

**HUNTER COLLEGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**City University of New York**

**GROUP WORK ELECTIVE, ADVANCED (SSW-736)**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

The purpose of this advanced elective is to give you an opportunity to broaden your theoretical base and practice skill in social group work. Building on the content of SSW-735, the class uses a seminar format to identify, examine, and develop insight and skill into aspects of group work practice that are of particular interest to the class. Small groups are formed to pursue common interests, the end result of which is a series of case presentations.

The work may focus on critical incidents from practice (such as but not limited to dealing with conflict, working with hard-to-reach/engage clients, dealing with problematic group roles, etc.) or on special aspects of practice in which you wish to gain greater understanding and skill (such as but not limited to use of activities with diverse client types, implications of co-leadership, nature of relationship between clinical practice and social action, innovation such as use of emerging technologies, and even strategies for developing groups in settings that do not normally use the method).

Concurrent group work practice is required unless special permission is otherwise granted by the instructor.

The instructor works first with the class to identify issues of interest for examination and presentation and then with task groups to help develop a structure for working on topics. A significant portion of class time is used for this purpose. Each group then takes responsibility for advancing its knowledge in the selected topic, for designing a case presentation that engages the class in an in-depth analysis of the issues from theoretical/conceptual considerations to practice principles, and for helping the class to arrive at some conclusions or implications for practice. Group members are also asked to discuss their experience as a task group prior to the presentation and to share their reflections with the class at the end of their presentation, noting in particular process that helped to advance their work or that posed special challenges.

Each group is expected to read and refer to at least 10 pieces of literature pertaining to the selected topic and to provide a Selected Recommended Reading List for classmates.

Length of presentation depends on class size and number of task groups formed.

**Course Objectives**

1. Enhance knowledge and understanding of the differential application of theories and practice principles to social group work practice.
2. Increase your capacity to differentially apply practice principles with diverse groups.

3. Develop your awareness of your role in catalyzing desirable group norms and process.
4. Increase your ability to monitor use of self in relation to group process
5. Increase your capacity to identify obstacles to best practice and ability to design intervention strategies for overcoming obstacles.
6. Advance your skill at intervening in/shaping group process and advancing mutual aid.

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### **Course Outcomes**

1. Enhanced understanding of theories and practice principles of social group work practice.
2. Greater skill in the differential application of theories, concepts, and practice principles in working with diverse groups, in meeting diverse needs, and in practice in varied settings.
3. Greater capacity to identify obstacles to practice and to initiate and implement problem-solving intervention strategies.
4. Greater self awareness of the worker's role in shaping group process and enhanced ability to monitor the professional use of self.
5. Enhanced skill at identifying opportunities for and at catalyzing mutual aid.
6. Greater ability to reflect on, analyze, and monitor use of self and impact of personal style in group process.

### **TOPIC SCHEDULE IS DETERMINED ACCORDING TO CLASS SIZE AND NEEDS**

### **Student Responsibility**

#### **Participation**

You are expected to prepare for and participate in class discussion. This includes attending class, being on time, and alerting the instructor immediately in case of unavoidable absence; fulfilling the reading assignments so that you can help to advance classroom process through meaningful contribution; being prepared to present course content or professional experiences, issues, themes, and/or problems that arise in your work to the class for discussion and analysis.

## **Assignments**

### **Midterm Assignment**

The case presentation is conceptualized as the midterm assignment. You will submit a proposal related to topic and process to the instructor for approval (either written or oral as determined by the instructor). Once that is approved you/your group will take responsibility for carrying out the work, for designing related class process, and for initiating and facilitating meaningful dialogue. Further instructions given in class; due date announced in class.

### **Final Assignment**

The final assignment consists of a journal that documents your thoughts, insights, and experiences as they relate to your group case presentation. Reflections and analysis will be two-pronged: your individual and collective work process (i.e., tasks, challenges, decision-making processes, and problem-solving processes) that occurred as you identified, organized, and prepared your presentation and your individual and collective socio-emotional process (i.e., the quality, quantity, and nature of interactions that occurred during the work and their impact on you both individually and as a group member) as you all attempted to find ways to create a body of work that represents collective effort toward a single product.

You will be expected to integrate related literature into your reflections and analyses in order to anchor your discussions in theories and principles of professional role and method in a way that demonstrates your deepening ability over time to understand both your topic and impact of group process on decision making and task production.

### **Blackboard**

Assignments may be made using the course's Blackboard site throughout the semester if deemed applicable by the instructor.

## **READING**

### **Required**

The three articles and Standards for Social Work Practice with Groups as noted below are required reading and will be used to introduce a theoretical base through which exploration and identification of methodological issues toward case presentations will take place:

Breton, Margot (2005). Learning from social group work traditions, Social work with groups, 28(3-4), 107-119.

Cohen, Marcia & Mullender, Audrey Breton, Margot (2005). The personal in the political: Exploring the group work continuum from individual to social change goals, Social work with groups, 28(3-4), 187-204.

Schwartz, William (2005). The group work tradition and social work practice, Social work with groups, 28(3-4), 69-89.

Standards for social work practice with groups, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2005). Ethical standards for social work practice with groups, produced and published by The Association for the Advancement of Social Work With Groups, Inc. (AASWG) (<http://www.aaswg.org/Standards/standards.htm>)

### **Textbooks**

The following textbooks will be utilized for this course, and reading will be either assigned or recommended by the instructor:

Middleman, Ruth & Wood, Gale Goldberg (1990). Skills for direct practice in social work. NY: Columbia University Press.

Northen, Helen & Kurland, Roselle (2001). Social work with groups (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). NY: Columbia University Press.

Shulman, Lawrence (2006). The skills of helping individuals, families, groups, and communities (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Milton, CA: Thomson-Brooks/Cole.

Steinberg, Dominique Moyse (2004). The mutual-aid approach to working with groups: Helping people help one another (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.

### **Selective Reading**

From time to time literature will be assigned from the Social Group Work Master Bibliography or other sources and will be also selected by task groups with the instructor's approval in preparation for case presentations and for purposes of fulfilling the journal assignment.

Students who receive the equivalent of an A or better (Honors) will receive a *Certificate of Accomplishment* in recognition of their excellence at deepening their skill in the ethical and effective use of this professional method.

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