SW 454/624: Social Work with Small Groups

Fall 2012

Course Instructor

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nick Yackovich, PH.D., LCSW</th>
<th>Office Hours: By appointment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>SW Building 309</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 10:00-12:00noon</td>
<td>Office Phone: 263-3667</td>
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<td>Social Work Building Room 114</td>
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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

SW 624 - I or II or SS; 2-3 cr (A). Exploration of the small group as the interventive unit; major models and techniques; principles guiding the selection of the small group approach to intervention based on research knowledge of problems, processes, and outcomes. P: Sr or Grad st, soc work major & Soc Work 440.

SW 454 - I or II or SS; 3 cr (S-I). Exploration and application of theory to the formation and development of small groups deliberately used by social workers to effect specified change in interpersonal relationships. P: Soc work/welfare major.

II. COURSE OVERVIEW: Social Work 454/624 is a practice course intended to enhance the student’s ability to understand, develop, and implement social work interventions using a small group format. This will be done through readings, lectures, example presentations, and practice using social work theory in the direct practice of change with social work clients while focusing on culturally competent skills development for working with small groups.

The course content is what you need to know to master the course objectives. The focus of this course is the mastery of general knowledge and interventions in the field of social work as they relate to small group interventions as educational, counseling, therapy, and task-focused interventions. These interventions will incorporate individual, family, agency, and community needs assessment to establish group utility and focus. It will involve acquiring the necessary sanctions to implement the groups in a variety of settings. The course will explore to concept of recruiting members and assessing group-readiness or these recruits. The course will also examine the various theories associated with group change, group process, and evaluating group effectiveness. Intertwined within each of the areas of focus will be the consideration and application of culturally-relevant issues and a strength-based approach to implementing the small group interventions.
III. COURSE OBJECTIVES:
By the end of this semester, students should have:

1. Developed an understanding of the advanced generalist strengths-perspective as it relates to group work theories, knowledge, and skills.
2. Understanding the implications of cultural diversity (i.e., age, race, gender, ethnicity, income, sexual orientation, disability, setting) on the functioning and use of groups.
3. Practiced the skill of assessing a group activity for a range of implementation criteria.
4. Practiced at an entry-level, the conducting of micro-level small group interventions.
5. Utilized their understanding of the course material and their own creativity to develop a small group’s intervention strategy to address a community need.

IV. COURSE COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS:
Successful completion of this course implies that students will have progressed toward achieving advanced social work competencies by demonstrating the following behaviors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies Addressed in Course</th>
<th>Practice Behaviors Addressed in Course</th>
<th>Assignment(S) Measuring Behavior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly</td>
<td>▪ Applying knowledge of social services, policies, and programs relevant to work with a variety of social work clients using small group format. In so doing will utilize the generalist social work perspective.</td>
<td>Assignment One, Two, and Three</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice</td>
<td>▪ Evaluate ethical dilemmas related to problems and issues encountered while using small groups in social work practice.</td>
<td>Assignments One and Three</td>
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| 2.1.3 Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments | ▪ Identify and synthesize multiple sources of knowledge on the use of small groups from a variety of theoretical models. Examine practice issues related to the assessment and treatment of participants served with the small group interventions. 
 ▪ Identify and evaluate models of intervention that are appropriate for the use of small groups interventions. | Assignments One, Two, and Three |
| 2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice | ▪ Demonstrate an understanding of how culture and values affect diverse conceptualizations and construction applicable to small group interventions. | Assignment One and Three |
| 2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research | ▪ Critically evaluate and utilize empirical research relevant to developing, conducting, and evaluating small group interventions for social work. | Assignments One and Two |
| 2.1.7 Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment | ▪ Evaluate and apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment to choose populations and circumstances appropriate for small group interventions. | Assignments One and Two |
2.1.10a Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

- Employ diverse strategies to engage with individuals, families, organizations, and communities using small group formats and strategies.

| Assignment One and Two |

2.1.10b Assess individuals and families

- Assess individuals and families to determine a range of potentially effective and appropriate small group interventions.

| Assignment One |

2.1.10c Intervene with individuals and families

- Demonstrate ability to intervene at different levels utilizing small group conceptualization and implementation skills.

| Assignment One |

V. EVALUATION AND STUDENT OUTCOMES: METHODS AND GRADING

Methods

SW 454/624 is a skills-based course. Therefore much of lecture time will focus on learning and practicing basic direct practice social work skills. A variety of teaching methods will be utilized including lecture, readings, class discussion, experiential exercises, and video presentations. Students will also engage in direct practice assessing, facilitating, and developing small group interventions. The weekly course topics are presented in the syllabus along with required readings.

