SW 7055  Foundation Group Theory/Practice:  (3 cr.)

Section #: 
Instructor: 
Office: 
Office telephone: 
Office Hours:

1  COURSE DOMAIN AND BOUNDARIES

This course provides students with content on major group theories and concepts of human behavior and the fundamental knowledge and skill for generalist social work mezzo practice (group work). The course builds on the human behavior and practice content introduced in SW 7560, Human Behavior and the Social Environment I: Micro Theory and SW 7040, Methods of Social Work Practice I: Individual and Family. The course uses an ecological systems perspective to examine mezzo theories that guide social work assessments and that provides the overarching framework for group work practice in social work.

This course provides foundation knowledge about the behavior and development of groups. Students critically analyze theories of human behavior with special regard to: (1) implications for group work; (2) consideration of social, cultural and economic forces affecting human behavior; (3) consistency with social work values and ethics; (4) how they build upon social work’s commitment to populations-at-risk and social justice. The course uses a holistic systems conceptual framework to consider the influence of mezzo theories have upon human behavior.

The concepts, principles, methods and skills relevant to group work practice (both task and treatment) with diverse populations will also be emphasized in this course. Students will become familiar with: preplanning; clarifying group purpose; assessment; stages of group development and group process; and group roles. Problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution in groups will be examined. Social work values and ethics in work with groups will be explored throughout the course. Students will be expected to demonstrate an awareness of the importance and effect of diversity among group members. The application of group work methods with populations-at-risk, e.g. foster children; victims of violence, people with AIDS, etc. will be addressed in this course and interventions that advance social and economic justice will be emphasized. Students will learn to identify opportunities to develop groups to remedy social and economic injustices. The fundamentals of group work strategies in crisis situations and group work skills with children will also be presented.

COMPETENCIES

1 - Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly
2 - Apply social work principles to guide professional practice
3 - Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
4 - Engage diversity and difference in practice
5 - Advance human rights and social and economic justice
6 - Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research
7 - Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment
9 - Respond to contexts that shape practice
10 - Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
11 - Analyze the impact of the urban context on a range of client systems, including practice implications

BENCHMARKS - By the end of this course students will be able to:

- differentiate between personal and professional boundaries when working with groups, and employ ethical standards in their professional role with client systems (Competency 1- C)
• illustrate effective use of social work supervision. Students will recognize the impact on group process of diverse group membership. (Competency 1-F)

• recognize their personal values and apply professional ethics that are integral to group work practice with diverse groups. (Competency 2-A)

• identify and address ethical and value dilemmas that arise in group work practice. (Competency B and C)

• recognize the mutual learning process intrinsic to the helping process between group members and group leaders. (Competency 2-D)

• Critically analyze how professional literature and research on group behavior discusses themes of client strengths, oppression and justice and implications for practice and be able to effectively communicate those findings to various systems. (Competency 3-B and C)

• will employ critical thinking skills in group work and integrate multiple sources of knowledge. (Competency 3-A)

• recognize the impact on group process of diverse group membership. (Competency 4-B)

• recognize the mutual learning process intrinsic to the helping process between group members and group leaders. (Competency 4-D)

• discuss the contribution of various theoretical perspectives to the understanding of change and development and to understanding human diversity and the consequences of discrimination and oppression on human behavior in groups. (Competency 5-A)

• use group interventions that support group goals and integrate their experiences with related research. (Competency 6-A and B)

• define various mezzo theories related to group behavior, including field theory, learning theory, social exchange theory, cognitive-behavioral theory, psychoanalytic theory, and systems theory. (Competency 7-A)

• employ beginning skill in facilitating groups in social work settings with adults and/or children. (Competency 9-A)

• explain the significance of the planning stage in the development of a group. (Competency 10-B)

• demonstrate sensitivity to human diversity and how one’s unique attributes influence the group process, particularly in urban settings. (Competency 11-A)

III PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Students will be expected to critically analyze theories of human behavior with regard to groups and demonstrate familiarity with the basic principles and skills of ethical group work practice with diverse populations. They should be able to demonstrate an understanding of group dynamics, structure, process, and developmental stage as well as beginning skill in leading groups, both task and treatment.

