major Assignment(s):	
Midterm Assignment	
Presentation Assignment	
Final Assignmnet	

#### *Letter Equivalent*

A – 90-100	C – 70-79
B – 80-89	D – Less than 70

### **Major Assignments**

## **Midterm Assignment**

The mid-term paper is designed to allow you to examine your role in a group. The paper should focus on explicating group-as-a-whole properties and processes, leadership and the ways in which you interact with and influence the functioning of the group. I would prefer you to use a current group experience, but you can use a previous group experience if you are not currently participating in a group. The paper should be from 10 to 15 pages in length. The paper is not research based. It is an analysis of your experiences in the group, using the outline for group dynamics covered in lectures and the book, and your analysis of the leadership of the group.

### *Outline for the Mid-term Paper*

Type of Group: Is the group formed or natural? If formed, is it a treatment or task group and within that, what type of group is it, i.e. support, socialization etc.?

### *Communication/Interaction Patterns*

- a. What are the communication/interaction patterns when the group meets: who talks to whom most often? Does the interaction vary by time or topic?
- b. Are there subgroups or isolates? If yes, what is their basis (what do subgroup members have in common, e.g., attraction, status, interest, previous acquaintance, etc.) and what effect do they have on the group?
- c. How does the composition (gender, racial or ethnic background, age) affect communication patterns? For example, are men, Caucasians, older persons, or professionals listened to more?

### *Cohesion*

- a. What brings people into this group -- what do they get out of group membership or what are the attractions? Examples are prestige, friendship, status with a peer group, chance to make contacts/meet prestigious people, learn or show off skills, liking of group task or purpose, ethnic or racial similarities, etc.
- b. Does the group appear to be cohesive or highly attractive to its members? What are indicators of high or low cohesion in this group? Examples of high cohesion are regular attendance, many members accepting responsibilities, pride in belonging, referring to the group as "we," considering the group's (or members') opinion important, choosing to do "group things" when something else could be done, etc.
- c. How does the composition (gender, racial or ethnic background, age) affect cohesion? For example, do racial/ethnic differences make the group more attractive or less attractive?

### *Social Integration, Influence and Control (Norms, Roles, Status and Power)*

- a. What are the norms in this group?
- b. What type or range of behavior does the group attempt to control or have expectations about? For example, are there expectations about dress, topics, attendance, self-disclosure, behavior outside the group, associates, etc.?
- c. What happens to someone who violates the norms?
- d. What roles do members play in the group, e.g. gatekeeper, talkative member?

- e. Who normally performs task-oriented (maintenance) functions within the group; e.g., keeping the group on task, coordinating, giving or seeking information, etc.? Other than the leader, do certain members take on aspects of these functions?
- f. Who normally performs socio-emotional (maintenance) functions within the group; e.g., encouraging, reducing tension, mediating conflict, making sure everyone is included, etc.? Other than the leader, do certain members take on aspects of these functions?
- g. How do age, gender, and ethnicity or race relate to the member roles? For example, are women the socio-emotional leaders, men the task leaders? Is the youngest person, or most different person, usually the "clown" (a socio-emotional role)?
- h. Are there differences in status among group members? If so, what are the indicators (cues to different status)?
- i. What are the informal status ranks? Who is "high" and who is "lower?" How does their behavior differ, for example, amount of talking, initiating interaction, dress, deference to others, freedom from norms, etc.?
- j. What appear to be the bases of higher status, that is, how did "higher status" persons get to be higher status? Some common methods are prestige, appointed or elected position, status or expertise outside the group, skills useful to the group (for example, the star athlete on a team, good writer on a committee to draft a document, good conflict resolver), length of membership, etc.
- k. What are the effects of "non-changeable" characteristics on the status ranks in this group? For example, are women generally higher or lower status? Someone of a different ethnic or racial background? Has anyone's status changed over time? If so, why did it happen? For example, did the member violate norms, learn or contribute new skills, join or leave a subgroup; did the group's purpose or base of attraction change?
- l. Who has the power in the group? Is there a formal and informal leader? Describe the leadership and what is done well and what could be improved.

### *Group Culture*

- a. What are the overall values and beliefs that are displayed in the way the group conducts its business?

### *Overall*

If you were the leader of the group, name two things that you would try to change about the group dynamics.  
Present a plan for how you would try to change the group dynamics. Do the plans for changing the two dynamics differ? If so, how?

### **Presentation Assignment**

Depending on the size of the class, pick two or three other classmates and decide on a group you would like to role play. This could be any type of treatment group, ex. anger management, children's social skills group etc. Develop roles for other members of the class so that you have a group of 6 to 8 participants. Develop a written agenda for the group meeting, and a second page where you have some additional resources/references other students could use if they were going to lead such a group. If your group is not a structured group, develop a 1 or 2 page resource handout which contains information about the group, what you are trying to accomplish and references from the literature that students could refer to if they were going to lead this type of group ex.

support group, growth group etc. We will use a fishbowl format where the rest of the class members will sit in a circle around the group you form. This will not be a graded assignment. It will be pass/fail. If it is not done it will take 10 points away from your 20 point class participation grade. It is designed to give you a chance to lead a group and to be a participant in a group. Please sign up for a time slot from session 11 to session 15.

