

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT
AUSTIN**

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH GROUPS

SW 333

DINA M. KASSLER, PH.D.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
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Social Work Practice with Groups

Course Number:	SW 333	Instructor:	Dina M. Kassler, Ph.D.
Unique Number:	63490	E-mail:	DinaKassler@yahoo.com
Semester:	Fall 2009	Contact #:	512-809-3407
Meeting Time:	M/W, 2:30 – 4:00 pm	Office Location:	SSW 3.104A
Meeting Place:	SSW 2.118	Office Hours:	Mondays 4:00 – 5:00 pm

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course in the practice sequence focuses on developing group leaders who possess both an understanding of group dynamics and effective leadership skills. The foundation of the course is social work values and the ethical decision making process, as illuminated by the NASW Code of Ethics. The content encompasses both task and treatment groups utilizing an ecosystems developmental framework. The course emphasizes understanding, affirming, and respecting groups with diverse backgrounds, including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin. Social work group facilitation is taught utilizing empirically-based theories and interventions to achieve client goals. Students will know how to evaluate the effectiveness of group interventions. Prerequisites for this course are SW 325 and SW 327.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate an understanding of social group work and practice related to the strengths, capacities and resources of individuals within groups.
2. Develop leadership skills with groups in order to help alleviate critical social problems and enhance group well-being.
3. Develop skills in identifying group members' issues, problems, needs, resources, and assets within a framework of group processes, dynamics, and developmental stages.
4. Understand and apply basic concepts of task-oriented group work, including recruiting and selecting members, leadership, group decision-making and problem solving, running an effective meeting, and evaluation of task groups.
5. Understand and apply basic concepts of treatment groups, including group formation, facilitation, and termination (assessment, intervention, and evaluation).
6. Develop skills in identifying, analyzing and implementing empirically-based group interventions and evaluating group effectiveness.
7. Develop tools and techniques for understanding, affirming, and respecting group members from diverse backgrounds, distinguished by characteristics including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin.
8. Apply social work values and the ethical decision making process, as illuminated by the NASW Code of Ethics, to social work with groups.
9. Demonstrate an understanding of the pursuit of social and economic justice including group/community strategies to combat discrimination, oppression, and economic deprivation for individuals and families.

III. TEACHING METHODS

This course is designed to include a variety of experiences intended to achieve the student educational outcome of mastering knowledge and skill in this area. Included will be lectures, readings, discussions, videos, and experientials. The professor will model group work principles and strategies. The class will be organized as an experiential skill laboratory, utilizing the small group context and role play for development of skill in leading treatment groups.

IV. REQUIRED TEXT

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

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Students are expected to attend class sessions promptly and regularly, and participate in an interactive framework between collegiate students and professor.
2. Please turn off cell phone ringers and refrain from text messaging and other non-class activities during the class period.
3. Students are expected to **complete the readings prior to class**, and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments.
4. Failure to regularly attend class and demonstrate through discussions that one has comprehended the readings will be considered in assigning the final grade. Students will be allowed 2 absences. Informing the professor of upcoming absences is expected, but does not excuse such, i.e., all absences will count towards the two that are allowed across the semester.
5. In cases where a student missed more than the allowed two absences, the professor reserves the right to lower that student's final grade. In extenuating circumstances of absence, students are to notify the professor. Students are responsible for any material missed due to absences.
6. Except in the case of extreme emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, **late assignments will not be accepted without penalty**. Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the agreed upon due date **at the beginning of class**. Assignments turned in after class starts will be considered late. If the due date is a problem, then the student should see the professor and negotiate another due date well in advance.
7. Regardless of the reason, even if excused, students that miss taking an exam on the scheduled date as outlined below in the course schedule will take a make-up exam that may be essay in nature. The make-up exam will be taken by the student as soon as possible following the administration of the regularly scheduled exam.
8. Students are expected to both learn and demonstrate knowledge of group work intervention theories and skills. This requires a search of the literature in a defined area (as part of the researched group role play) in order to develop specialized knowledge concerning the use of group work as treatment of a specific problem area and/or for a specific population. In addition, students will demonstrate their level of applied knowledge of group work interventions and skills on exams.
9. If students are concerned about their class performance, the professor is more than willing to work with students to help them improve their course grades *prior to the end of the semester*. **FINAL GRADES ASSIGNED IN THE COURSE ARE NOT NEGOTIABLE.**

10. Small groups are expected to resolve challenges within their group context. The professor is willing to serve as a consultant if group members are unable to resolve their differences.
11. Group work can raise emotional issues. The professor and students have the ethical responsibility to their colleagues to see that the class environment is maintained as a respectful and confidential setting.

VI. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Class Attendance and Contribution

Due to the format and content of this course, both attendance and contribution are imperative. The other students in your small group are dependent on you for a quality learning experience. If too many students are absent in a small group, the group suffers. Thus, students are expected to be in class, or in extenuating circumstances, to notify the professor and at least one other group member that they will be absent. Attendance and quality of contribution, as demonstrated by student preparation level, will determine grades. Students will be allowed **two (2) absences**. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each class period (*N.B.* once students are known to the professor, this will not be verbal but will still be noted every class period). In cases where a student misses more than the allotted two absences, the professor reserves the right to lower that student's final grade by **3% points for each class missed** after two.