Since students are enrolled in a professional school, they are expected to be responsible learners, i.e. attend all classes and participate in class discussions and activities. They will be expected to demonstrate their progress in basic comprehension and skill development through course assignments, e.g. papers, exams, class exercises, presentations, and/or periodic quizzes.
IV COURSE TEXT

The required readings for this course are:


V COURSE ORGANIZATION

This course will include theoretical content on human behavior in groups and social work practice methods for group work. The course will examine human behavior in groups; students will review theories specific to social work practice in small group will be are analyzed. The dynamic process of change in groups will be examined. Patterns of group formation, development, and termination will be studied. Alternative patterns of change in groups in terms of their promotion of personal well-being and social justice will be assessed. This includes critical evaluation of styles of leadership, authority, decision-making, and distribution of power and resources that empower or disempower participants.

The fundamental knowledge and skill of group work practice (task and treatment) will be presented through class lectures, discussions, exercises, and select videos. Students will become familiar with the history and development of group work practice, and the ethical and value stances that underscore social work practice with diverse groups. The range of worker roles at different stages of group development will be addressed and students will become skillful in identifying interventions that facilitate mutual aid, that address conflicts among members and that facilitate the problem solving process. Students will demonstrate awareness of the steps involved in planning a group and in evaluating the effectiveness of their group practice. The ethics and values of social group work will be highlighted and examined in class exercises. Issues and interventions specific to work with children and populations-at-risk will be studied. The value of supervision and consultation will be emphasized.

VI ROLE OF THE STUDENT

Students are expected to attend all class sessions; absences from class may affect the student's grade, particularly excessive absences and tardiness. For further details about your role as a student, see the University's Statement of Obligations of Faculty and to the Instructional Process in the Wayne State University Graduate Bulletin.

More than three absences will result in students being asked to withdraw from the class. Students are expected to arrive for class on time and stay until the end of the class session. Students are expected to be prepared at class time for discussions pertaining to assigned readings. *In order to be courteous to classmates, I ask that cell phones use be restricted to vibrations—no rings.*

**Academic Honesty:** All students are expected to submit their own original work. The presentation of another’s words or ideas as your own, without giving credit to the source is regarded as plagiarism. Plagiarism is the same as lying and stealing. Any work that is submitted in this class and found to contain portions that are plagiarized will receive a ZERO. The official School of Social Work’s policy reads: The principle of honesty is recognized as fundamental to a scholarly community. Students are expected to honor this principle, and instructors are expected to take appropriate actions when instances of academic dishonesty are discovered. Plagiarism, defined as taking and using the ideas or words of another and presenting them as one’s own without crediting the source. An instructor, on discovering such an instance, may give a failing grade on the assignment or for the course. Serious acts of dishonesty may lead to suspension or exclusion.

The instructor has the responsibility of notifying the student of the alleged violation and the action being taken. Both the student and the instructor are entitled to academic due process in all such cases as defined by the WSU student due process policy. Information on procedures is available at the Office of the Dean, School of Social Work.
The instructor may require students to review Blackboard for updates on the course. Students are asked to regularly check their WSU email account.

VII COURSE OUTLINE

This is a tentative schedule of instruction offered to aid students in planning for course readings and assignments in this course. The instructor reserves the right to make alterations as dictated by the combined needs of the instructor and the student.

*denotes readings from the professional literature

Unit 1: Introduction and Orientation WEEK 1

Course overview, expectations and assignments. Historical overview of social work with groups. The generalist perspective and the interactional model with group work practice. Introduction to social work ethics and values in group work.

Readings:


NASW Code of Ethics


Unit 2 Theories of Human Behavior in Groups. Taskgroups. WEEK 2 AND 3

Human behavior theories in groups. Types of groups; Task groups. Core concepts in task groups.

Readings:

Kirst-Ashman, Human behavior in groups: Theories and dynamics, Chapter 2, pp. 43-77.