Course Expectations: As previously mentioned, this course is a practice-based course. As such, it is interactive and will provide an opportunity for each student to experience directly the role of a Social Work professional. For the majority of the semester, class periods will be a combination of lecture, experiential exercises and discussion. As in real life social work practice, students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner and demonstrate respect for all members of the class. As one might expect of a practice course of this nature, attendance is essential and pre-class preparation as well as in-class participation is necessary.

Learning Environment:

To minimize disruptions to class process, cellular or digital telephones must be turned off or set on vibrate or silence during the class period. Any other electronic devices must be turned off during the class period. If there is a medical or other serious need for these devices, please speak to the instructor. Taping of classes will be allowed only after full disclosure to the class that a tape recorder is operating. Lap tops may be used for note taking and 454/624 course work only. Violation of any of these requests may result in the suspension of use of these devices in class. Abuse may also result in reduction in the class participation grade.

Confidentiality is of utmost importance. In both written assignments and oral discussions and presentations, the rules of confidentiality, as expressed in the NASW Code of Ethics, are to be strictly observed. It is imperative to protect client identity at all times. The same rules apply to dialogue concerning co-workers or professionals and staff at the field placement site and/or agency of employment. Do not share information that would violate the confidentiality of clients or embarrass coworkers.
The instructor and students in this course are expected to strive to maintain a learning environment that encourages participation by everyone in an atmosphere of academic integrity. Students are expected to utilize the four skills of dialogue: Suspend judgment, listen toward understanding, uncover and examine their assumptions, and inquire with genuine curiosity. As a result of this, students will be able to reflect on what has been offered with the goal of creating group cohesiveness in the learning environment. Dynamic, engaged dialogue is critical to your learning experience.

Important Note: Cooperation and collaboration among students is encouraged. Please keep in mind that the purpose of professional school is not to work for grades, but to prepare for practice that will contribute to the collective well-being of our society. Grades are therefore used to encourage active engagement in learning activities. They are not a reflection of your value as a human being!

One of the basic ethical principles of the social work profession is respect for all people regardless of their dimensions of diversity (race, ethnicity, religious/spiritual orientation, culture, social economic status, gender, sexual orientation, personality, age etc). This value applies to clients in any circumstance, regardless of their behavior. Please consult the NASW Code of Ethics regarding clients' rights to respect, dignity, and self determination. Additionally, please consult NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice which expands on and further elucidates NASW Ethical Principles in general and specifically Ethical Standard 1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity. Students are expected to adhere to these principles in all dialogue, presentations, and written work.

Information regarding participation by students with disabilities, accommodations for religious observances, academic conduct, complaint procedure, grade appeals procedures, sexual harassment policy, safety policy and other standing policies/procedures is available in the student handbook. Students requiring accommodations pursuant to the Americans with Disability Act should disclose their needs to the instructor at the beginning of the course.

Important Note: Student complaints or concerns about the instructor should be addressed with the instructor. If concerns persist or are not adequately addressed, students should notify the Social Work School director Kristin S. Slack at ksslack@wisc.edu; 263-3671; School of Social Work, room 321.

Attendance/Participation:
This is a skills-building course. Attendance is essential for developing cultural and personal self-awareness and acquiring practice skills as they are demonstrated in the laboratory and in lectures. Students are required to attend all lecture periods and participate as part of the shared responsibility for class dialogue. Students are expected to be present and on time for all class sessions as well as remain in the classroom until class has been dismissed. In this course volunteers will be recruited to act as group members for role-plays and graded assignments. Each student is expected to share this responsibility. Students are expected to actively participate in class sessions including attentive non-verbal behavior, offering comments relevant to course dialogue including class, video and group processes. In order to actively participate in class, students will need to come to class prepared to dialogue
about assigned reading materials and give examples of practice applications and dialogue about practice and policy implications.

Lecture:
The lecture period will be devoted to lecture, demonstrations, small group exercises, and class dialogue. Students are expected to attend all lecture periods.

Incompletes:
Students are expected to complete all work as assigned. Incompletes are not automatically granted. A grade of "I" may be assigned in cases of illness, accident, or other catastrophic occurrences beyond the student's control. It is the responsibility of the student to bring pertinent information to the instructor and to reach agreement on the means by which the remaining course requirements will be satisfied.

VI. COURSE READING MATERIALS:

Readings will be assigned throughout the course and will be available through Learn@UW. A hardcopy of the readings will be on reserve in the Social Work Library.

VII. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA:

Class participation – 25 pts.
This includes attendance and promptness, level and quality of participation in class discussion, and performing as a volunteer in the group role plays. Class participation is not always graded on number of words spoken, but the quality of the involvement. Students in classes such as this come with a variety of experiences, personal and professional. Please do not slight yourself because your perspective is different or because you feel as if others have more professional experience. This is a class to learn, all of us will be engaging in the learning and teaching process.

