

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT WILMINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**

**SWK 442 - Social Work Practice with Groups  
Fall, 2009**

Instructor: Dr. Donna Hurdle  
Class Day/Time: TR 11:00 – 12:15  
Office Hours: TR 12:15 – 2:00

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**I. Course Description**

This is the third course in a sequence of four generalist social work practice courses. It integrates the basic working relationship orientation into social work practice at the mid or mezzo level of the generalist practice framework. Students are introduced to the basic structure, use, and processes of a typology of groups used in generalist practice, to include the broad categories of treatment and task groups. Issues of social justice, social policy, ethical and fiduciary responsibilities, empowerment, assessment, and recursive evaluation will be integrated into the mid/mezzo practice knowledge and skills.

**II. Purpose**

This course will prepare students to work with client systems at the mid/mezzo levels of social work practice. Students will learn to think in terms of the contextual implications of the interface of the person-in-the-environment and apply this perspective toward understanding client systems and intervention. Students will engage in both didactic and practice learning of the typology of group structure, planning, group process (beginnings, working through, endings), group dynamics, decision-making, leadership, assessment and recursive evaluation. Students will integrate their learning of empowerment, strengths and solution perspectives into work at the mid/mezzo level. Students will continue to integrate knowledge and skills related to diversity and individual uniqueness, as well as ethical and fiduciary responsibilities. They will consider the implications of policy decisions from the agency to the national levels on the work they do at the mid/mezzo level, as well as learn to use groups and group process in addressing policy and social justice issues. Students will be prepared to record and engage in recursive evaluation of their practice.

**III. Course Objectives**

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the integration of group work into assessing client systems from a generalist social work perspective.

2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of various types of groups included in the terms “task” and “treatment” groups and their purpose.
3. Students will be able to recognize and to propose appropriate group structures for addressing client system, agency and community issues.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the significance of preliminary planning, and the initial stages or beginnings of group level practice.
5. Students will demonstrate a beginning understanding of group dynamics and leadership.
6. Students will be able to demonstrate a beginning level of skills in leading a group and working with group processes.
7. Students will be able to demonstrate a beginning-level knowledge and skills in the stages of group work (assessment, beginnings, working phase, endings or transitions, and evaluation).
8. Students will recognize the utility of group structures and process to address the issues of social justice with diverse peoples to include the poor and oppressed.
9. Students will understand and demonstrate the use of empowerment/strengths focused practice.
10. Students will understand and demonstrate an ability to engage in ongoing (recursive) evaluation of practice.
11. Students will demonstrate a continued recognition and integration of social work values, ethics and fiduciary responsibilities, and human uniqueness and diversity into generalist group practice.

#### **IV. Texts and Readings:**

##### **Required Text:**

Toseland, R. W., & Rivas, R. F. (2009). *An introduction to group work practice*. (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

#### **V. Course Requirements and Grading Procedures:**

The following assignments are required of students, and are worth the point value indicated. All assignments must be turned in on their due date; late assignments will receive a reduced grade.

##### **1. Mid-Term Exam (50 points) - Held in-class on October 13, 2009**

This exam will cover all course readings, experiences, and discussions prior to the exam date. It will be given in class, and consist of short answer essay-type questions on relevant topics. The exam will also include case examples for analysis and discussion. An exam preparation guide will be handed out the week prior to the exam.

## 2. **Group Intervention Presentation (50 points) – Date will be Assigned in Class**

For this assignment, students will be assigned to a dyad or small group; each group will develop a presentation for the class on a group intervention method that is appropriate for clients with a particular issue or concern. Suggestions are: groups for children, adolescents, or adults going through various life problems – divorce, bereavement, step-families, sexual molestation; groups for clients with medical problems (cancer, AIDS) or mental illness (SMI, depression, ADD); groups for addictions issues (drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc). Presentations will be given during the class period, and will last for up to one hour. Students are encouraged to use PowerPoint in their presentation of information.

Grading will consist of two parts: a group grade worth 30 points based on how thorough and complete the presentation is; each group member will receive this grade. In addition, each student will submit a description of their own work on the project and include a reference list, which is worth 20 points. The paper must be handed in on the day of presentation

*Presentations should include the following topics:*

- a. **Development of the Intervention** – How was this type of intervention developed? Who was the primary creator(s), when did this occur, and is it based on any particular theory or foundation?
- b. **Description of the Intervention** –
  1. How do you actually provide this intervention? What are the steps or methods involved? Give a **demonstration** to the class illustrating how to do this type of intervention, **such as a role-play, or a class participation exercise.**
  2. Should the intervention be modified for diverse client groups (consider age, gender, race and ethnicity, social class, handicapping conditions, etc.)?
- c. **Empirical Basis of the Intervention** - Describe the research literature on the effectiveness of this intervention. Are there client groups for which it is most appropriate, or ones for which it is not useful at all? What outcome studies have been done?

## 3. **Group Analysis Paper (65 points) – Due December 1, 2009**

This assignment will provide an opportunity to observe a group “in action”, analyze its characteristics and research the literature on the type of intervention you are observing. You are

to pick a therapeutic group of your choice (therapy, education, skill-building, socialization, self-help, etc.), which is conducted at your field placement, work setting, or other community location. The group should be one that is new to you, not one in which you are already involved. You should attend the group for at least three sessions; your role is to be a participant-observer if you are not leading the group. Be aware that you may need permission to attend the group, and assurances of confidentiality may need to be given. You will need to select your group immediately and begin attending sessions.

