

WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

SWK 6328

BLOCK 2015

Social Work with Groups

Dr. Jay Sweifach

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course is designed to increase students' knowledge and skill in social work practice with groups. Covered are the generic knowledge and skills that social workers require to work in groups with vulnerable populations. An aim of the course is to assist students in recognizing the efficacy of practice with groups in a variety of clinical and community settings. Emphasis is on the skills necessary for influencing individual change through small groups. Special issues include values and ethics in group work practice and social justice. This is an elective course that builds upon the knowledge and skills acquired in the first year Foundations of Practice courses.

II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, students will demonstrate:

1. An understanding of the roots of social group work, particularly its emphasis on work with poor and oppressed populations.
2. Apply group work theory to different settings and populations, e.g., children, adolescents, adults and the elderly.
3. Knowledge of the different types of groups, socialization, therapy, task and their purposes.
4. Identify the values, knowledge and skills that can be applied to the formation and practice with different types of groups
5. Understand and apply the process of group formation in a social agency that includes the principles of group composition, selection and preparation of members.
6. Recognize the different stages of group development that apply to group and individual characteristics, tasks to be accomplished and the role of the group worker in each stage.
7. An understanding of ethical dilemmas in social work practice with groups

and knowledge of how to help a group make responsible decisions.

8. Apply social work values and ethics to group work practice

III. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Learning will occur through a variety of experiences and methods such as lecture, class discussion, role plays, and contributions from field work and videos.

Text for the Course

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: Skills and strategies for effective interventions*. New York: Haworth Press.

ISBN: 0789007401 \$55.44

Recommended Text

Shulman, L. (2005). *The skills of helping individuals, families, groups and communities with infotrac* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

ISBN: 9780789007407 \$54.95

Note: All required readings are on-line through electronic reserve (ERES). Your instructor will distribute the password and directions to access these readings

IV. Assignments **Assignment 1: Forming A Group Within An Agency**

Covers Learning Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Prepare a plan for the development of a **new client group** in your field work agency. Discuss: the needs of the client population proposed for the group, how a group service will meet those needs; group purpose; who the members will be; group size and structure; pre-group contact with prospective members and content for the first meeting.

Discuss your plan with an agency staff member whose support would be required before you could start the group. Include his/her reactions (contact by email, and include the email correspondence).

You are expected to refer to concepts from the readings units III & IV, Chapter V in the text. The first assignment is due: **Session 7**

Assignment 2: Group Assessment - Covers Learning Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

The assessment is to be conducted with a group you are in or have worked with or were a member. If the aforementioned do not apply to you, the assessment should be done by interviewing a fellow student who has worked with a group. The purpose of the assignment is to aid you in your present understanding of group and individual functioning and your role with the group as well as to serve as a guide for future action.

You are expected to incorporate concepts from the text and other required readings.

The second assignment is due: **Session 13. A detailed outline is attached.**

V. Course Expectations and Grading

Students are expected to attend all classes and to be on time. Class participation is important and there is an expectation that students will do the required reading specified under each course unit. Grades are largely based on assignments; 45% each for both assignments, and 10% for student discussion of readings, class attendance, and completing assignments on time.

PLAGIARISM:

Students should remember that the School will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is **not** plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will **FAIL** the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean automatically for disciplinary action which may include expulsion.

HIPAA ALERT

In line with the new HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work, will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain

other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, Rochelle Kohn, Beren Campus, 917-326-4828, rkohn1@yu.edu, Abby Kelsen, Wilf Campus, 646-685-0118, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. After approval for accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter to Disability Services Office immediately.

Unit I. Introduction To Course (Session 1)

Covers learning objectives: 2,3

- A. Review of course objectives, content, assignments and grading.
- B. Expectations for student learning.
- C. Identification of student interests and expectations for the course.
- D. Positive and negative affects of groups on the individual and society.

Required Readings:

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: Skills and strategies for effective interventions*. New York: Haworth Press. (Chapter I).

Drumm, K. (2006). The essential power of group work. *Social Work with Groups*, 29(2/3), 17- 31.

Recommended Reading:

Malekoff, A., & Papell, C. (2012). Remembering Hull House, speaking to Jane Addams, and preserving empathy. *Social Work with Groups*, 35(4), p. 306-312.

Unit II. The Evolution of Group Work (Sessions 2,3,4)

Covers learning objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4

- A. Historical development of group work within the social work profession.

- B. Uses and typology of groups in social work practice.
- C. Basic elements of the group work method.
- D. Development of group work theory.
- E. Values and ethics in group work practice.