*Hutchinson, Small groups, Ch. 11


Unit 3 Group Dynamics, Pre-Planning and Mutual Aid: Human Behavior and Practice Perspectives WEEK 4, 5, 6

Group Dynamics, Membership, Communication, Norms/Roles, Group Cohesion, Power/Status, Leadership, Goals, Stages of Task Group Development. Group climate. Understanding the impact of member composition and group diversity. Clarifying group purpose and group goals. Establishing and communicating the group=s purpose; Gaining the agency=s sanction; recruiting members and composing the group; orienting members to the group and preparing for the first meeting.

Readings:

Kirst-Ashman, Types of groups in the macro social environment. Chapter 11, 309-361.


*Fatout, M. F. (1996). *Children in groups: A social work perspective*. Westport, Ct: Auburn House, Ch. 1, Ch. 3, Planning for the Group, Ch. 4, Developing a Mutual Aid System


Unit 4 The Beginning Phase of Group Work WEEK 7 and 8

First meetings; Readiness, purpose, contract, approach-avoidance of members; Worker skills and the development of a climate of trust. Assessment of members.

**Readings:**

*Fatout, Ch. 5, Therapeutic Use of Settings and Other Limiting Structures.*


Unit 5 The Work Phase of Group Work WEEK 9 and 10

Dealing with conflict among members; worker skills in problem solving and conflict resolution; Assessment of group process. Worker roles in facilitating group process and dealing with individual members.

**Readings:**


*Fatout, Ch., 6, Play and Activity as Change Mechanisms and Ch. 7, Using the Group Process and Ch. 8, Working with Members.

Unit 6 Groups in a Multicultural Context WEEK 11

**Readings**
Kirst-Ashman, Diversity, Populations-at-Risk, and Human Behavior in the Macro Environment, Chapter 12, pp. 245-247.


**Unit 7**  **The Ending Phase of Group Work WEEK 12**

Planning the termination; Separation themes; evaluation of the group experience.


*Fatout, Ch. 9, Ending the Group.*


**Unit 8: Variations in Group Work Practice: Group Work in Crisis Situations and with Populations-at-Risk WEEK 13 and 14**

Open-ended groups and member orientation to the group process. Single-Sessions groups and goals. The use of the group modality in crisis situations. The use of groups with populations-at-risk: How to advance social and economic justice for marginalized groups.

**Readings:**


VII  ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES
Students will complete three assignments. One assignment will involve a detailed analysis of a group experience: the group process, dynamics, and development and worker interventions. The other will involve the planning of a group for a population-at-risk. Instructors will determine the due dates for the assignments. The third assignment will involve an analysis of two theories related to human behavior in groups.

Assignment #1 ANALYSIS OF GROUP THEORIES
Select two theories related to groups and address the following points in a well-written and well-organized essay.

1. Brief introduction of the theories
2. The theories’ contributions to understanding groups
3. The theories’ strengths and weaknesses for assessing groups
4. The theories’ compatibility with social work values and ethics, with regard to diversity and social justice.
5. For the types of groups you participate in your social work practice, which theory seems to fit best?

Papers should be 6-8 typewritten pages. Papers must be completed using APA style of referencing. Students must integrate content from the required readings and texts in the paper and will likely need to reference other literature.

This assignment is worth 30 points toward the final grade.

Assignment #2: RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS
Select a group in which you were a member. It might be a social group, a committee, a task group or another kind of group. It must be one in which you participated for at least several sessions. Describe and analyze the group process using the framework below.

1. Identify the purpose of the group, setting, frequency of meetings, and time boundaries. Clarify whether it was a task or treatment group. Identify whether participation was voluntary or involuntary.

2. Describe the group composition. Give a brief descriptor of each group member. Clarify the degree of diversity present in the group (or lack thereof) and how this influenced the group dynamics. Consider the persons constituting the group, those persons attending the meetings, the environment in which the meetings took place, or the issues dealt with by the group. Identify whether group membership changed over the course of the group’s life and how change (or stability) affected the work of the group.

