

SOCIAL WORK 361—SOCIAL WORK METHODS: GROUPS AND FAMILIES

Fall 2018

Wednesdays 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM

INSTRUCTOR

Todd Stage, LCSW

CCC/ 616-337-3838

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays for an hour after class ends; and by appointment.

COURSE PRE-REQUISITES

Admission to social work major, or consent of instructor

REQUIRED TEXTS

Toseland, R. & Rivas, R. (2008). *An Introduction to Group Work Practice, 6th Edition*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Collins, D., Jordan, C., & Coleman, H. (2010). *An introduction to family social work, 3rd Edition*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to help students learn the basic issues and key concepts associated with the group process and how to apply these concepts as group facilitators working with a variety of group types. Basic theories of social work practice with groups will be explored, and students will learn how to develop a group and prepare for all phases of group work practice. This course is also designed to help students learn the basic issues and key concepts of social work practice with families and how to apply these concepts in work with families across a variety of practice settings. A systems and strengths-based approach to working with families will be emphasized, and students will learn how to engage, assess, and intervene with families. Throughout this course, emphasis will be placed on social work ethics and values, as well as how elements of diversity impact social work practice.

COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

Graduates of accredited social work programs should demonstrate competency in the nine areas listed below, as defined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). As articulated by CSWE, "Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being" (2015 EPAS). This course addresses many of these areas of competency as indicated under "course objectives" below.

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the completion of the course, the student should:

1. Further identify as a professional social worker and demonstrate professional behavior. (Competency 1)
2. Demonstrate skill in professional writing. (Competency 1)
3. Understand ethical issues associated with social work practice with groups and families. (Competency 1)
4. Recognize the need to tailor social work approaches according to elements of client diversity when working with groups and families. (Competency 2)
5. Demonstrate skill in the use of available resources when working with groups and families. (Competency 8)
6. Understand theoretical perspectives and practice models as they relate to social work practice with groups and families. (Competencies 7-8)
7. Demonstrate skill in developing a support group, including the aspects of planning, beginning, engagement, assessment, intervention, evaluation, and ending. (Competencies 6-9)
8. Demonstrate skill in the phases of social work practice with families, including preparing, beginning, engagement, assessment, intervention, evaluation, and ending. (Competencies 6-9)

CLASS FORMAT

Classes include lecture, discussion, in-class exercises, and experiential learning.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

| | | | |
|----|--|-----|--------|
| 1. | Attendance and Participation (If I don't know who you are by the end of the class, you aren't getting these points) | 100 | points |
| 2. | Finding Support Groups Assignment | 25 | points |
| 3. | Support Group Observation Paper | 75 | points |
| 4. | Group Project | 100 | points |
| 5. | Family Paper | 100 | points |
| 6. | Final Exam | 100 | points |

- ◆ Students are expected to **attend class** and **read all assignments** before attending the class for which they are assigned. It is imperative that students **attend every class session** due to the way the class is structured. If students miss class, they not only impede their own learning, but also the learning of others.
- ◆ Students should be prepared to take part in discussion, experiential, and written assignments in class.
- ◆ Students should expect to spend time outside of class completing assignments and preparing for the group presentation.
- ◆ The exam may include multiple choice, true-false, short answer, and essay questions. Focus is on applying knowledge, skills, and values to social work practice.

GRADING SCALE

| | | Percent |
|----|---|----------------|
| A | = | 94-100 |
| A- | = | 91-93 |
| B+ | = | 88-90 |
| B | = | 84-87 |
| B- | = | 81-83 |
| C+ | = | 78-80 |
| C | = | 74-77 |
| C- | = | 71-73 |
| D+ | = | 68-70 |
| D | = | 60-67 |
| F | = | 59 and below |

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

- ◆ Papers will be graded on accuracy, breadth of content, consideration of social work principles, development of ideas, spelling, and grammar.
- ◆ Assignments should use Standard English and non-sexist language. Papers should include complete sentences and appropriate paragraphs.
- ◆ If utilized, **sources for all quotations, statistics, and major ideas must be cited**. ALL sources must appear in a reference list at the end of the paper using APA style.
- ◆ **All assignments must be typed/ word processed.**
- ◆ All assignments must include YOUR NAME, the COURSE name and number, the INSTRUCTOR'S name, the NAME OF THE ASSIGNMENT, and the DATE it is due.
- ◆ Assignments may be turned in before the due date.

ASSISTANCE WITH ASSIGNMENTS

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss assignments as needed. This can be done in person, by phone, or by e-mail. Office hours may be utilized, or students can arrange another time with the instructor if needed.

LATE PAPERS/MISSED EXAMS/INCOMPLETES

Students are expected to complete course work by the date that it is due. Students are responsible for contacting the instructor to negotiate for any alternate dates. Students must do this **BEFORE THE DUE DATE**. The same process is necessary to request an incomplete. Requesting an extension does not automatically mean that one will be granted.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism—using words or ideas of another person without citation—will result in a failing grade for the course and may lead to other disciplinary action. Any quotation, specific fact, or major idea taken from a book, article, or other source, must be cited with its page number within your paper, as well as being included in your reference list at the end of the paper.

DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS

Students who have disabilities/special needs affecting their participation in the course may notify the instructor if she/he wishes to have special accommodations considered in either instruction or examination. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible to discuss special needs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Since personal information may be revealed during the course of this class, confidentiality is of utmost importance. We will be discussing case examples about real people and will be sharing information about ourselves. Students are expected to hold confidential any personal information shared in class. Writing assignments will be viewed only by the instructor; personal information will be held confidential unless information shared implies a threat of harm to the student, another person, or reveals academic misconduct.

GROUND RULES FOR CLASS PARTICIPATION

- We are working to develop knowledge, skills, and values that are consistent with social work in this class. We all have misinformation, and sometimes prejudices, about groups of people. One of the goals of this class is to learn accurate information that will help us change prejudice and discrimination--our own and that of others. In order to do this, we need to practice changing what we say after we have learned that we have misinformation. We need to practice not blaming people for their positions in life. We need to find accurate information about all people and actively work against myths and stereotypes that exist about people.
- We need to share information about ourselves for this course. No one is expected to be perfect. Everyone is expected to **try**. This involves some risk taking. I want to make this classroom a safe place to practice this kind of risk taking. Students are expected to assist in attaining this goal.
- Respect is vital. We may disagree on a variety of things, but everyone will treat each other with respect.
- Demonstration of ethical behavior is expected in all aspects of academic performance. Professional/ ethical behavior is expected to be displayed during class and in the completion of assignments. Social workers work with vulnerable populations who must be able to depend on the ethical standards of behavior from the professionals from whom they seek assistance.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

For more information on rights and responsibilities associated with being a student at UWSP, please see the UWSP Community Bill of Rights and Responsibilities at <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights/RRBOOKLET8-2005-06.pdf>.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Please review the UW-Stevens Point Emergency Management Plan at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.

READING ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS TOPICS FOR:

Changes in assignments or dates of assignments will be announced as far ahead of time as possible. Please attend class or, if you miss keep an eye on D2L.

Week 1

Introduction to the Course; Introduction to Group Work
Read: Toseland & Rivas Chapter 1

Week 2

Group Dynamics; Group Leadership (Competency 7; Competency 8)
Read: Toseland & Rivas Chapters 3 & 4
Group Project: Developing a Group Contract

Week 3

Contracting for Group Work; Group Diversity (Competency 1; Competency 2; Competency 8)
Read: Toseland & Rivas Chapter 5 & 6
Assignment Due: Finding Support Groups
Group Project: Developing a Group Proposal

Week 4

Planning a Group (Competency 1; Competency 6)

Read: Toseland & Rivas Chapter 7 & 8

Beginning Stage of a Group (Competency 1; Competency 6)

Group Process: Developing Beginning Group Strategies

Group Assessment (Competency 1; Competency 7)

Week 5

Read: Toseland & Rivas Chapters 9 & 10

Group Project: Developing Strategies for Assessment

Group Interventions and Methods (Competency 1; Competency 8)

Week 6

Read: Toseland & Rivas Chapter 13 & 14

Ending & Evaluation (Competency 1; Competency 9)

Group Project: Developing Interventions and Group Activities

Week 7

Group Project: Developing Strategies for Ending and Evaluation

Week 8

Group Project Presentations

Week 9

Introduction to Family Social Work

Read: Collins Chapters 1 & 2

Assignment Due: Support Group Observation Paper

Week 10

Family Systems; Practical Aspects of Family Social Work (Competency 7; Competency 6)

Read: Collins Chapters 3 & 4

Week 11

The Beginning Phase (Competency 6)

Assessing Family Strengths and Resiliencies

Read: Collins Chapters 5 & 6

Week 12

Qualitative Assessment; Quantitative Assessment (Competency 7)

Read: Collins Chapters 7 & 8

Week 13

Family Development and the Life Cycle; Family Interventions (Competency 8)

Read: Collins Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Assignment Due: Family Paper

Week 14

Evaluation & Termination (Competency 9)

Read: Collins Chapter 14

Week 15

Final Exam Due

Finals Week

Final Exam—the final exam is a take home final. It will be provided to you a week ahead of its due date. It is due to the Dropbox of D2L at the scheduled final exam time—

Assignment Detail

Support Group Observation Project (Competency 1; Competency 8)

Part 1: Identifying Area Support Groups

- Using any and all available resources (internet, personal and professional connections, newspaper/other media, calls or visits to specific agencies), identify **at least 6** support groups that you would consider attending for the assignment explained below.
- Suggestion: First identify the client populations and/or issues you are most interested in from a professional and/or personal perspective (i.e. domestic violence, adoption, people with disabilities, GLBTQ issues, divorce, substance abuse, grief and loss, mental illness, caregiving, Alzheimer's Disease, cancer, traumatic brain injury, aging, etc.) Then, identify agencies that might have knowledge of services related to these issues. Then, search for potential support groups online or in the paper and make phone calls or visits to learn more.
- **List 1) the name of each support group, 2) its affiliated/sponsoring agency, 3) its meeting time and place, 4) its contact person/number, and 5) a description of the support group. You may need to make phone calls to locate all of this information.**
- Submit your list to the Dropbox of D2L by the date/time indicated in your syllabus.

