

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

Course Number: SW 333
Unique Number: 63495
Semester: Fall 2009
Meeting Time: M/W 2:30-4:00

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Office Hours: Tues 12-2 and by Appt

SW 333: SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH GROUPS

I. Course Description

This course in the practice sequence focuses on developing group leaders who possess an understanding of group dynamics and effective leadership skills. The course deals with both task and treatment groups from an interactional perspective and emphasizes issues that have application to a wide range of social work clients and situations. The historical and theoretical foundations of social group work are examined including the social systems which influence individual and group behavior. The emphasis of the course is placed on the development of social work skills in conducting ethical and culturally competent group work practice. Throughout the course, special attention is given to factors affecting diverse population groups, including (but not limited to) groups distinguished by race/ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin.

Prerequisites for this course: Admission to the social work major and PSY304, SW310, SW312, SW313, SW325, SW327, and previous or concurrent enrollment in SW322 (formerly 330K).

II. Course Objectives

1. Demonstrate knowledge of historical and theoretical foundations of social group work.
2. Demonstrate knowledge in the area of group processes, dynamics, and developmental stages.
3. Develop knowledge about the basic concepts of task-oriented group work, including recruiting and selecting members, leadership, group decision-making and problem-solving, and evaluation of task groups.
4. Demonstrate knowledge and beginning level skill in treatment groups practice, including recruiting and screening members, effective leadership and group facilitation as well as planning, assessment, intervention, and evaluation
5. Assess the appropriateness of the differential use of group modalities for diverse client populations, including (but not limited to) groups distinguished by race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, and age.
6. Identify individual characteristics of group members/ leaders that may facilitate or impede the group process.
7. Identify and assess individual characteristics, the developmental levels, and the social systems of individual group members and the ways in which those individual characteristics and social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being.
8. Demonstrate skill in self-assessment and knowledge about the complex nature of culture and personal identity, including between and within-group differences as these relate to the service delivery and culturally competent social work practice with groups.
9. Demonstrate an understanding of the use of research both as a means for acquiring knowledge and for evaluating practice with groups, with emphasis on empirically supported studies that inform best practices with diverse clients
10. Demonstrate an understanding of the agency and social policy issues that influence group dynamics
11. Demonstrate an awareness and use of social group work values and develop skills in analyzing ethical dilemmas
12. Critically examine the role of social work practice with groups in promoting social and economic justice.

III. Teaching Methods

This course is designed to include a variety of experiences intended to help students master knowledge and skills in group work practice. The course will include lectures, readings, discussion, speakers, videos, on-line interactive case examples, a community service learning component, and experiential exercises. The instructor will model group work principles and strategies. Part of the class will be organized as a skill-building laboratory, utilizing the small group context and role plays for development of skill in leading groups. In addition, students will have the opportunity to work directly with group facilitators in the community on a variety of projects related to task and treatment group work.

IV. Required Text

Zastrow, C. H. (2009). *Social Work with groups: A comprehensive workbook*. (7th edition). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

V. Course Requirements

A. Examinations: There will be three examinations based on the readings, text, lectures, and class discussions. Exams will be both objective (multiple choice, matching, and true/false questions) and essay-based with case studies that require the student to integrate course material, demonstrate critical thinking, and apply the knowledge from classroom and community learning to complex case examples of social work practice with groups.

B. Critical Thinking & Application Assignments. For each class session, students will be given a small group or individual assignment to complete. These assignments provide opportunities for critical thinking and skill-building activities based on readings and lecture material.

C. Group Role Play Simulation Project: The class will be organized into role play treatment-growth groups of approximately 5-6 students per group. The focus of the role play growth group will be diversity. The purpose of each group will be to develop members' potential, awareness, and insight related to working with diverse cultures (diversity based on ethnicity/race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, etc.). Through this role play simulation project, students will develop awareness, knowledge and skill in self-assessment and assessment of how issues related to diversity, social and economic justice impact individuals within the context of social work practice with groups. Members will take turns facilitating the group. Each group will decide how best to address each area of diversity and how best to organize the group discussions to facilitate growth in members' insight and awareness. Although the instructor will provide some guidance for group activities, exercises, and discussion topics, it is the group's responsibility to work together toward growth and development related to the topic of diversity. Creativity and initiative are highly encouraged. Each group should reflect adherence to social work values and ethics. Both attendance and group participation will determine your grade for this assignment. At the end of the course, each group will make informal presentations to the class about their group's growth. A group journal is required.

D. Community Group Experience Project and Paper: Each student chooses one of three community group experience projects: (1) co-facilitating a group with an established group facilitator in the community; (2) co-facilitating a community group with a classroom peer with community-based supervision; (3) designing a comprehensive group plan for a selected agency. Through partnering with community-based group facilitators, students will develop awareness, knowledge, and beginning level skill in social work practice with groups. In addition, each student will turn in an 8 page paper in APA format.

Student Performance Evaluation

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent of Grade</u>
Examinations	50%
Critical Thinking Assignments	5%
Group Role Play Simulation Project/Journal	15%
Community Group Experience Project & Paper	30%

DETAILED GUIDES FOR ROLE-PLAY JOURNAL AND COMMUNITY PROJECT PAPER ASSIGNMENTS are on BLACKBOARD under ASSIGNMENTS. **IMPORTANT—see Guideline for Grading Criteria***

Grading Scale: GRADING SCALE

100 - 94 = A 93 - 90 = A- 89 - 87 = B+ 86 - 84 = B 83 - 80 = B-
79 - 77 = C+ 76 - 74 = C 73 - 70 = C- 69 - 67 = D+ 66 - 64 = D 63 - 60 = D- 59 and below = F

VI. Class Policies

- Attendance:** Attendance and prompt arrival to class is mandatory and students must be present for examinations on the dates scheduled. **Beyond two absences, each absence will result in 5 points being subtracted from the final grade points.** An individual exception will be made only in the event of properly documented extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control.
- Late Assignments/Incompletes:** Assignments are due on the date assigned. Three points per day (including weekends) will be deducted for late assignments. Incompletes for the course will only be given in the case of extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control.

3. **APA format:** The School of Social Work uniformly requires the APA editorial style as the standard format for all written assignments. Details of the APA style are included in [the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 4th Edition](#).
5. **Participation:** Student's level of active participation will be assessed in three ways: in class, during role play groups, and through group project work. The assessments will be done by both instructor and peers.
6. **Small group work:** Groups are expected to resolve challenges within their group context. The instructor will serve as consultant if groups are unable to resolve their differences. Groups are not penalized in their grade for consultation.
7. **Confidentiality:** Group work can raise emotional issues and usually involves moderate to high self-disclosure. The instructor and classmates have the ethical responsibility to see that the class environment is maintained as a respectful and confidential setting. In addition, a student's class performance, grade, and any other personal information the student discusses with the instructor will be kept confidential.
8. **Civility:** Students are expected to demonstrate civility in classroom. Incivility can take on many forms in the college classroom and can include but is not limited to the following: using a computer in class to conduct work unrelated to the course; arriving late/leaving early from class; signing attendance sheet and then leaving the classroom; talking on cell phone or texting during lecture. You will be asked to leave the classroom if not abiding by civility rules.

OTHER POLICIES

The University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Professional Conduct in Class

The professor expects students to act like professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

Documented Disability Statement

Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive.

Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Safety

As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

Use of Blackboard in Class

In this class the professor uses Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://courses.utexas.edu>—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to give students online quizzes and surveys. Students can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk by calling 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Feedback Statement

During this course the professor will ask students to provide feedback on their learning in informal as well as formal ways, including through anonymous surveys about how the professor's teaching strategies are helping or hindering student learning. It is very important for the professor to know the students' reactions to what is taking place in class, so students are encouraged to respond to these surveys, ensuring that together the professor and students can create an environment effective for teaching and learning.