SSA 62322  
Spring, 2018  
Instructor: Ann M. Bergart, Ph.D., LCSW  
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KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE GROUP WORK PRACTICE

COURSE DESCRIPTION

SSA 62322 builds a theoretical framework for understanding both the group itself (dynamics; processes; development) and the actual practice of social group work. Course materials include relevant social science theory, in addition to contributions of group work scholars to group and practice theory. SSA 62322 is suitable for students who plan to elect either a clinical or an administration concentration. Both task groups (committees; teams; advisory boards) and treatment groups (support; psychoeducation; therapy) will be explored. The course begins with a focus on small group theory, going on to examine the role and function of the facilitator in various types of social work groups. A model will be presented for conceptualizing, planning, assessing, intervening, and evaluating group work practice with a variety of populations. There will be an emphasis on strategies for establishing and maintaining groups in agencies. Attention will be given to issues of empowerment, social and economic justice, and the use of social action to change adverse environmental conditions.

SMALL GROUP EXPERIENCE

Each student will be assigned to an ongoing small group which, once formed, will meet during part of each class session. The purpose of this group is to help students integrate the course material and apply theory to practice -- through discussion, reflection, and the practice of group work skills. For the first few meetings the instructor will assign tasks to these groups. Later in the quarter each group will decide on its own purpose as a mutual aid group with a member-generated agenda.

Attendance and active participation in this group are expected throughout the quarter. Students are expected to notify their small group, as well as the instructor, if they will be absent from a class session. Periodic journals and recordings about the group experience are required. Role playing and other experiential teaching methods will be used to help students apply theory to practice.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES
Course objectives will be achieved through a combination of lectures, readings, discussions, in-class group experiences, use of audiovisual materials, and completion of course assignments. By the end of the course you are expected to demonstrate mastery of the following objectives:

**Knowledge**

1. Possess a clear understanding of basic small group theory, including the developmental process in groups.

2. Understand the roles and functions of the worker at various stages in the life of a variety of groups.

3. Understand the meaning and role of diversity in group development and in the change process.

**Values**

1. Understand the key ethical issues in social group work practice.

2. Understand and uphold the importance of democratic processes in group work.

3. Value group process as a positive and effective mechanism of change and empowerment.

**Skills**

1. Demonstrate critical thinking skills through the assessment and evaluation of group process.

2. Demonstrate beginning practice skills in planning, intervening with, and evaluating social work groups.

3. Demonstrate beginning skill in assessing the developmental stages of groups and the appropriate corresponding interventions in a variety of types of groups.

**GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

Contacting the Instructor:
The instructor will check e-mail messages once daily on Monday and Tuesday before each class session. *If you need to receive a response quickly, please call 847-826-6922* and leave a message indicating this.

**Notification of Absence from Class:**
If you are going to miss class, please e-mail the instructor at least two hours before class time. You are also expected to contact your small group to let them know you will be absent.

**Laptops and Cell Phones:**
Since learning in this class relies heavily on close attention to in-class processes, the classroom will be an *electronic-free zone*. Phones must be *turned off* (not vibrate-mode activated) and laptops cannot be used during class.

**Respect in the Classroom:**
You are expected to treat your fellow students as respectfully as you treat your clients. In the context of class discussion, respect includes:

- listening well
- respecting a diversity of opinions and perspectives; not stereotyping or dismissing others; not assuming that you know where others are coming from
- keeping private what is said in class in order to support an atmosphere in which students can speak openly without fear of being judged
- when making a point, building on what others have said and making it clear how what you are saying is related to the discussion
- when wishing to change the direction of the discussion, making this explicit so that the class can decide whether or not to shift focus
- making your point clearly and briefly, supporting your position, and then allowing the discussion to move on
- letting others know if your comments come from personal experience or knowledge gained outside of class, rather than from the readings

**Use of Case Material:**
All case material used in class must be treated as confidential. Clients’ names and other key identifying information should be disguised during discussion and in written summaries. When case material is handed out it should be picked up by the presenter at the end of class and destroyed immediately.

