SOCIAL WORK 504: GROUP THEORY AND PRACTICE

PREREQUISITE: Social Work 430

CREDITS: 3

DESCRIPTION:

This course will focus on the theory and practice of social work with empowerment groups that provide mutual aid in which social workers participate as facilitators and co-facilitators. The course will draw on the philosophy, theories and values of the historic group movement, including pragmatism, contextual thought, connectedness, development/process, community action/activism, and experiential learning. Group practice skills will focus on the social worker’s tasks in establishing group services and in facilitating work in the group from the time of its formation through its termination. The course will enhance the social worker’s differential use of self in various types of groups in both clinical and large system settings, and with diverse members. Particular attention will be placed on providing services to those who, due to economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or other factors, may not ordinarily receive equity in services in the urban environment. In most sessions, students will meet in a formed group to discuss practice applications and observe group dynamics and stages.

TEXTBOOKS:


Online and Electronic Reserve (ERes; password is socialwg) journal articles will also be used in this course.

OBJECTIVES

Knowledge:
1) Articulate a rationale for the selection of group work as a modality of service.
2) Understand the basic concepts of group dynamics such as group goals, membership, culture, and stages of development as reflected in group processes.
3) Understand theories of group practice as they apply to different practice settings and client groups, and the role of the worker in affecting individual and collective change in the group.
4) Understand the application of social work values and ethics in work with diverse group members including gender, race, culture, and sexual orientation.
5) Understand approaches to evaluate group practice effectiveness.

Skills:
1) Describe and critique the differential use of self and group processes throughout the phases of the group’s development.
2) Ability to identify individual and small group dynamics as manifested in various groups.
3) Ability to develop facilitative responses to various group situations.
4) Ability to apply group practice concepts to various settings and populations.
5) Describe the purposeful use of group processes around diversity issues such as economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.
6) Ability to develop self-awareness as a group member and leader/facilitator.
7) Demonstrate ability to evaluate group practice effectiveness.

STUDENTS REQUIRING ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES:
Students requiring accommodations for disabilities must follow established University procedures:
1. Go to the UIC Office of Disability Services to obtain confidential verification of the disability and a statement of accommodations recommended by that office.
2. Show the UIC Office of Disability Services accommodation letter to the instructor of the class for which the student requests accommodation. In the case of field instruction classes, the letter should be shown to the College field liaison or the Director of Field.
3. Accommodation letters are to be shown to the instructor at the beginning of the course or before the start of the course.

STUDENTS NEEDING ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS
Students needing accommodations for religious reasons should, at the beginning of the semester, contact the instructor by e-mail to identify appropriate class work to make up any missed sessions or other work.

CELLULAR TELEPHONES AND PAGERS: Cellular phones and pagers may not be used in the classroom. Please consult with your instructor regarding genuinely emergency situations.

WRITING CENTER: Excellent writing skills are required for professional practice. Students requiring assistance in this area may self-refer to the UIC Writing Center, or may be referred by the instructor.

EVALUATION-BASIS FOR GRADING
All students will be held accountable for adhering to academic and nonacademic standards of conduct in the JACSW Student Handbook. Copies can be obtained from the Office of Student Affairs.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is academic dishonesty. In this course, plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are described more fully in the student handbook. Non-exclusive list of examples of plagiarism:
- Presenting work done for another class as new, original work.
- Failing to cite & reference previous papers that you have written.
- Failing to cite & reference other authors’ works that have contributed to your paper in any way.
- Failing to cite, reference & identify with quotes material directly taken from another work.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
1. Participation (25% of grade). The course is heavily experiential, and therefore active participation is expected. Every session will include an experiential lab of some kind related to the session content. Participation is defined as on-time attendance for complete class sessions, attentive non-verbal behavior, offering comments relevant to course discussions, and active participation in laboratory exercises. Demonstration of familiarity with readings will increase your participation grade. Class sessions you do not attend will be graded 0 for participation. Please treat colleagues with respect and maintain confidentiality regarding any personal information shared in class sessions. You will in some cases be asked to bring simple materials to class (CDs, photographs).

2. Self-Graded Interteaching (25% of grade). A portion of each class session after the first will be spent in interteaching, a process in which student dyads will work together to explore specific questions applying the required readings for that week to practice situations; these questions will then structure subsequent class discussion. Students will grade themselves as a dyad, considering both level of preparation and depth of discussion. Students who have not completed the readings should indicate that that is the case to the instructor, and can then join an existing dyad without credit.
3. **Group work demonstrations (20% of grade)**. Each student will be responsible for researching, presenting, demonstrating, and organizing a 20 minute lab session for (a) particular form(s) of group(s), or a set of group activities that may be useful to members of the class in their future work (other than those in the existing lab sessions). Students presenting will explain the approach they are presenting, provide at least 3 related references, and lead the class in a group simulation. Sessions in which these demonstrations will be scheduled will be assigned at the second class session.