### **Final Assignment**

You have three options for the final paper. The first option is a research paper which is focused on your work with a group. The second option is for you to plan a group for a specific population (children, aged, those with substance abuse problems, men who batter, etc.). The third option is for you to do a paper on group work techniques such as psychodrama, or types of groups (e.g., teams, self-help groups). The first two options entail reading specialized literature on group work with the population, and problems faced by the population, and then preparing a paper about the group. In the first option, after a focused literature review, describe the group and your work with it. For the first option, if you report on your work with a group you may want to discuss your field experiences, work experiences, or volunteer experience with a group. The emphasis should be on the leadership of the group, and what you would do differently based on the course. After the literature review, your description of the group can follow the planning outline (briefly). Then, you should focus on group dynamics and leadership of the group during each session, your analysis of the positive and negative aspects of the group dynamics and the leadership, and how it might be lead differently if you have the opportunity to do it again. It is fine if the group is currently being conducted, and it is not finished. The second option involves planning for a group that you have never led. If you would rather do this planning option, use the planning group proposal to illustrate how you would develop and conduct a group with which you have little or no experience. After the literature review, follow the planning a group option 2 outline on page 7. The choice of the topic should reflect your interest in a particular area of group work. For the third option, you need to discuss the topic with me and how you plan to organize the paper. If you are considering the third option, please make an appointment to see me. For any of the three options be sure to include information from lecture and from the text for the course. The final paper should be about 15 pages in length.

### ***Outline for the Final Paper***

This is a suggested outline for option one designed to serve as a guide for those who have chosen to examine their work with a group. Although the outline is fairly comprehensive you are free to vary your analysis based on the practice situation you are attempting to describe.

1. Introductory paragraph explaining the paper.
2. Literature review on the social problem being addressed in the paper.
3. Literature review on the group work methods that have been used to address the social problem.
4. Description of the setting and the group.
5. Planning for the group - See below and the text Chapter 6 (Planning) for topical headings. When choosing option one, limit your description of planning to one or two pages.
6. Leadership approach used in the group.
7. Intervention strategies used during the beginning, middle and ending phase of the group.
8. Evaluation of the group process - use the group dynamics framework in the text to evaluate group processes, i.e. communication and interaction, cohesion, social integration dynamics and culture.
9. Evaluation of the group outcome.

10. Conclusions and recommendations for future practice, and how you would change things if you were able to do it over.

### *Final Assignment – Planning a Group (Option 2)*

Plan a task or a treatment group for a community social service or health care agency you are familiar with.

Outline for planning a group:

1. Introductory paragraph explaining the group
2. Purpose: Purpose of the group (its goals)
3. Role of the worker in the group (e.g., chair, facilitator, therapist)
4. Literature review on the social problem being addressed in the paper
5. Literature review on the group work methods that have been used to address the social problem
6. Agency Sponsorship:
  - Agency name and mission
  - Agency resources relevant to the group (i.e., physical facilities, financing, staff, etc.)
  - Agency geographic location (community, not address), sponsorship, demographic characteristics of clientele, type of staff, any other characteristics that might affect group
7. Membership: Target population for the group—who you would like to reach. Appropriateness of the population with respect to the agency mission and group purpose.
8. Recruitment: Method(s) for recruiting members.
9. Composition: Criteria for including or excluding members.
10. What characteristics you would like group members to be heterogeneous on, and what characteristics homogeneous, and why.
  - Size: Open or closed membership.
  - Demographic characteristics important to group purpose.
  - How will the expected composition affect interaction or group development? Include age, gender, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, disability or any other special considerations that may affect the composition.
11. Norms and Roles: What are the most important group norms you would like to develop?
12. How will composition affect the norms or their development? Are there specific roles you would like members to develop within the group? If so, describe these roles.
13. Orientation: Whether potential members will be screened, and if so, how and for what characteristics. Preparation for group membership and roles (e.g., pre-group interview or letter, discussion at beginning of group).
14. Contract: Describe and justify the number of meetings, frequency, length, and times for meetings. If appropriate, depending on the type of group, describe the types of contracts with individual group members, or the group as a whole that you would try to foster.
15. Environment: Physical arrangements (room, space, materials, room set-up, other considerations. Financial arrangements (budget, expense, charges, income) and any special arrangements (child care,



transportation, access for persons with physical handicaps, etc.).

16. Structure: How will the group conduct its work? (e.g., discussion group, arts-and-crafts, exercises, role plays, etc.). Will there be a structure for each group meeting? How will the structure help the group achieve its' goals.

## UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE POLICIES AND ETHICS

[INSTRUCTOR: Insert Your University's Academic Policies]

### CSWE EPAS 2015 Core Competencies and Behaviors in This Text

Competency	Chapter
<b>Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior</b>	
<b>Behaviors</b>	
Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context.	1, 7, 13, 14
Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations	1, 4, 5
Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication	1, 6, 7
Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes	1, 6, 14
Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior	1, 4
<b>Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice</b>	
<b>Behaviors</b>	
Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences	1, 5, 8, 14
Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies	1, 4, 5, 7, 8
<b>Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice</b>	
<b>Behaviors</b>	
Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels	4, 5, 8, 9