**Academic Honesty:**
You may not knowingly give or receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, and you may not submit an assignment for this course which was written to fulfill the requirements for another course. Proper acknowledgment of another's ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is required. The direct or indirect
use of any written source or material from that source should be identified by author, title, and page number. **Failure to properly credit sources of information is plagiarism, or cheating, and is punishable under the University's disciplinary system.** Because these offenses compromise the ethical, moral, and intellectual character of the University, they are considered serious and subject to punishment that may include expulsion from the University.

**REQUIRED READINGS**


Other required readings will be available electronically.

**RECOMMENDED READING** (very useful/highly recommended; try buying used online)


**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

1. **Small group participation**
   See p. 1 for a description. Weekly attendance and participation in the small group are expected. If you will be absent, both the instructor AND your small
group should be notified in advance. Once the small groups begin to meet, if you are absent you will be expected to write a brief reflection on what you think it will be like for you to attend the next meeting after having been absent.

2. Periodic journals or recordings
At a number of points during the quarter you will be asked to write a brief journal or recording focusing on specific questions about your small group. One of the two recordings will focus on your experience as a facilitator of the small group on a particular day, and the other one will be written from the point of view of an observer of the group process during a particular meeting. The outlines for the facilitator and observer recordings will be posted on Canvas, and the questions in these outlines should be included as headings in the assignment.

Directions for the journal entries will be posted on Canvas following the class during which the assignment is given. All journals and recordings must be e-mailed to the instructor at abergart@uchicago.edu by noon on the Monday following the class when the assignment is given. If the you are absent and cannot write about a given meeting, you should consult with the instructor about an alternate assignment.

3. Midterm exam (April 18)
Note: The exam, which will count as 25% of your final grade, will cover the readings, handouts, and class discussion for the first three class sessions only. Questions will test your understanding of core concepts in group work theory by asking you to apply them to a case example. A study guide will be distributed in class the week before the exam.

4. Paper #1 (Due May 9):
In a 4-5 page paper discuss two specific areas of group facilitation you need to work on developing in yourself so that you can facilitate groups more effectively. Some examples (don’t limit yourself to these) are:

- Stimulating interaction among group members
- Allowing silence
- Working with monopolizing behavior
- Dealing with conflict directly

Make sure you address all of the following questions about each area of leadership you selected:

- How did you choose this area?
- What are the behaviors in this area of leadership which you need to develop?
- What personal strengths will help you work on these behaviors?
What personal obstacles will you need to overcome in making these changes in your leadership?

How can you use your experiences in this class (and in your field placement if you are working with groups) to work on developing your skills in this area?

5. Final Paper (Due May 30):
In the final paper you are asked to develop a proposal for a small group and address the implementation of that group. This proposal requires you to apply and integrate knowledge gained throughout the course. You are expected to utilize the course’s text/articles and at least three outside readings. Additional details will be described in a separate handout, which will be posted on Canvas.

Format and Submission of Journals and Recordings:
Journals and recordings must be no more than two pages, double-spaced. They should be submitted by e-mail to abergart@uchicago.edu by the following Monday before class, and are due at noon.

Format for Papers:
- Compose a title page, including the title of your paper, your name, the date, and the course number.
- Use Times New Roman font, 12-point.
- Double-space.
- Use 1-inch margins.
- Include page numbers.
- Submit the required number of pages.
- Use correct grammar and punctuation, and proof-read your paper personally. “Spell-check” misses a lot. If there are enough errors in your paper to distract from the content, the grade will be lowered.
- Citations should be in APA format.
- No more than one-fourth of your citations may be web-based.

Submitting Papers:
- Submit a hard copy by the end of the class session on the assigned date.
- Only students who are absent on the due date may submit the paper by e-mail, and it must be submitted by 4:30 PM on that date.
- Failure to meet the deadline will result in a lowering of the grade.