3. Discuss the communication patterns and structure of the group. What roles were assumed by members? What were the patterns of leadership and communication in the group? Were there subgroups (triads, dyads, alliances, undercurrents in the group) and how did these affect the group’s work? What did you observe in relation to acceptance, judgments about other members, What was your perception of quiet member (s)? What was the group’s perception?

4. Discuss the group’s culture. What were the norms of the group? How did they develop? How did the group’s diversity (e. g., class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, income, religion) affect the norms? communication?

5. What was the developmental stage of the group? What evidence is there to support your decision?
6 Discuss whether conflicts arose in the group. How were these handled by the group facilitator? Were ethical/value issues present? How were these resolved?

7 In reflecting on the group experience, what do you think would have helped the group reach an even higher level of functioning and give your rationale? Clarify whether the group met its stated goal.

Students are expected to submit a well-written, well-organized paper that addresses all points outlined in the assignment. Errors in writing mechanics e.g., grammar, spelling, etc. may result in the lowering of the student’s grade. This assignment is worth 30 points toward the final grade. Papers should reflect APA writing style and be 7-9 pages in length.

ASSIGNMENT #3: PROPOSAL FOR A SPECIALIZED GROUP

Students will work in small groups and develop a plan for a specialized group, one that addresses the needs of a population-at-risk, e.g., children in foster care, a court-mandated substance abuse treatment group for adolescent mothers, victims of domestic violence, etc. (Students are asked to clarify their choice with the professor before proceeding with the assignment). Guided by a brief literature review (3-4 articles from the professional literature), students will develop a plan for establishing and conducting a group.

Suggested outline:

1 Include a brief review of the literature. Include one or two paragraphs that provide an overview of group work with your chosen population. Address the following:

- Clarify whether the literature suggests a didactic, interactive, supportive approach or a combination of the above.
- Are specific interventions/techniques suggested or are they believed not useful/to be avoided?
- Are there any recommendations for the size of the group?
- Does the literature anticipate dynamics specific to the group?
- What are the demands placed on the worker?
- What ethical or value issues should the worker consider?

2 Group Proposal
With consideration to the guidelines presented in the text, develop a plan/proposal for a group. Include the following:

A. Goals and objectives: the primary focus of the group and the purpose/objectives of the group. Clarify how these advance the concerns of the population-at-risk.

B. Composition: who will comprise the group? What needs will be fulfilled by the group? How many group members will be selected? Is there an ideal= number suggested for this type of group? How will you prepare group members? Will members be interviewed individually prior to joining the group? What will members be told about the group; and how will they be informed? Who will lead the group? What kind of expertise (knowledge and skill) required to lead this kind of group? Are there any value or ethical considerations you should consider during this process? Discuss.

C. Clarify the structural issues you=ll need to address. Who will be notified about the group? What kind of a meeting room is needed? What is the frequency, time and location plan for the group?
D. Discuss the group dynamics. What are the anticipated members’ and workers’ early expectations of the group experience? What dynamics might be expected for this particular population, based on your literature review? What is the anticipated worker’s role and activity level? Clarify specific anticipated interventions (lecturer, organizer, counselor, facilitator, educator, advocate) and to whom interventions will be directed. What and how will the worker need to prepare for the group (include knowledge and skill, materials, etc)

E. Outcome evaluation. Briefly describe the method you will use to evaluate the progress of the group as related to its state goals and objectives. Clarify the methods you will consider, e. g., pretest-posttest, self-reports/family reports, worker=s assessment, other assessment tools. Identify if you will use short term and long term assessment strategies and how you will implement this. Use content discussed in Toseland & Rivas article on evaluation. Clarify how this group experience might advance the needs and concerns of the population-at-risk

This assignment is worth 30 points toward the final grade. Each student will submit a proposal based on the work of the group experience. Papers are expected to be well-written, well-organized and address all the questions included in the assignment. Students are to use APA writing style. The proposal should be 5-7 pages in length.

**Grades will be determined as follows:**

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis of Group Theories</td>
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<td>Retrospective Analysis:</td>
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<td>Group Proposal</td>
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<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Grading scale:**

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<td>95-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94.9</td>
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