Assignment 1: Group Observation Assignment (Due Nov. 1st – 50 pts.)
Students are required to locate a service agency that provides group social work services or support groups. When the student locates an agency they want to use for this assignment, they must request and obtain permission from an agency administrator and a group leader to observe a group. Sometimes students have difficulty finding a group to observe. Therefore, start researching agencies for opportunities as soon as possible to ensure completing this assignment! Many agencies have requirements that student observers be approved as "volunteers" and sometimes approval entails various background checks. Volunteer coordinators at agencies usually know what the agency's requirements are. Agencies that offer psycho-educational groups can be more likely to allow observers. If the student cannot find a group to observe, other options include:

• Attending TWO 12-step program meetings and observing the group interactions in self-help groups.
• Joining a therapy or psycho-educational group and observing the interactions in the group while attending.

In all situations of group observation or participation and observation students must respect and keep confidentiality. Students are to observe the group, taking notes while you observe or immediately afterwards if note-taking behavior seems too disruptive to process. This assignment includes the requirement that once the student returns home and reflects
on their experience, he or she creates a group profile and reaction paper including the following information:

a) **Purpose:** The purpose of the group, including the benefits and goals for group participants – 5 points

b) **Group Composition:** Group composition and structure – 5 points

c) **Facilitator’s Leadership Style:** The facilitator’s leadership techniques and style (students may interview the group facilitator after their group experience to find out more about how the group operates, etc.) – 10 points

d) **Group Dynamics:** Specific dynamics noted re: interactions between members, systems observations, etc. – 10 points

e) **Group Stage:** The stage of group development that the student can analyze from observations. – 10 points

f) **Overall Assessment:** Based on student’s group analysis (c-f above) and material from the class, conclude the paper with an overall assessment of the strengths of the group and areas that might be improved or facilitated differently. – 15 points

This paper should be double spaced, 12-point font. The length of the paper should be no less than 3 pages and no more than 5 pages.

**Assignment 2: In-Class Role Play**

Students will pair up and inform the instructor of their pairings by the third class period (if students need help in pairing up the instructor will assist in this process). Each member of the pair will take turns as a group leader and as a supportive group co-facilitator.

The assignment should be done in the following four steps:

**STEP ONE:** Each student will select a theory or method of group facilitation from class, the required readings, or the recommended readings. Each student will develop a working knowledge of this theory and be prepared to use it in a 15 minute role play as a group leader.

**STEP TWO:** Each student should create a brief scenario outlining the group topic, location, and a general description of who would be attending the group.

**STEP THREE:** The theory being used and the scenario should be shared and reviewed with your partner. (Ideally you will pair up with someone who has similar interests theoretically or population wise.)

**STEP FOUR:** You should select one of the available time slots to conduct your group session in class.

On the day of the presentation you will inform the class about the theory that you have selected and why (about 5-10 minutes). You will then present the information that was developed for STEP TWO above. As a class we will recruit 5-6 volunteers to act as group members. (Note: Part of your class participation grade is based on volunteering at least twice as a group member and conducting yourself in a cooperative manner). We will then role play the group for 10-15 minutes, with one of the pair acting as the Lead facilitator and the other acting as a co-facilitator. Following the role play, group
members will offer feedback as will the class as to what seemed to go well and what might have been better (Note: Feedback is expected to be given constructively and respectfully, in line with the professional conduct of social workers in-training). A schedule for conducting these sessions will be distributed during the second class session. The first sessions will be scheduled for November 15th. (Lead facilitator 50 points/ Co-Facilitator 25 points)

Assignment 3: Group Development Paper (Due Dec 13th – 200 pts.)
Identify and study an issue relevant for social work practice in a Wisconsin community of your choosing. (Can be a community in another state if you plan to re-locate to that community.) Examples of issues might be teenage pregnancy, drugs, unemployment, violence, etc.. Describe the development of a group for that population. In the class session during which we discussed group development you were presented with a checklist of factors to be considered when proposing a group. They were:

- Rationale
- Objectives
- Practical Considerations
- Procedures
- Evaluation

For this assignment you are expected to address these issues along with a few additional points of concern. To assist you I have provided an outline that addresses the five points for the checklist as well as the additional considerations. They are listed below along with the point value assigned to each:

RATIONALE: [20 total points]
A. Introduction: Brief Introduction of topic and need identified in community. – 10 pts.
B. Setting the Stage: Describe your plan for identifying a host agency and getting permission from your host agency to implement this group. – 10 pts.

