Course Description

This course reviews and critically analyzes contemporary group methods utilized to achieve individual and/or systems change. Empirical and theoretical bases for assumptions and outcome research at the individual, group, and larger system levels will be discussed. Topics will include major models and procedures as applied to the behaviors of individual members, modification of group structures, processes, norms, tasks and reciprocal interactions between the group and its environment. Attention will be paid to qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data; how group interventions lead to changes in individuals, groups, and larger systems; the effects of ethnic and gender composition upon group functioning; the use of groups for rehabilitation, skill development, personal enhancement, and prevention; areas requiring further research; and ethical and value issues. Students will have the opportunity, as a class project, to work on a model of group practice related to their areas of interest.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to

1. Describe major approaches to and models of group work practice

2. Indicate the empirical support for several models of group work practice with reference to specific populations.

3. Specify and critique the interventions utilized in a range of group approaches

4. Describe research methodologies for the study of group approaches.

5. Generate a group approach for use with a particular population through drawing upon existing knowledge, personal experience, and social science theory.

Course Texts

There will be no text. However, many of the articles assigned in this course will be available in a course pack.

Session Outline


4-5. Developmental Research in the Creation of Group Work Technologies

A. Specification/Proceduralization


B. Evaluation


For weeks 6-12 we will discuss a range of group interventions that have substantial empirical support and discuss the theoretical rationale of the interventions as well as the validity of the designs.

6. Empirical approaches to model development


7. Prevention/Treatment of Addictive and Self-Destructive Behaviors


8. Treatment of the Perpetrators and Victims of Violence


9. Treatment of Persons with Serious Mental Illness


10. Groups for the Enhancement of Social Skills


11. Groups for Educational/ Psychoeducational and Support Purposes


12. Task, community, and social action groups


13. Research on Curative Factors in Group Therapy


14-15 Presentation of student projects