

SIMMONS COLLEGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Introduction to Social Work with Groups: 462-01

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Course Description:

Social work with groups began in the settlement houses of the Progressive era. The objective of group work was to diminish the effects of poverty and racial or ethnic marginalization by creating stronger, more supportive relationships in the community. In groups, clients can find kinship, voice, empowerment, and the skills that enable them to be higher functioning, build more meaningful connections with those in their lives, and mobilize for social change.

We will begin this course by exploring the group-as-whole as an organism that is unique, needs care and protection, and undertakes a developmental journey throughout its life. We will look at the differential impact of individual members and the roles that they play on group development and process. We will concurrently explore theory and build practice skills against a backdrop of varying client populations and settings. While doing thus, we will also consider the importance of agency setting and culture, the benefits and challenges of group co-facilitation, gender, age, race, and ethnicity on group process. We will also explore the group as a model for social action, and a place where clients can obtain skills needed to negotiate multiple social systems and strengthen their abilities to advocate for themselves. Lastly, we will consider the importance of evaluating the efficacy of group work for its participants, which is consistent with evidence-based practice.

Reading assignments, class discussions, field interviews, written assignments and case presentations will incorporate the themes, concerns, and practice dilemmas that students face currently in their field work and are likely to encounter in their professional lives after graduation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES INCLUDE:

Knowledge:

By the end of the semester, participants will understand the following:

1. The inter-relational or mutual aid perspective of social group work and how this differs from psychodynamic group psychotherapy.
2. The importance of groups within an ecological systems paradigm, and how groups and the experiences and skills acquired from them can help clients more effectively navigate social systems.
3. Group developmental theory, which includes an understanding of what the expectations are of the worker at each phase, what the group members may be

feeling and needing at each phase, and the ways in which these dynamics inform clinical interventions and group process.

4. The similarities and differences between small groups, didactic groups, support groups, peer-led groups, task-oriented groups, psychoeducation groups, social rehab groups, curriculum-based groups (DBT and CBT), and treatment groups.
5. Identify group roles, and the impact these roles have on group development and process.
6. Differential use of worker's self on group process. This includes an exploration of the impact of worker-client diversity on group development and process.
7. To elucidate and appreciate the effects of racism, heterosexism, sexism, and other forms of bias on group process.
8. Groups as the birthplace of and model for social action, community mobilization and change, and personal empowerment.
9. The philosophy and application of evidence-based practices to social work with groups.
10. To elucidate and appreciate the inherent ethical dilemmas which arise in the practice of group work.

Skills:

By the end of the semester, participants will demonstrate the following skills:

1. Increased comfort and confidence with facilitating groups in varied settings.
2. Participate in relaying thoughtful, constructive consultation and support to peers.
3. Construct a group contract, sessional contract, individual treatment contract for the group, uses of scanning, contain and reframe a monopolist, uses of silence as a catalyst for group cohesion, and non-verbal cues to help group members engage with each other. Additionally acquired skills will include: limit setting and enforcement of consistent, predictable structure and rules.
4. Interview a group worker in the field.
5. Attend one 12-step or community-based support group.
6. Evaluate the efficacy of an individual client's goals for the group and the impact of group on helping a client meet his/her goals.
7. Facilitate a well organized and economically presented case conference that promotes discussion with colleagues and engages their feedback and support.

Values:

1. To understand and be sensitive to the mutual impact of setting, culture, group worker's race, gender, and age on the group and vice versa.
2. To increase students' respect and commitment to social group work as a useful treatment modality and method that embodies the values of the Social Work profession.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, each student will be able to do the following:

1. Demonstrate through class discussion, participation and written work, a familiarity with the assigned readings and an ability to apply concepts in them to clinical practice.
2. Facilitate a case conference in which each student has the opportunity to present his/her own clinical work.
3. Research and write a well organized paper (s) that integrates material from assigned readings and class discussions with examples from his/her own clinical work.
4. Demonstrate an interest in learning from fellow classmates' experiences and ideas.
5. Approach group work with a sense of familiarity with the skills and conceptual framework necessary for doing effective group work.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