OBJECTIVES and PROCEDURES: [80 total points]
C. Suggested Model of Intervention: What population will be served by this group and what type of group would best serve this at-risk population, (include general topic and whether the group will be open or closed and give rationale for your choice). – 20 pts.
D. Group Leader: Leadership skills needed – 10 pts.
E. Outline of Group Content: A brief outline of the groups objectives and how you propose to meet these objectives. This should include a specific intervention strategy for each objective. – 50 pts.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS: [50 total points]
F. Recruitment: Membership recruitment – 10 pts.
G. Group Setting: Setting location and Physical environment – 10 pts.
H. When will the group meet and for how long. – 10 pts.
I. Basic norms of the group – expectations of participants for attendance and participation- 20 pts.
EVALUATION: [50 total points]
J. Ethical and cultural considerations: Discuss these topics considering the topic suggested and the population served. – 20 pts.
K. Termination: How will you end the group and what type of follow-up might you suggest. – 10 pts.
L. Outcome Measure: Discuss how you would measure group effectiveness – 20 pts.

Use of the strength-based perspective should be included in this paper. The paper should be no less than eight and no more than ten pages long (not including cover and reference pages). It must be typed using 12 point font and double spaced.

Ground your perspective and argument(s) in your knowledge of the subject based on readings and lecture. Writing style will be important, specific attention should be given to organization, paragraphs and sentence structure, clarity, and the handling of factual and source material. Care should be used to ensure that the ideas of others are cited appropriately using APA style. The writing Lab on campus is a great resource. The main location of the Writing Center is in room 6171 Helen C. White Hall, 600 North Park Street.

Grading

Grades will be earned on the following grade point system

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>outstanding; surpasses expectations in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88-93</td>
<td>surpasses expectations in most areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82-87</td>
<td>surpasses expectations in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>76-81</td>
<td>meets expectations in most areas; above in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-75</td>
<td>meets expectations in most areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-69</td>
<td>below expectations in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;64</td>
<td>fails to meet minimal expectations in all areas, not acceptable work</td>
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VI. COURSE CONTENT:

Sept. 6 - SESSION ONE: Introduction to Course
Personal Introductions; Review of the Syllabus; Theory and Practice related to selecting small groups as an intervention.

Required Readings:

Sept. 13 - SESSION TWO: Group Dynamics
Discussion of the dynamics that take place within small group interaction. Class will discuss various components that must be recognized and potentially facilitated by the group leader.

Required Readings:


Sept. 20 - SESSION THREE: Group Leadership
Review of the skills and characteristics associated with being an effective group facilitator.

Required Readings:


Sept. 27 - SESSION FOUR: Group Development
This section begins the discussion of getting a group off of the ground. Material will be useful for the final assignment, but more importantly will assist students in the process of establishing a group.
Required Readings:


Oct. 4 - SESSION FIVE: Group Stages - Initial Stage

Once a group begins it evolves through a series of growth and changes (hopefully). This class session begins the discussion of the four phases of the group process.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Oct. 11 - SESSION SIX: Group Stages – Transition Stage

Following the Initial Stage, the group takes a next step towards transitioning into the purpose of the group. A critical juncture in the process, this is a piece that can make or break the groups success.

Required Readings:

Oct. 18 - SESSION SEVEN: Group Stages – Working Stage
Once the logistics and dynamics of the group have been addressed, the group begins to engage in the work at hand. This is where the rubber meets the road and the potential benefit of the group intervention can be experienced.

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Oct. 25 - SESSION EIGHT: Group Stages – Final Stage
All good things come to an end. Many times an effective termination of the small group intervention can play a big part in how the participants remember the overall experience.

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Nov. 1 - SESSION NINE: Types of Groups – Purpose and Theory
(Expiration One due)
During this class session we will review the various types of groups using the group’s purpose and theoretical models of small group interventions as our framework.

Required Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


SESSION TEN: Types of Groups – Population and Setting

This session will build on the content of the previous session. The focus here being the population and setting of the group intervention.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Nov. 15 - SESSION ELEVEN: Types of Groups – Organization/Community

(Assignment Two role plays – Groups 3 & 4)

Generalist social workers have clients identified at a variety of intervention levels. This section explores small group work with organizations and communities.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Both program developers and funding sources alike want to know what group interventions are working. This section explores ways to identify if groups are effective, how one determines effectiveness, and what about the groups are effective.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Dec. 6 - SESSION THIRTEEN: Ethical/Professional Issues
(Assignment Two role plays – Groups 8, 9, & 10)

This session will examine the professional and ethical issues relevant for doing small group work.

Required Readings:


Dec. 13 - SESSION FOURTEEN: Course Overview
(Assignment Three due)
(Assignment Two role plays – Groups 11, 12 & 13)

Recommended Readings: