Advanced Social Work Practice with Groups

Course Description

Group work practice will be examined in depth with application to social work within an agency context. The course creates a link with the foundation practice courses taught in the first year, as well as content taught in the foundation human behavior in the social environment courses. Emphasis will be on addressing conceptual understanding, analytical and interactional skills necessary for group work practice. This course is taken in conjunction with field education, as a co-requisite, in order to facilitate the integration of classroom and field learning.

Group practice as an integral part of social work intervention is the focus of this course. The context and agency setting will be addressed in relation to the impact in developing and working with groups. The course includes theories and methods of work with groups, and the use of groups in staff and team relationships, prevention, mutual aid, and in treatment. An eclectic approach which integrates theory and practice is used.

This course provides students with a perspective which considers the special qualities of group practice as an integrative part of intervention in various settings. The choice of group as an interventional method is made by utilizing a broad-based or systems assessment and communication and ego psychological formations. Within the field of group practice the various group approaches of social group work, task groups, psychodynamic and cognitive behavioral groups are addressed.

The course covers the history of social work groups, different models of group practice, the stages of group development, the planning and formation of groups, leadership issues, the beginning through ending phases of group, and groups for vulnerable and specific populations. Throughout the course, the impact of racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, and poverty in the provision of group services and in group dynamics, is explored. Identification and utilization of client strengths within the group are stressed.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of course, students will demonstrate the following knowledge and application of skills:

- Planning, assessment, practice and evaluation of social work practice with groups.

- Agency and organizational impact in developing groups, and develop the ability to apply negotiation skills including advocacy, mediation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and systems change efforts which will lead to provision of enhanced group services as an essential approach in various settings.
The impact of diversity i.e. ethnicity, race, religion/spirituality, gender, age, sexual orientation and other issues on group planning, assessment and intervention.

A range of theories and group practice models.

Dynamics and interventions appropriate to the beginning, middle and endings of groups.

Group dynamics and processes (including leadership and member roles) in planning and implementing interventions with groups.

Evidence-based and promising group interventions to identify and build client strengths.

Values and ethics specific to social work with groups, including those that impact and emerge through the group experience.

Social work role as agent of change, working on connections between group and community practice to promote social justice, equity, and enhance functioning and improve social conditions.

**Required Texts:**


**Recommended Texts:**


**Availability of Readings:**

Instructors may elect to order a Course Pak of readings for this course and may provide some readings through a Blackboard site for the class. In addition, required and some recommended readings are available through the library.

**Journals:**

*Groupwork*
*International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*
*Social Work with Groups*
Websites:

- www.aaswg.org  Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups
- www.eaps.org  Eastern Group Psychotherapy Society

Student Assignments

Students will be required to complete two or three assignments that will take the form of written papers, logs, or group presentations. This will give students the opportunity to demonstrate their level of mastery of the course content. Class participation in-class demonstrations and class discussions is expected.

Student Evaluation Criteria

Criteria used for evaluating students may include performance in such areas as: written assignments (including depth of content, clarity of content, accuracy, and research adequacy), exams, class participation, and attendance. Individual instructors will provide students with written notification regarding the specifics of how grades will be determined in each section of the course.

Exam Assignment Policy

Adelphi University welcomes diversity in its community, and respects various religious observances. The University requires that students who anticipate being absent due to their religious observance, will notify their professors at the start of the semester. This will allow the faculty to take these observances into consideration in light of their course exam and assignment schedules.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when one does not give credit to another author’s ideas. It includes lifting paragraphs from a book or the Internet, using someone else’s papers and failing to acknowledge the ideas of another person, which are paraphrased. It is a serious offense and the penalty can range from failure for the assignment or course, to dismissal from the School of Social Work.

Grading Criteria

Students are expected to attend all class sessions, complete reading assignments and written assignments as assigned. Active participation in class discussions and other class activities is also required.

Students will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of their written and oral work as this demonstrates appropriate acquisition and application of social work practice skills in supervision and staff development. The criteria for evaluation of student’s work are: mastery of course content; critical thinking; organization of material; writing ability; integration and application of course content to social work; and ability to conceptualize.
Graduate Grading Policy – Adelphi University School of Social Work

The numerical equivalents for letter grades are:

- **A** = 93 and above
- **A-** = 90-92
- **B+** = 87-89
- **B** = 83-86
- **B-** = 80-82
- **C+** = 77-79
- **C** = 73-76
- **C-** = 70-72
- **F** = below 70

The nominal definitions of letter grades are:
- A is awarded for excellent work
- B is awarded for good work
- C is awarded for marginal work
- F is awarded for failing work

**Accommodations**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to speak to the professor about accommodations they may need to ensure an accessible learning environment.

**Course Outline and Readings**

**I. Historical and Theoretical Background of Group Work Practice (Session 1)**

A. Overview
   1. Why group?
   2. Definitions of Social work with groups, Group work, Group treatment, etc.
B. History: When, Where, and How Groups Began to be Used in Social Work.
C. The Settlement House Movement
   1. Social reform – Community organization
   2. Mutual aid
   3. Task groups
D. The Child Guidance Movement
   1. Activity groups
   2. Parent groups
E. Life Space and Therapeutic Community
   1. Day treatment
   2. Institutional settings
   3. Psycho-education groups
F. Group Therapy
   1. Theoretical models
   2. Practical technologies

**Recommended Readings**


II. Models and Approaches (Sessions 2 & 3)

A. Common Elements of Social Work Practice with Groups

B. Development of Models and Approaches, Examples Including:
   1. Remedial And Rehabilitative Model (Vinter, Glasser)
   2. Social Goals Model (Phillips, Konopka, Coyle, Weiner)
   3. Reciprocal Interactionist Or Mutual Aid (Schwartz, Lee, Shulman, Gitterman)
   4. Psychodynamic Model (Yalom, Levine)
   5. Activity, Task Oriented, Structured, Action And Mixed Transactional Groups (Slavon, Garvin)
   6. Time-Limited Groups (Garvin, Reid & Epstein)
   7. The Mainstream Model (Papell & Rothman)
   8. Cognitive - Behavioral Groups
   9. Empowerment (Lee, Guitierrez)

Required Readings


Papell & Rothman, (1980). Relating the mainstream model of social work with groups, group

**Recommended Readings**

**III. Stages of Development (Session 4)**

A. Overview of Stages in Social Work Practice – Application in Group Work
B. Comparison of Models of Stages of Development in Groups
   1. Northen & Kurland Model: Preparation, Beginning, Middle, End
   3. Critiques and alternative models.

**Required Readings**

**Recommended Readings**
IV. Group Formation (Session 5, 6)

A. Organizational Factors
   1. Agency purpose and function
   2. Organizational culture and environment
   3. Negotiating the System
   4. Handling agency resistance

B. Needs of Potential Members
   1. Psycho-social reasons for joining a group
   2. Interpersonal reasons

C. Potential Group Purpose

D. Group Structure
   1. Site of group
   2. Space and time

E. Group Composition
   1. Heterogeneity vs. homogeneity
   2. Open or closed membership
   3. Commonalities of issues or diagnosis

F. Pre-Group Contact
   1. Screening of clients
   2. Pre affiliation
   3. Factors of attraction

G. Potential Group Content

H. Evaluation Plan

I. Beginnings
   1. Purpose and goal setting
   2. Tuning – in affectively/intellectually
   3. Engagement

J. Contracting
   1. Agency goal
   2. Reaching for client goals
   3. Worker goals
   4. Reaching for consensus and commonality

K. Early Assessment

L Values and ethics in starting a group.

Required Readings

Recommended Readings
V. Leadership (Session 7)

A. Worker-Authority Relations
   1. Structured
   2. Unstructured
   3. Transference/Countertransference
   4. Self-Disclosure

B. Group Leadership
   1. Co-Leadership
   2. Shared Responsibility
   3. Members as Helpers

Required Readings

Recommended Readings
VI. Middle Phase (Sessions 8, 9, 10)

A. Identifying and Developing Themes within the Work Phase.
   1. Latent and manifest content
   2. Authority and intimacy
   3. Scapegoating
B. Identification of Themes
C. Detecting and Identifying Obstacles in Work
D. Values, Norms, Group Culture
E. Cohesiveness
F. Interventions
   1. Increasing interaction and communication
   2. Mediating the interactional process
   3. Making a demand for work
   4. Reaching for and relating to feelings
   5. Encouraging mutual aid
   6. Consensus taking-detecting false consensus
   7. Interpretation and assessment
   8. Dealing with major difference in group member characteristics
G. The Individual and the Group
   1. Roles, sub-groups
   2. Accepting difference
   3. Identifying commonalities that help members deal with difference
H. Ongoing Assessment
   1. Group as a whole
   2. Individual in the group
I. Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Culture
   1. Worker-group differences
   2. Working with cultural diversity among members
J. Conflict and Decision-Making
   1. Exploration of conflict and intimacy issues as growth-producing commonalty
   2. Reaching for commonalty and acceptance of differences in consensus making.
K. Developing a Mutual Aid System
L. Psychodynamic Interaction

Required Readings


**Recommended Readings**


**VII. Use of Program and Activity (Session 11)**

A. Program as a Tool  
   1. Children and adolescents  
   2. Adults  
B. Gearing Tasks to Needs of Client Population  
C. Role of Worker
**Required Readings**

**Recommended Readings**

**VIII Specialized Groups (Session 12, 13)**
A. Single Session Groups
B. Large Groups
C. Therapeutic Community Groups
D. Clubhouse Model
E. Participatory Research
F. Self-Help Groups
G. Psychodynamic
H. Psycho-Educational Groups

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**IX Endings and Evaluation (Session 14, 15)**

A. Termination as a Transitional Stage
   1. Transition/member
   2. Departure/worker departure
   3. Group termination

B. Factors in Termination Phase for Workers and Members
   1. Anxiety
   2. Denial
   3. Regression
   4. Fight or flight
   5. Recapitulation
   6. Graduation effect

C. Evaluation
   1. Purpose
   2. Method and instrumentation
   3. Understanding outcomes

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