- *It is recommended that all students participating in this course facilitate a group in the field, or have regular access to observe a group. The class will heavily draw upon, and be enriched by examples from students' field experience.*
- *Class participation: 20% (class participation includes ability to discuss one's own work, present article summaries as part of a reading group, and peer feedback given during case conferences.*
- *Mid-Semester Case Conference and reaction paper: 20 %*
- *Field Interview and write-up: 15%*
- *Attendance at one 12-step or community-based support group and write-up: 15%*
- *Final Paper: 30%*

Class Preparation:

Class participation, attendance, timeliness, and preparation are required and considered during final grading. If an absence is necessary, please contact the instructor.

To fully participate in class, students are expected to complete the required readings and field/written assignments. It is suggested that students note three reactions to

each reading in order to facilitate a richer and more involved, student-centered class discussion.

Statement on Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability and anticipate that you will need a reasonable accommodation in this class, it is important that you contact Todd K. Heriot at the Academic Support Center at 617-521-2472/2473. You may also contact him via email at: todd.heriot@simmons.edu. Students with disabilities receiving accommodations are encouraged to contact their instructors within the first two weeks of the semester to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

Citations for References Used in Written Work

All citations for references used in written work and all reference lists must follow the American Psychological Association Manual, Fifth Edition. Failure to do so will affect your grade. If you have any questions about how to do this and what resources to consult, please contact the instructor. You may also refer to <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>.

Plagiarism is using someone's words, works, thoughts, or ideas without giving proper credit. When a source is not cited, it is assumed that the words, works, thoughts, or ideas are the sole product of the student. Plagiarism includes handing in as one's own work a paper on which a student has received extensive aid without acknowledging that help. When a paper borrows from any source the extent and nature of the borrowing must, to avoid the charge of dishonesty, be fully and explicitly noted in the text or in footnotes. Direct quotations must be differentiated from text by using quotation marks or by indenting or single spacing and accompanied by appropriate APA citation.

HIPAA Guidelines

All social workers are required to adhere to HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, Public Law 104-191) regulations regarding the privacy of client information outside the agency setting. Unless you have the client's written permission, confidentiality must be strictly maintained when discussing or writing about clients in the classroom, in assignments and in process recordings.

This syllabus is not a contract. The instructor reserves the right to alter course requirements and/or assignments based on new materials, class discussions, or other legitimate pedagogical objectives.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

There are three required texts for this course, and a selection of readings that are on reserve at the library.

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: skills and strategies for effective interventions*. New York: Haworth Press.

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: principles and practice*. New York/London: The Guilford Press.

Steinberg, D.M. (2004). *The mutual-aid approach to working with groups: helping people help one another, second edition*. New York: The Haworth Press.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Garvin, C.D., Gutierrez, L.M., & Galinsky, M.J., (Eds.), (2004). *Handbook of social work with groups*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Gitterman, A., & Shulman, L. (Eds.). (2005). *Mutual aid groups, vulnerable and resilient Populations, and the life cycle*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Macgowan, M.J. (2008). *A guide to evidence-based group work*. New York: Oxford University Press.

ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments and their requirements are listed in the order that they are due.

Assignment #1: Field Interview due on the fourth class.

Interview a group worker. Please make sure to obtain informed consent. Consent forms will be available either through the instructor or via elearning. Please obtain the following information and write a two-page reaction paper.

1. How does this worker define group work?
2. Does she or he practice social group work or does she or he identify with another modality of group treatment?
3. What is his or her philosophy about group process?
4. How does she or he define manifest versus latent group content?
5. How does she or he define content versus process?
6. How does the agency setting impact the group and the members' experiences of it?
7. What does he or she most want you to understand and appreciate about group work?
8. Ask two questions not included in this inventory.

Assignment #2: Case Conference

The purpose of the case conference is to provide each participant with an opportunity to showcase his/her clinical work, to obtain constructive, supportive and meaningful consultation from the class, and to practice presenting his/her work in a clear and concise manner. *These skills are necessary in daily clinical practice.*

1. Each student will choose a designated presentation date. This will be done during session three.
2. Each student presentation will be approximately 30 minutes
3. Each student will distribute to the class a case outline the week prior to his/her presentation.

This outline should include the following components:

- Brief description of the group, agency setting, group contract, and any norms or rules that the presenter feels the class should know.
- Brief description of the group members and salient identifying information. (It is up to each student to decide how much the class needs to know in order to provide informed and effective consultation and support.
- Provide the class (and instructor) with a process recording consisting of three to five interventions. Please write the process recording in script form, indicating who is speaking and any relevant non-verbal communication.
- Underline each intervention.
- The process recording should capture a significant clinical moment. The significant clinical moment is some interaction between members or between the worker and the group members that has an impact on group process. It is up to each presenter to define what "significant" means.
- After each intervention explain why that moment was significant to the group.
- In addition to the process recording, each presenter should come prepared to ask the class two or three questions. These questions will form the basis of the consultation.
- The consultation is an opportunity for the presenter to elicit feedback from the class. Be clear, economical, and provide the class with the most relevant data in the outline and during the presentation.

Assignment #3: 12-step or community-based support group attendance and reaction paper due on the ninth class.

You may choose any 12-step or community-based support group to attend that you wish. You may locate groups by reading the newspaper or going on line. Please be sure not to attend a closed group, and be sure to identify yourself as a social work student.

For the reaction paper (not to exceed two pages):

1. What are your thoughts about this group?
2. What happened and what did you observe?
3. According to the literature, does this group meet the criteria for a support group and if so, what kind?

Assignment #4: Final Paper due on the last day of class.

Students can choose from one of three options.

- The purpose of this paper is to integrate course material and discussions, your clinical experience, and practice wisdom.
- This paper should be 8-10 pages, doubled spaced, standard 12 point font size, with correct APA (fifth edition) format. Process material should be incorporated into the text.
- This paper should contain at least seven data sources (literature, personal communications from interviews, etc.)

Option #1: Special Issues Paper

For this assignment you will choose any issue that is relevant to the group. Whatever topic or issue you choose will form the basis of your analysis. This issue should have had some bearing on group dynamics, or your development as a social group worker. Examples of special issues include, but are not limited to: race, group development, silence, rules, impact of worker's race or gender, lateness, acting out behaviors, etc. Please include the following information listed below.

1. **A description of the group.** This should include the community and setting in which the group functions, the purpose of the group, a brief description of the members of the group (gender, age, ethnicity, culture, presenting problems), structure of the group-as-a-whole (norms, roles, how members communicate with each other, etc.)
2. Include an **in-depth description of the setting and agency culture.** For example, what is the agency's attitude toward this group? In what ways has that impacted or not impacted your experience and/or effectiveness as a group worker? What is the history of this group's existence? Did you inherit it? Is there any relevant group

folklore that impacted your experience? What other aspects of setting and agency culture are relevant?

3. **What is the special issue or clinical challenge that emerged from the group and is the focus of your analysis?** What impact did that special issue or clinical challenge have on the group in terms of its development and ability to be effective? In what way did the special issue impact your development and/or efficacy as a group worker? Please support your analysis with concepts from the readings and class discussions.
4. Present a **clinical moment** from one session or look at five interventions over consecutive sessions. Consider what was going on in the group. Set the stage and explore the following.
 - a. What prompted you to intervene in the way that you did?
 - b. What external stimuli (group interactions, non-verbal communication, noises outside the room, other factors in the room) do you think you were responding to?
 - c. What internal stimuli (your own thoughts, your own issues, other internal feelings which were influencing you) were you responding to?

The interventions you choose should highlight a new insight you have gained or represent a moment when you were particularly challenged in some way. Discuss your assessment of the group dynamics that informed each of your interventions. Please underline each intervention so that it is readily identifiable.

Please consider and include the following themes:

1. Explore your development over time as a group worker.
2. What progress has the group made while you observed or facilitated it?
3. Explore any co-therapist-related issues where applicable and relevant.
4. If you participated in facilitating a case conference, explore the ways in which ideas generated from class consultation were or were not helpful. Did you try out any of the suggestions that were made by the instructor or your peer consultants? What was that process like? What were the outcomes?
5. Discuss **ethical considerations** and dilemmas relevant to your topic and the group process.
6. What is your **prognosis** for this group's future?
7. Please include termination or transfer plans. How is your termination impacting the group process?
11. What have you learned from this group experience with regard to group process and yourself as a social group worker?

Note: Integrate theory from readings and class discussions throughout your discussion. You can organize your paper in anyway that you wish, as long as you address the required content areas.

Option #2: Critical Incident Analysis

The purpose of this assignment is to give you a chance to really dissect your thought process and your clinical interventions. It will allow you to break down a significant clinical moment (approx. five interventions) from a group session and scrutinize it to further your self awareness and learning. You will be required to extrapolate from the literature and class discussions, and integrate theoretical concepts with your evolving understanding of your role as a facilitator and your growing awareness of and appreciation for group process.

Please include the following information:

1. **A description of the group.** This should include the community and setting in which the group functions, the purpose of the group, a brief description of the members of the group (gender, age, ethnicity, culture, presenting problems), structure of the group-as-a-whole (norms, roles, how members communicate with each other, etc.), and how the topic has been relevant to the process of the group over time.

1. Include **five excerpts of process** to illustrate the chosen topic. Please present the five excerpts in script form and underline them in order to make them easily identifiable.
2. Take each intervention and discuss the following: what do you think was going on in the group before the intervention or event occurred; how the group responded, and what sense you made of the group's response; what you were thinking, and how you responded to the group's stimuli. Please discuss each intervention or process excerpt in this way, and integrate relevant literature.
4. Discuss ethical considerations and dilemmas relevant to your topic and the group process.
5. What is your prognosis for the future of the group with respect to your selected topic? Please include termination or transfer plans. How is your termination impacting the group process?
6. What have you learned from this group experience with regard to group process and yourself as a social group worker?

Option #3: Evidence-Based Evaluation

1. Description of the group; include community, agency setting, and group purpose.

2. Who are the members? Provide a brief description of germane identifying information about the members. What role do they play in group?
3. Describe the group norms and culture.
4. Choose an individual group member. Why was this individual referred to the group? What were his/her treatment goals and objectives?
5. Formulate an answerable practice question about this client?
6. Contextualize this question and the individual's treatment goals within the group-as-a-whole's goals?
7. Present a significant clinical moment during which the individual attempted to, avoided, was unable, or successful in addressing his/her treatment goals. (Please underline interventions).
8. What was the individual's challenge?
9. What did the worker do to address this challenge and provide strategies or techniques for change? In what ways did the worker involve the group-as-a-whole in this process of change?
10. Did the worker involve the group-as-a-whole in a pluralistic change effort?
11. Using the group work literature, what theories about practice are/might be informing the worker's practice?
12. Undertake a critical review of the evidence and discuss the outcomes. .
13. Evaluate whether or not group work is helping this individual.
14. What alternative strategies or techniques for change would you recommend to this client?

COURSE OUTLINE

Session I:

Objectives:

- Introduction of the class, participants and instructor.
- Review of the syllabus and assignments.
- What is a group?
- A brief history of Social Group Work.

Assigned Readings:

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: skills and strategies for effective interventions* (pp. 9-13; 15-25). New York: Haworth Press.

Kurland, R., & Salmon, R. (1998). Purpose: a misunderstood and misused keystone of group work practice. *Social work with groups*, 21(3), 5-17. This reading is on reserve.

Kurland, R., & Salmon, R. (1993). Groupwork versus casework in a group. *Groupwork*, 6(1), 5-16. This reading is on reserve.

Steinberg, D.M. (2004). *The mutual-aid approach to working with groups: helping people help one another, second edition* (pp. 3-8). New York: Haworth Press.