Required Readings:

- Birnbaum, M.L., & Auerbach, C. (1994). Group work in graduate social work education: The price of neglect. *Journal of Social Work Education, 30*(3), 325-335.
- Brandler, S. (1999). The small structured group: A tool for teaching social work values. *Social Work with Groups, 22*(1), 79-97.
- Breton, M.(1990). Learning from social group work traditions. *Social Work with Groups, 13*(3), 21-34.
- Kurland, R. (2008). Debunking the “blood theory” of social work with groups: Group workers are made and not born. *Social Work with Groups 30*(1), 11-24
- Shulman, L. (2005b). Group work method. In A. Gitterman & L. Shulman (Eds.) *Mutual aid groups, vulnerable and resilient populations, and the life cycle* (3rd ed) (pp. 573-596). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Shulman, L. (2005). *The skills of helping individuals, families, groups and communities with infotrac* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co. (Chapter 8).

Recommended Readings:

- Kurland, R., & Salmon, R., (1992). Group work vs. casework in a group: Principles and implications for teaching and practice *Social Work with Groups, 15*(4), 3-14.
- Newstetter, N.I. (1935). *What is social group work?* In: proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work. (pp. 291-299). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Unit III. The Process of Forming A Group Within An Agency (Session 5)

Covers learning objective: 3, 4, 5

- A. Concepts of social systems and agency function in thinking about group services.
- B. How groups are formed in social work settings.
- C. Criteria for the choice of the group modality based upon client needs.
- D. Issues in working with the staff and agency administration system to implement group plans.

Required Readings:

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: Skills and strategies for effective interventions*. New York: Haworth Press. (Chapter 5).

Gitterman, A. (2005). Group formation: Tasks, methods and skills. In A. Gitterman & L. Shulman (Eds.) *Mutual aid groups, vulnerable and resilient populations, and the life cycle* (3rd ed) (pp. 73-110). New York: Columbia University Press.

Kammerman, D. (2011). A new group worker's struggles and successes in a host school. *Social Work with Groups*, 34(3-4), 233-245.

Kurland, R., & Salmon, R. (2006) Purpose: A misunderstood and misused keystone of group work practice. *Social Work with Groups*, 29(2/3), 105-120.

Shulman, L. (2005). *The skills of helping individuals, families, groups and communities with infotrac* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co. (Chapter 9).

Recommended Readings:

Birnbaum, M., Catalina, J., Nisinzweig, S., & Abrams, V. (1989). Institutionalization of a group service in an individual-oriented agency. *Social Casework*, 70(8), 495-501.

Hannah, P.J. (2000). Preparing members for the expectations of social work with groups. *Social Work with Groups*. 2(4), 51-66.

Unit IV. Planning: Composition, Structure, Content (Sessions 6)

Covers learning objective: 3, 5

- A. Principles that apply to group composition

- B. Assessment of individual members
- C. Determination of group size
- D. Open-ended and closed groups
- E. Group duration
- F. Content

Required Readings:

Hannah, P.J. (2000). Preparing members for the expectations of social work with groups: An approach to the preparatory interview. *Social Work with Groups*, 22(4), 51-66.

Kleinmuntz, J. (2011). On becoming a group worker. *Social work with Groups*, 34(3-4), 219- 232.

Lesser, J.G., O'Neill, M., Burke, K., Scanlon, P., Hollis, K., & Miller, R. (2004). Women supporting women: A mutual aid group fosters new connections among women in the middle. *Social Work with Groups*, 27(1), 75-88.

Manov, O. (1986). The preliminary interview in social group work: Finding the spiral steps. *Social Work with Groups*, 9(2), 21-39.

Steinberg, D. (2010). Mutual aid: A contribution to best-practice social work. *Social Work with Groups*, 33(1), 53-68.

Sweifach, J. (2009). Cross-cultural group work practice with African-American and Jewish adolescents. *Social Work with Groups*, 32(1-2), 109-124.

Recommended Readings:

Bildes, D. G. (1990). Race, color, ethnicity, and class: Issues of biculturalism in school based adolescent counseling groups. *Social Work with Groups*, 13(4),43-58.

Jagendorf, V., & Malekoff, A. (2000). Groups-on-the go: Spontaneous formed mutual aid groups for adolescents in distress. *Social Work with Groups*, 22(4), 15-32.

Unit V.Stage I:- The Beginning Stage of Group Development (Sessions 7, 8)

Covers learning objective: 3, 4, 6, 7

- A. Overview of stages of group development
- B. Group characteristics
- C. Worker role
- D. Elements of a working agreement

Required Readings:

- Birnbaum, M.L., Mason, S.E., Cicchetti, A. (2002). Impact of purposeful sessional endings on both the group and the practitioner. *Social Work with Groups*, 25(4), 3-19.
- Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: Skills and strategies for effective interventions*. New York: Haworth Press. (Chapter 2).
- Rooney, R. & Chovanec, M. (2004). Involuntary groups. In C. Garvin, L. Gutierrez, and M. Galinsky (Eds.), *Handbook of social work with groups* (pp. 212-226). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Shulman, L. (2005). *The skills of helping individuals, families, groups and communities with infotrac* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co. (Chapters 10 & 11).
- Toseland, R.W. & Rivas, R.F. (2005). *Introduction to group work practice* (5th ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon. (Chapter 6).

Recommended Readings:

- Caplan, T., & Thomas, T. (2003). If this is week three we must be doing 'feelings': An essay on the importance of client-paced group work. *Social Work with Groups*, 26(3) 5-17.
- Solane, C. (2003). How Did We Get Here? The importance of sharing with members the reasons for a group's formation and the history of its development. *Social Work with Groups*, 26(2), 35-49.

Unit VI. Stage II: Power and Control (Sessions 9,10)

Covers learning objective: 4, 6, 7

- A. Group characteristics
- B. Tasks and role of the worker

- C. Principles for working with group conflict
- D. Influence of racial, ethnic, sexual and age factors in this stage

Required Readings:

Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: Skills and strategies for effective interventions*. New York: Haworth Press. (Chapter 8).

Gitterman, A. (2006). Building mutual support in groups. *Social Work with Groups*, 28(3-4), 91- 106.

Kurland, R., & Salmon, R. (1997). When worker and member expectations collide: The dilemma of establishing group norms in conflictual situations. In A. Alissi & C.G. Corto Mergins, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Group work responds* (pp. 43-53). New York: Haworth Press.

Mondros, J. B., Woodrow, R., & Weinstein, L. (1992). The use of groups to manage conflict. *Social Work with Groups*, 15(4), 43-57.

Northen, H. (2003). I hate conflict but..... *Social Work with Groups*, 25(1-2), 39-44
Steinberg, D.M. (2004). *The mutual aid approach to working with groups: Helping people help one another* (2nd ed.). Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press. (Chapter 1).

Recommended Readings:

Henry, S. (1992). *Group skills in social work: A four-dimensional approach*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. (pp.127-159).

Kurland, R., & Salmon, R. (1997). When worker and member expectations collide: The dilemma of establishing group norms in conflictual situations. In A. Alissi & C.G. Corto Mergins, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Group work responds* (pp. 43-53). New York: The Haworth Press.

Unit VII. Mutuality and Work (Sessions 11,12,13)

Covers learning objective: 4, 6

- A. Group characteristic
- B. Tasks and role of the worker
- C. Problem solving process
- D. Use of program activities

Required Readings:

- Brandler, S., & Roman, C.P. (1999). *Group work: Skills and strategies for effective interventions*. New York: Haworth Press. (Chapters 3, 6, & 7).
- Malekoff, A. (1997). *Group work with adolescents: Principles and practice*. New York: Guilford (pp 146-165).
- Northen, H., & Kurland, R. (2001). *Social work with groups* (3rd ed.). New York: Columbia University Press. (Chapters 11 & 4).
- Shulman, L. (2005). *The skills of helping individuals, families, groups and communities with infotrac* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co. (Chapters 4, 11, & 12).

Recommended Readings:

- Brown, L. N. (1991). *Groups for growth and change*. New York: Longman. (pp. 189-217).
- Getzel, G. S. (1983). Poetry writing groups and the elderly: A reconsideration of art and social group work. *Social Work with Groups*, 6(1), 65-76.
- Wayne, J., & Weeks, K. K. (1984). Group work with abused adolescent girls: A special challenge. *Social Work with Groups*, 7(4), 83-104.

Unit VIII. Stage IV: Separation, Termination, Transition (Sessions 14)

Covers learning objective: 6

- A. Group dynamics when an individual leaves the group
- B. Reactions of worker and member to termination
- C. Variation in group characteristics according to the type of group
- D. Tasks and role of the worker in termination

Required Readings

- Brandler, S., & Roman, C. P. (1999). *Group Work: Skills and strategies for effective interventions*, New York: Haworth Press, Inc. (Chapter 4).
- Pudil, J. (2006). I'm gone when you're gone: How a group can survive when it's leader takes a leave of absence. *Social Work with Groups*, 29(2/3), 217-233.

Roman, C.P. (2006). A worker's personal grief and its impact on processing a group's termination. *Social Work with Groups*, 29(2), 235-242.

Shulman, L. (2005). *The skills of helping individuals, families, groups and communities with infotrac* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co. (Chapter 13).

Toseland, R.W. & Rivas, R.F. (2005). *Introduction to group work practice* (5th ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon. (Chapter 14).

Recommended Readings

Garvin, C.D. (1997). *Contemporary group work* (3rd Ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon. (pp. 208- 211).

Wayne, J., & Avery, N. (1979). Activities as a tool for group termination. *Social Work*, 24(1), 58-62.

ASSIGNMENT II

Guide for Group Assessment

The following concepts are useful in understanding how the group as a whole is functioning. The questions help to focus the assessment.

Group Purpose

Purpose expresses the common need problem or interest that brings the members together and how the group will be of help. It is a process of clarification that continues throughout group development.

- a. Is the group purpose clear to the worker, agency and members?
- b. Is there congruence between the worker and members' perception of group purpose?
- c. Have the members shared their goals and expectations as part of the shaping of group purpose.
- d. Does the group continue to refer to its purpose or has the purpose stated at the beginning, been forgotten?

Social Interaction

Through interaction the members influence each other's attitudes and behavior and accomplish group goals.

- a. Is there active participation by group members or is the discussion dominated by certain members?
- b. Are the members communicating with one another or does the interaction tend to be between the members and the worker?
- c. Do the members share their conscious thoughts and feelings about the group or do they avoid open and honest communication with the worker and one another?
- d. Do the members listen to one another or are interruptions prevalent? If interruptions are occurring who interrupts whom?

Relationships

The positive and negative feelings the members have for one another affect the group process and the achievement of individual group goals.

- a. Are members regarded favorably by the group or are there individuals who are rejected?
- b. What factors influence the attraction and repulsion among member?
- c. Do members recognize their interdependence and reach out to help one another?
- d. Do members regard one another objectively or do stereotypes exist based on such characteristics as: race, religion, gender, social class and appearance.

Roles

Members perform various informal and formal roles in their interaction with each other. Informal roles express individual needs as well as the expectations of others while formal roles are designated positions related to the purpose and structure of the group.

- a. What informal roles are performed by individual members?
- b. Are the roles constructive for the individual in the roles and for the group or are there roles that are destructive for the individual and the group?
- c. Are any individuals stereotyped in their roles by the group so that it is hard to alter their role behavior?

- d. Are there formal or informal roles needed the group to achieve its goals that are not being performed?

Norms

Norms express standards of behavior to which the members of a group expect one another to meet. Norms differ from rules, which are externally imposed on the group by the worker or agency. They develop from social interaction and provide stability and control. Norms may help or hinder the group. The following questions express humanistic values and democratic norms providing the foundation for the practice of social group work.

- a. Does the group value the contributions of all of its members regardless of such factors as race, class, status, age, and gender?
- b. Is there a norm for inclusion of different kinds of people and opinions rather than for exclusion?
- c. Does the group allow expression and experimentation with new ideas and behaviors?
- d. Are the interactions of group members based on caring and helping, or do members avoid taking responsibility for one another?
- e. Do members take responsibility for the group through collective decision making or is responsibility avoided and decisions made by the worker or a few members?

Conflict

Differences amongst the members are a normal and natural part of the group process and essential for group development and change. The ways in which members recognize and manage conflict is crucial to group functioning and survival.

- a. Does the group avoid dealing with conflict or are difference recognized and accepted as beneficial to the group?
- b. Does the group allow for a full and open discussion of differences or is there a tendency toward premature resolution of the conflict?
- c. Are the ideas and opinions of all group members solicited in the resolution of conflict?

- d. Is there sufficient closure to insure that the conflict is satisfactorily resolved by the members?

Group Cohesion

- a. Cohesion refers to the attraction the members have for one another, the worker and the group as an entity. The more cohesive the group the greater is its influence on the members. The following attributes are signs of group cohesion.
- b. Regularity of attendance and punctuality predominate, especially in groups in which memberships voluntary
- c. Members feel that they belong, as evidenced by knowing who are members and differentiating themselves from nonmembers.
- d. Members increase their expressions of Awe@ feelings, symbolizing identification of members with each other and with the group entity.
- e. Relationships among members become accepting, interdependent, and intimate.
- f. Members become highly invested in their participation in the content of the group experience.
- g. Members express verbally their satisfaction with being a member of the group and with the way it operates.
- h. The social climate is characterized by spontaneity, informality, and appropriate self- disclosure.