2. Exams, 75% (3 @ 25%)

There will be three (3) exams. Each exam will be worth 25% of the total course grade (for a cumulative worth of 75% of final grade). The exams will be based on readings, discussions, presentations, videos, experiential exercises, and lecture material. The exams will be objective in nature, and consist of multiple choice questions. Exams will cover the material indicated at the end of this syllabus – they will not be cumulative and no comprehensive final exam will be scheduled. Make up exams will not be given unless there are unusual extenuating circumstances. The professor reserves the right of final approval of what an unusual extenuating circumstance might comprise. In the event that a make-up is deemed appropriate, it may be essay in nature.

3. Group Observation Assignment, 10%

Students will locate a service agency with treatment group services. If an agency is chosen, permission must be given by an agency administrator for group observation. Because some students have difficulty finding a group to observe, it is recommended that you **start looking for opportunities as soon as possible**. Psycho-educational groups are more likely to be open to observers. If a group cannot be located, you can consider attending THREE different 12-step program meetings (e.g., AA, NA, GA) as an option and writing a compare/contrast paper about self-help groups. In any case, **confidentiality must be insured**. Observe the group, taking notes immediately after the group experience. Once you return home and reflect on your experience, create a group profile and reaction paper including the information that follows. This summary is due at the start of class on **Wednesday, October 14th** and will be worth 10% of the total course grade. Late assignments will be assessed penalties at the rate of **5 points for each calendar day late** (not per scheduled class day). Late papers will be accepted as e-mail submissions with penalties assessed based on arrival time. The paper should be 5 - 10 pages, typed, double spaced. It is permissible to write from a "first person" perspective. No references are required.

Your **Group Observation Summary** should include:

- The type and purpose of the group and its stage of group development
- Group composition, structure, and dynamics/interactions between members
- The leadership techniques and style of facilitator(s)
- An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the group
- What you would do the same/different if you were facilitating this group
- Personal reactions/observations re: what the experience was like for you as an observer and how this may have differed from what you expected

4. **Researched Group Role Play, 15%**

Students will be assigned to one of three groups which will role play one treatment session in front of the class utilizing a specific theoretical framework(s). Group members will alternate in roles, with each student taking on the role of group leader for at least 5 minutes (co-leadership is acceptable, with 10 minutes expected for the pair). Each group will reflect adherence to social work values and ethics, and application to a specific population (e.g., child, adolescent, adult, elderly, shared treatment issue). The session should demonstrate techniques appropriate to the “middle” group developmental stage. It is expected that the role play should last at least 45 – 60 minutes, leaving time at the end of class to process what the group members and class observers experienced. This assignment, which includes the role-play itself, a group outline, a group summary, and a post-group evaluation, will be worth 15% of the final course grade. (*N.B.* Only one outline and group summary is expected per group.) **All outlines will be due Monday, November 2nd** and should be a brief version of what the final “Group Summary” will become. **Role plays will take place on Monday, November 16th, Wednesday, November 18th, and Monday, November 23rd**. Each group member will be evaluated on an individual basis as well as on his/her contribution to the group as a whole. **Please note that any student who fails to be present for the actual group presentation will receive no higher than 20% of the possible points and may receive no points at all depending on contributions made up to that point.** Evaluation components will include:

- Evidence of preparation and creativity
- Theoretical coherence demonstrated
- Group developmental stage (“middle”) represented appropriately
- Intervention modeling associated with “middle” stage of group development demonstrated
- Social work perspective evident in context of role play
- Specific contribution of each individual student as demonstrated during the role play itself, as well as a combined self-evaluation and evaluation by your fellow group members (evaluation forms to be distributed at the time of role plays)

Additionally, on the day of the role play, each group will distribute to all members of the class a copy of the group’s **Role Play Summary** with relevant research that should include, but is not limited to:

- Type of group (purpose, location, # of sessions, open-ended *v.* closed-ended, etc.)
- Theoretical framework(s) being implemented
- Member characteristics (general description)
- Description for each group member’s character (student’s real name with corresponding name adopted for role play; age; ethnicity; individual goal for group; relevant life and environmental circumstances; role within the group, such as monopolizer, scapegoat, etc.)
- A list of references used to prepare the role play. Citations must be recent and accurate. Research MUST include journal articles, not just web-based resources.

5. OPTIONAL Assignment for Extra Credit (Up to 5 points on final grade)

Attend, and then write a brief reflection paper on, the following Fairbanks endowment lecture: *Psychoanalytic Theory in a New Key: Implications for Contemporary Social Work Practice*. This talk by Carol Tosone, Ph.D. is scheduled for Friday, September 18, 2009, from 1:00 – 4:00 pm at Utopia. The summary paper should be reflective in nature, synthesizing the material Dr. Tosone discussed with each student's unique perspective on the topics covered and is expected to be 2 – 4 pages in length. This assignment will be graded based on the student's clarity of thought regarding the topic as well as overall writing (i.e., spelling, grammar, and punctuation) and is due at the start of class on **Wednesday, September 30th**. NO LATE SUBMISSIONS OF THIS ASSIGNMENT WILL BE ACCEPTED.

VII. COURSE GRADING CRITERIA

<u>Course Requirement</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>	<u>Grading Scale</u>
Exams (3 @ 25% each)	75%	A = 94.0 – 100%
Group Observation Assignment	10%	A- = 90.0 – 93.9%
Researched Group Role Play	15%	B+ = 87.0 – 89.9%
		B = 84.0 – 86.9%
TOTAL	100%	B- = 80.0 – 83.9%
		C+ = 77.0 – 79.9%
		C = 74.0 – 76.9%
		C- = 70.0 – 73.9%
		D+ = 67.0 – 69.9%
		D = 64.0 – 66.9%
		D- = 60.0 – 63.9%
		F = 59.9% and below

N.B. Grading of all written assignments will take into account the **quality** of the writing as well as the **content**. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association – Fifth Edition* format should be used. Assignments should be carefully proofread and errors corrected (e.g., punctuation, typos, spelling) or points will be lost.

VIII. ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

1. 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.

2. 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 sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

3. 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/>).

4. 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 exams. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

5. 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.

6. Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

E-mail is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their e-mail 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>.

7. 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.

8. 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>.

9. 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 are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

10. 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, and to post grades. Blackboard is used to provide access to PowerPoint presentations of lecture materials and pre-exam review materials. 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. Please plan accordingly.

IX. COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is intended only as a guide. Students should complete the readings as they are outlined, in order to space them evenly throughout the semester. This is especially important since the exams will cover the required readings for that period of time. The student is responsible for all readings whether or not the material is covered in lectures.

WEEK	DAY/DATE	DESCRIPTION/TOPIC	READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS
1	Wed, 8/26	Introduction & Overview of Course	Syllabus
2	Mon, 8/31	Introduction to Group Work	Chapter 1
	Wed, 9/2	Social Group Work Standards & Ethics	Appendices A1, A2, A3 In-Class Ethical Cases
3	Mon, 9/7	<i>NO CLASS – Labor Day Holiday</i>	
	Wed, 9/9	Historical and Theoretical Overview	Chapter 2
4	Mon, 9/14	Group Dynamics and Stages of Development	Chapter 3
	Wed, 9/16	Group Leadership	Chapter 4
		Leadership and Diversity	Chapter 5
5	Mon, 9/21	<i>Groups in Action – Challenges Facing Group Leaders</i>	In-Class Video & Discussion
	Wed, 9/23	“Jeopardy” for Exam #1	
6	Mon, 9/28	Exam #1	Covers Chapters 1-5, Appendices A1-A3, and Group Leader Video
	Wed, 9/30	Review Exam #1	
		OPTIONAL Extra Credit Assignment Due	<i>Extra Credit Due Today</i>
7	Mon, 10/5	Planning and Composing Groups (cont'd)	Chapter 6 (cont'd)
	Wed, 10/7	Beginning Groups	Chapter 7
8	Mon, 10/12	Assessment	Chapter 8
	Wed, 10/14	Group Observation Assignment Due	<i>Group Observation Summary Due Today</i>
		Foundation Methods for Treatment Groups	Chapter 9

9	Mon, 10/19	Foundation Methods for Tx Groups (cont'd)	Chapter 9 (cont'd)
	Wed, 10/21	"Jeopardy" for Exam #2	
10	Mon, 10/26	Exam #2	Covers Chapters 6-9
	Wed, 10/28	Review Exam #2	
		Meet in small groups for Group Role Plays	In-Class time for groups
11	Mon, 11/2	Group Role Play Outlines Due	Researched group role play outlines due today
		Specialized Methods for Treatment Groups	Chapter 10
	Wed, 11/4	Termination of Groups	Chapter 13
12	Mon, 11/9	<i>Groups in Action – Evolution of a Group</i>	In-Class Video & Discussion
	Wed, 11/11	<i>Groups in Action – Evolution of a Grp (cont'd)</i>	In-Class Video & Discussion
		Evaluation of the Group	Chapter 14
13	Mon, 11/16	Researched Group Role Play – Group #1	Group #1's role play summary due today
	Wed, 11/18	Researched Group Role Play – Group #2	Group #2's role play summary due today
Group #1's evaluation forms due today			
14	Mon, 11/23	Researched Group Role Play – Group #3	Group #3's role play summary due today
			Group #2's evaluation forms due today
	Wed, 11/25	NO CLASS – Library/Research Day	
15	Mon, 11/30	"Jeopardy" for Exam #3 Closure to Our "Group as a Group"	Group #3's evaluation forms due today
	Wed, 12/2	Exam #3	Chapters 10, 13, 14, Group Evolution Video, RGRPs