Session II:

Objectives:

To define group work versus individual casework in a group setting.
Using a video we will begin to see how a group negotiates stages of development where interactions, group member's roles, agency culture and mores, gender roles, age and development of members, and the impact of official and assumed group leadership as well as additional dynamics on the overall group experience and the efficacy of a group.

Assigned Readings:

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: skills and strategies for effective interventions* (pp. 26-40). New York: The Haworth Press.

Kurtz, L.F. (2004). Support and self-help groups. In C.D. Garvin, L.M. Gutierrez, and M.J. Galinsky (Eds.), *Handbook of social work with groups* (pp. 139-159). New York: The Guilford Press.

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: principles and practice* (pp.35-52). New York/London: The Guilford Press.

Session III:

Objectives:

To assign student case conference presentation dates.
Finish film and discussion of group development and role theory.

Assigned Readings:

Cox, E.O. (1991). The critical role of social action in empowerment oriented groups. In A. Vinik and M. Levin (Eds.), *Social action in group work* (pp. 77-90). New York: The Haworth Press.

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: principles and practice* (pp. 53-58). New York/London: The Guilford Press.

Steinberg, D.M. (2004). *The mutual-aid approach to working with groups: helping people help one another* (pp. 13-33). New York: The Haworth Press.

Session IV:

Assignment #1 is due today.

Objectives:

To define and exemplify the following group work skills:

- sessional contracting

- limit setting

- elaboration skills

- mediation skills

- scanning

- skills of support and sustainment

The worker's thought process at different phases of group development.

We will examine and compare three models of group development: The Mutual Aid Model (Schwartz, Gitterman and Shulman), The Boston Model (Garland, Kolodny, & Jones), and the Feminist Relational Model (Schiller).

Required Reading:

Gitterman, A., & Shulman, L. (Eds.), (2005). *Mutual aid groups, vulnerable and resilient populations, and the life cycle* (pp. 38-72). New York: Columbia University Press.

Session V: February 19, 2008

Objectives: To continue reviewing necessary group work skills:

- Planning

- Consistency and structure.

- Group rules and policies (attendance, lateness, acting out, and leaving the group).

- Content versus process response.

- Group-as-a-whole interventions.

- Impact of agency setting and time.

- Use and impact of silence.

- Impact of worker's gender, race, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation on the group-as-a-whole, and vice versa.

Assigned Readings:

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: skills and strategies for effective interventions, second edition* (pp. 41-81). New York: The Haworth Press.

Steinberg, D.M. (04). *The mutual-aid approach to working with groups: helping people help one another* (pp. 35-75). New York: The Haworth Press.

Session VI:

The outlines for the first round of case conferences are due today.

Objectives:

To define and begin to discuss group work with at risk populations, “problem clients”, and addicted populations. We will identify our own biases, highlight the challenges, and explore the potential that groups have for helping at risk clients-- providing strength, support, education and normalization.

Assigned Readings:

Kelly, T.B. (2005). Accumulated risk: mutual aid groups for elderly persons with a mental illness. In A. Gitterman & L. Shulman (Eds.). *Mutual aid groups, vulnerable and resilient populations, and the life cycle* (pp. 536-569). New York: Columbia University Press.

Kurtz, L.F. (2004). Support and self-help groups. In C.D. Garvin, L.M. Gutierrez, & M.J. Galinsky (Eds.), *Handbook of social work with groups* (pp. 139-159). New York: The Guilford Press.

Shulman, L. (2005). Persons with AIDS in substance-abusing recovery: managing the interaction between the two. In A. Gitterman & L. Shulman (Eds.). *Mutual Aid Groups, vulnerable and resilient populations, and the life cycle* (pp. 266-289). New York: Columbia University Press.

Note: Do not be daunted by the amount of pages. Many of the pages are references!

Session VII:

Objectives:

Student Case Conferences begin. Case conferences will occur on sessions 7, 8 and 9, and if necessary, 10.

Assigned Readings:

Please carefully read your colleagues outlines. Please consider their questions and come to class prepared to discuss your ideas with each presenter.