Based on your observations, you will write a paper that is eight to ten pages in length, not including references. Your paper will concern a description and analysis of the group experience; you will also briefly research the professional literature on this type of intervention. Your class readings should be integrated into this discussion as appropriate. You will be given an outline of the required topics in class.

**4. EXTRA CREDIT: ASSIST WITH HUNGER BANQUET (10 points)**

You may assist Dr. Blundo's class in the development of the annual hunger banquet. You will hand in a brief description of your work in this event to receive extra credit. This is due the class following the banquet.

**Summary of Assignments: Total = 175 Points**

Mid-Term Exam	50 points
Group Presentation	50 points
Group Paper	65 points
Class Participation	10 points

**5. Grading Policy and Scale:**

All tests and assignments will be graded according to the following criteria:

1. Clarity and flow of discussion, presentation of material, and *demonstrated mastery of course content*.
2. Inclusion of content in a complete and thoughtful manner (using course concepts and terminology).
3. Obvious effort and attention to the material required in the assignment.
4. Writing skills (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling, content).
5. *Grading Scale:*

A = 157 – 175 points	D = 105 - 121 points
B = 140 - 156 points	F = 104 points and below
C = 122 - 139 points	

**6. Honor Code:**

From the University of North Carolina at Wilmington academic honor code:  
“No form of dishonesty among faculty or students will be tolerated... Academic dishonesty takes many forms, from blatant cheating, stealing, or similar misdeeds to more subtle forms of plagiarism...” *UNCW University Catalog and Student Handbook and Code of Student Life*.

## **7. Attendance Policy**

Attendance will be taken at each class period, and students are expected to attend each class. This is particularly important, as there will be a number of group experiences and exercises during the class periods. Students who miss a number of classes will lose their class participation points and may receive a reduced grade. Students are encouraged to inform the instructor of any absences, and to get class notes from other students.

## **VI. COURSE OUTLINE**

### **August 20 & 25/27, 2009: Introduction to Group Work in Generalist Practice**

#### **A. Objectives - Students will be able to:**

1. Define group work and its historical development.
2. Identify and differentiate the purposes and characteristics of treatment groups and task groups, and list various functions for which groups are employed.
3. List and delineate values and ethics specific to group work.
4. Identify advantages and disadvantages of group vs. individual treatment methods.

#### **B. Required reading:**

Toseland, R. W., & Rivas, R. F. (2009). *An introduction to group work practice*. Chapters 1 & 2; appendix A3.

Miley, O'Melia & DuBois (2000). *Generalist social work practice: An empowering approach*. pages 4-24.

### **September 1/3: Group Dynamics and Group Leadership**

#### **A. Objectives - Students will be able to:**

1. Delineate four major areas of group dynamics.
2. Identify potential sources of power of group leaders.
3. Discuss different leadership styles and their impact on group process.
4. Identify and explain leadership skills in facilitating group process, gathering data and assessing, and promoting action.
5. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of co-leadership.

B. Required reading:

Toseland & Rivas. (2009). *An introduction to group work practice*. Chapters 3, 4 & 5.

**September 8/10: Planning Groups and Recruitment**

A. Objectives - Students will be able to:

1. Establish the group's purpose.
2. Assess the potential membership of a group.
3. Recruit appropriate members.

B. Required reading:

Toseland & Rivas. (2001). *An introduction to group work practice*. Chapter 6.

**September 15/17: Selecting Members and Starting the Group**

A. Objectives - Students will be able to:

1. Select appropriate members for a group.
2. Orient members to a group.
3. Contract for member and group goals.
4. Create an environment conducive to group processes

B. Required reading:

Toseland & Rivas. (2001). *An introduction to group work practice*. Chapter 7.

**September 22/24: Stages of Group Development**

A. Objectives - Students will be able to:

1. Identify the objectives to be accomplished in the beginning stage of a group.
2. Assess the functioning of a group on various dimensions, including the group as a whole and the group's environment.

B. Required reading:

Toseland & Rivas. (2009). *An introduction to group work practice*. Chapters 8.

Berman-Rossi, T. (1993). The tasks and skills of the social worker across stages of group development. *Social Work with Groups*, 16, 69-81.

**September 29/October 1: Wrap-up and Review for Exam**

**October 6/8 – FALL BREAK - NO CLASS**

**October 13 – MID-TERM EXAM – IN CLASS (Bring Blue Book or Paper)**

**October 15 through November 3: Treatment Group Interventions  
Group Presentations Scheduled**

A. Objectives - Students will be able to:

1. Identify the therapeutic factors in group therapy.
2. Identify and describe interventions employed in treatment groups for various types of client concerns and issues.

B. Required reading:

Toseland & Rivas. (2009). *An introduction to group work practice*. Chapters 9 & 10.

**November 5, 10/12 & 17/19: Task Group Interventions**

A. Objectives - Students will be able to:

1. Identify the characteristics of task groups.
2. Identify and describe interventions employed in treatment groups for various types of client concerns and issues.

B. Required reading:

Toseland & Rivas. (2009). *An introduction to group work practice*. Chapters 11 & 12.

**November 26 – THANKSGIVING - NO CLASS!**

**November 24 & December 1: Evaluation and Termination of Groups**

A. Objectives - Students will be able to:

1. Discuss evaluation methods and measures of group process, with a particular focus on outcomes of efficacy and efficiency.
2. Identify and discuss the basic factors associated with the ending phase of a group's work.

B. Required readings:

Toseland & Rivas. (2009). *An introduction to group work practice*. Chapters 13 & 14.

**December 1: GROUP ANALYSIS PAPER - Due in Class**