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK #1: March 28

COURSE OVERVIEW
WHAT IS A SOCIAL WORK GROUP?  
HOW IS GROUP WORK DIFFERENT FROM CASEWORK?  
COMMON FEARS ABOUT FACILITATING GROUPS  
IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS  

Required readings: 


WEEK #2:  April 4  
FUNDAMENTALS OF GROUP WORK  
ETHICS AND STANDARDS  
HISTORY OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK  
THEORETICAL APPROACHES  
TYPES OF GROUPS  

Required readings: 


Pelech, W., Basso, R., Lee, C. D., & Gandarilla, M. (2016). *Inclusive group work*, chapters 1 (pp. 3-13); 2 (pp. 14-24); 5 (pp. 48-69); & 7 (pp. 78-90).


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**WEEK #3: April 11**

**DIVERSITY IN GROUPS**

**INCLUSIVE GROUP WORK**

**DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES IN GROUPS**

**THERAPEUTIC FACTORS**

**ASSESSMENT IN GROUP WORK**

**Required readings:**


Pelech, W., Basso, R., Lee, C. D., & Gandarilla, M. (2016). *Inclusive group work*, chapters 3 (pp. 25-36); 4 (pp. 37-47); & 8 (pp. 91-114).


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**WEEK #4: April 18**  
**GROUP FACILITATION**  
**MIDTERM EXAM**

**Required reading:**


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**WEEK #5: April 25**  
**PLANNING STAGE**  
**NON-VERBAL METHODS IN WORKING WITH GROUPS**

**Required readings:**


Pelech, W., Basso, R., Lee, C. D., & Gandarilla, M. (2016). Inclusive group work, chapter 6 (pp. 61-76); pp. 231-238; pp. 247-257.


WEEK #6: May 2

BEGINNING STAGE
HIGHLIGHTING COMMONALITY AND DIVERSITY

Required reading:


WEEK #7: May 9

MIDDLE STAGE
MANAGING CONFLICT
PAPER #1 DUE

Required reading:


WEEK #8: May 16

MANAGING CONFLICT (Cont’d)
ADVANCED SKILLS

Required reading:


WEEK #9: May 23
ENDING STAGE
TRANSFORMATION
EVALUATION
RESEARCH

Required reading:


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**WEEK #10: May 30**

**SELECTED PRACTICE APPLICATIONS:**
- CHILDREN
- ADOLESCENTS
- ADULTS
- OLDER ADULTS
- REVIEW & CLOSURE
- FINAL PAPER DUE

**Required readings:**


*NOTE: The prior stated schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.*

**GRADING POLICY**
Attendance and Participation:
Learning in this course relies heavily on in-class experiences, so attendance and active participation in class are essential. Missing more than one class session will result in a lowered grade. **Students who are absent more than once may not receive a grade of A.**

The overall grading procedure is based on the rules of SSA and the University of Chicago. Course grades will be determined by the quality of classroom participation and written assignments.

Grade of:

A  Denotes work which demonstrates the creative application of the material requested in the assignment including independently developed insights.

B  Demonstrates understanding of the material at a high level; provides theoretical material in a comprehensive manner; and integrates classroom and field experiences.

C  Demonstrates some understanding of the material but:
   1) fails to complete all portions of the assignments;
   2) is poorly written, organized, or contains large amounts of grammatical and spelling errors;
   3) contains material which is inaccurate or not adequately documented; or
   4) contains material which is unrelated to the assignment.

F  Papers will receive an F if they:
   1) are incoherent;
   2) ignore the assignment;
   3) fail to include material presented in class or in the readings;
   4) show minimal evidence of comprehending the concepts which form the basis of the assignment.

Special accommodation:
Any request for special accommodation should be explicit and should be directed to the instructor at the beginning of the quarter.

Late Paper and Extension Policy:
Extensions will be given only if requested prior to the due date and only in the case of extreme situations which are beyond the control of the student.

**Course Expectations and Basis for Evaluation:**

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<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Attendance and Participation (preparation for and participation in all class sessions and small group experiences – consistent and productive contributions; timely and thorough completion of readings; timely and thoughtful journals and recordings)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Midterm Exam (April 18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Paper #1 (Due May 9)</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>Final Paper (Due May 30)</td>
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Total 100


**JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS**