4. **Plan for a Group (30% of grade)**. An 8-10 page paper that uses the Toseland and Rivas Planning Model (page 152 and following) to propose an agency-based client group of any kind. Ideally the group proposed may be of value to the placement or future employment setting. Should draw extensively on the literature, use APA citation format, and be typed double-spaced. Includes
   - a **Group Proposal** (Toseland and Rivas, Appendices D, E, F, provide a structure, but you will provide substantially more detail)
   - an **Outline of the Content/Program** of the group (what will actually be done in sessions), and
   - a **plan for evaluation** of the group. **Due at the 13th class session, or at any time before that.**

**TOPICAL OUTLINE (ALL LISTED READINGS ARE REQUIRED FOR THAT SESSION)**

**Session 1: Introductions; Introduction to Social Work with Groups; Shared Power and Human Rights.**
   **Readings (2 week assignment)**
   Toseland & Rivas, Chapters 1 (Introduction) & 2 (Historical Developments)
   Malekoff, Chapter 3 (Strengths-Based Group Work with Adolescents)

**Session 2: Historical developments; The Mutual Aid Perspective; Work with Involuntary Clients**
   **Readings (2 week assignment)**
   Toseland & Rivas, Chapters 1 (Introduction) & 2 (Historical Developments)
   Malekoff, Chapter 3 (Strengths-Based Group Work with Adolescents)

**Session 3: Ethical Issues in Group Work; Managed Care and Group Methods**
   **Readings:**
   Toseland & Rivas, Appendices A1 (Guidelines for Ethics), A2 (Ethical Guidelines for Group Counselors), & A3 (Standards for Social Work Practice with Groups)

**Session 4: Group Dynamics, Group Purpose and Program**
   **Readings:**
   Toseland & Rivas, Chapter 3 (Understanding group dynamics)
   Malekoff, Chapter 2 (Between Adolescent and Group Worker: Uncertainty, Fluidity, and Learning From the Inside Out)

**Session 5: Preaffiliation: Planning and Recruitment**
   **Readings:**
   Toseland & Rivas, Chapter 6 (Planning the Group)
   Malekoff, Chapter 4 (Planning in Group Work: Where We Begin)
Session 6: Group Leadership and Facilitation
Readings:
Toseland & Rivas, Chapter 4 (Leadership)
Malekoff, Chapter 9 (The Use of “Program” in Group Work: Cultivating a Sense of Competence, Belonging, and Creativity)

Session 7: Engagement and Establishing Purpose
Readings:
Toseland & Rivas, Chapters 7 (The Group Begins) & 8 (Assessment)
Malekoff, Chapter 5 (Good Beginnings in Group Work: Socializing Adolescents Into the Group Culture)

Session 8: Evaluation of Effectiveness
Readings:
Toseland & Rivas, Chapter 14 (Evaluation)

Session 9: Culturally Sensitive and Ethnoconscious group work
Readings:
Toseland & Rivas, Chapter 5 (Leadership and diversity)
Malekoff, Chapter 11 (Prejudice Reduction, Intergroup Relations, and Group Identity: Spontaneous and Planned Interventions to Address Diversity in Group Work)

Lab 9: Student Demonstrations

Session 10: Middle Phase: Power and Control/Intervention and Mutual Aid
Readings:
Toseland & Rivas, Chapter 9 (Treatment groups: Foundation Methods)
Malekoff, Chapter 7 (Groups on the Go: Spontaneously Formed School-Based Mutual Aid Groups for Adolescents in Distress)

Lab 10: Student Demonstrations

Session 11: Middle Phase: Intimacy and Differentiation
Readings:
Malekoff, Chapter 14 (Adolescent Sexuality and Group Work: Variations on a Theme), and Chapter 16 (Loneliness, Social Isolation, Scapegoating, and Group Work: The Adolescents’ Struggle to Fit In)

Lab 11: Student Demonstrations

Session 12: Group Work with Different Populations
Readings:
Toseland & Rivas, Chapter 10 (Treatment groups: Specialized Methods)
Malekoff, Chapter 12 (Violence and Youth 1: Dimensions and Interventions in Group Work)

**Session 13: Growth and Therapeutic Factors**

**Readings:**
- Malekoff, Chapter 8 (The Use of Problem Solving in Group Work)

**Session 14: Task Groups**

**Readings:**
- Toseland & Rivas, Chapters 11 (Task Groups: Foundation Methods) & 12 (Task Groups: Specialized Methods)

**Session 15: Endings: Types of Terminations. Processing Losses and Gains.**

**Reading:**
- Toseland & Rivas, Chapter 13 (Ending the Group’s Work)
- Malekoff, Chapter 10 (Leavetaking. Moving On, and Looking Back: The Ending Transition in Group Work)
  & Chapter 17 (On Becoming a Reflective Group Worker)