Gitterman, A., & Shulman, L. (Eds.), (2005). *Mutual aid groups, vulnerable and resilient Populations, and the life cycle* (pp. 73-110). New York: Columbia University Press.

Session VIII:**Objectives:**

Student Presentations Continue.

Assigned Reading

Steinberg, D.M. (2004). *The mutual-aid approach to working with groups: helping people help one another, second edition* (pp. 77-124). New York: Haworth Press.

Session IX:

Assignment #3 is due today.

Objectives:

Student Presentations Continue.

Assigned Readings:

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: skills and strategies for effective interventions* (pp. 179-206). New York: The Haworth Press.

Cohen, M.B., & DeLois, K. (2001). Training in tandem: co-facilitation and role modeling in a group work course. *Social Work with Groups*, 24 (1), 21-36.

Session X:**Objectives:**

To understand how diversity impacts group process, and the importance of directly addressing issues pertaining to diversity in the group.
Student case conferences conclude.

Assigned Readings:

Camacho, S.F. (2001). Addressing conflict rooted in diversity: the role of the facilitator. *Social Work with Groups*, 24 (3/4), 135-152.

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: principles and practice* (pp. 207-232). New York/London: The Guilford Press.

Session XI:**Objectives:**

Evidence-based group work practice, which asks the following question:
How do we know if what we are doing in groups is actually helping group members?

Assigned Readings:

Macgowan, M.J. (2008). *A guide to evidence-based group work*. New York: Oxford University Press (pp. 1-17; 21-30; 78-118).

Session XII:**Objectives:**

To discuss the complexities of ethics in relation to social group work. We will explore the following concepts as we review and discuss case vignettes.

- confidentiality
- selection criteria
- client honesty
- breaches of group contract
- safety contracts
- substance abuse contracts
- expelling clients from treatment
- other dilemmas raised by the class

Assigned Readings:

Brandler, S., Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: skills and strategies for effective interventions* (pp. 207-229). New York: The Haworth Press.

Northen, H. (2004). Ethics and values in group work. In C.D. Garvin, L.M. Gutierrez, & M.J. Galinsky (Eds.), *Handbook of social work with groups* (pp. 76-90). New York: The Guilford Press.

Rooney, R., & Chovanec, M. (2004). Involuntary groups. In C.D. Garvin, L.M. Gutierrez, & M.J. Galinsky (Eds.), *Handbook of social work with groups* (pp. 212-226). New York: The Guilford Press.

Session XIII:**Objectives:****Activity Workshop!**

For future reference, there is a lovely glossary of group games and activities in Brandler and Roman. Malekoff also offers wonderfully creative ideas for poetry and story writing in groups.

Note: activities and the materials you are required to bring may vary by instructor. Please check with your instructor to confirm what you will need to provide for the workshop.

What to bring for the workshop.

1. Two large pieces of construction paper or poster board.
2. crayons or markers.
3. scissors
4. glue stick or scotch tape
5. two magazines you won't mind throwing away.

Assigned Reading:

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: skills and strategies for effective interventions* (pp. 83-111; 277-294). New York: The Haworth Press.

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: principles and practice* (pp. 329-338). New York/London: The Guilford Press.

Session XIV:

Final Papers are due today.

Objectives: To discuss endings and transitions.

To discuss how to form and begin a group.

Discuss what goes into assessing the need for a group and how to market within an agency and within the community.

Termination.

Assigned Reading:

Note: These are two beautiful pieces that focus on group work in New York city, post-9/11. You may choose which one you read.

Lynn, M., & Nisivoccia, D. (2005). When the world no longer feels safe: helping Children through mutual aid. In A. Gitterman & L. Shulman (Eds.). *Mutual aid, vulnerable and resilient populations, and the life cycle* (pp. 139-162). New York: Columbia University Press.

Malekoff, A., (2004). *Group work with adolescents: principles and practice* (pp. 249-274). New York/London: The Guilford Press. (Read where it begins, "Where the world stage and group work intersect").