Part 2: Support Group Observation

- Choose a **support group** that is of some interest to you. You can choose from the list you developed in the previous assignment or may choose a group you did not know about at the time of the assignment.
- Make sure that it is o.k. to attend the meeting. **Call ahead** to confirm that new members/ visitors are welcome. When you call, present yourself as professionally as possible. Indicate that this is for a class assignment, but that you have an interest in possibly pursuing a career in that issue area and want to learn more about how groups operate. If you have personal experience with the issue, you may want to share that as well (for example if you have a family member with substance abuse issues and you would like to attend an AA group or if you have experienced adoption and want to attend an adoption support group). Indicate that you will be writing a paper about the group process, but will not include any information about specific participants. **Please remember that some support groups are "closed" to visitors** due to the nature of the group (for example, the grief support group and domestic violence groups in Stevens Point typically do not allow visitors).
- **Attend by yourself.** If you encourage a client to attend a support group, the client usually goes alone and doesn't know anyone there. This will give you an idea of what the experience would be like for a client. Also, if several students attend together it can significantly change the group experience for regular members and for you.
- **Inform the group of your purpose for being there if needed.** If you have personal experience with the issue the group is designed for, you can simply attend as a prospective new member. If you have another connection to the group (you are working or interning for its sponsoring agency), you can explain your desire to participate due to that affiliation. If you are only attending because of this class assignment, you should share this, explaining that although it is for a class assignment, you are really interested in learning more about how support groups work and about their particular issue. You should disclose that you will be writing a paper about the group but assure them that you will not be including any of their names or other personal information. You will be writing more about how the group operates, not about individual members.
- **Feel free to participate if appropriate.** Get a sense for this from the group facilitator and use your best judgment. It is not required that you actively participate, but group members may feel more comfortable if you share and/or comment rather than just observe.

Part 3: Support Group Analysis/Reaction Paper

- Write a 5-6 page paper about this experience. Include the following and be sure to relate your experience to course concepts throughout:
 1. Your preparation for the meeting
 2. Reasons for choosing this group
 3. The type of group you attended, the date, the location, and the contact person/ leader
 4. A **description of the group**, including:
 - a. purpose and type of group—relate to group types/purposes discussed in chapter 1 of Toseland and Rivas text
 - b. stage the group is in and how you could tell
 - c. structure of the group (composition, size, frequency, duration, etc.)
 - d. diversity within the group and how it was attended to
 - e. open versus closed group, and how did you know
 - f. examples of group dynamics observed (i.e. communication, cohesion, social control, group culture)
 - g. brief summary of what was actually discussed
 - h. impact of new members on the group (you are a new member)

5. A discussion of **leadership**, including:
 - a. level of formality/style of relating to group members
 - b. interventions/approaches observed
 - c. your assessment of the leader's skill in using the interventions/approaches
6. Discussion of **roles** performed in the group
 - a. filled by the leader
 - b. filled by the members
 - c. filled by you
7. A response to the following questions
 - a. What would this experience be like for a client who had the issue that the group is designed for?
 - b. How could you, as the worker encouraging the client to attend, help prepare the client for the first meeting?
 - c. How could you, as the group leader, assist the client in developing a comfort level in being present?
8. Closing remarks on what this experience was like for you—value to your education

Group Project (Competency 1; Competencies 6-9)

Part 1: Development of a Support Group

- You will be assigned to a task group of 4-5 students. Your group is to imagine that you have been asked by the administrator of a social service agency to develop plans for a new support group to be offered by the agency. Your group will determine what type of support group it would like to develop. It should be a group that your group believes is needed by the community.
- You will meet in class and outside of class to develop plans for your new support group, from preparing phase to ending phase. Your instructor will give you guidance on a weekly basis as to what issues your group needs to address in its planning process.
- It is important that you all work together and participate fully in the process. Your group contract should clearly state what the consequences are for those who do not fulfill their responsibilities as group members. You can be as lenient or as strict as you wish; just remember that the group is responsible for itself. Your instructor is happy to offer guidance if problems arise; be sure to ask for help early on if this is the case.

Part 2: Group Presentation

- Your group will present the plans for your group to the class in a 15-minute presentation (you must adhere to this timeframe). You are to imagine that you are presenting it to the agency administrator and/or other key workers for review and approval. As such, the presentation should be very professional and should provide a clear picture of your proposed group. Present, in an interesting and meaningful way, your ideas for your chosen support group and the rationale behind your ideas. Much of the presentation will include material that you have worked on in class as a group, but you will also have to do some work outside of class. You will need to include factual information regarding the need for your particular group as well as sources for the methods you chose to use. You will need to conduct some research to find these things.
- Incorporate the use of audiovisuals; the use of power point is required.
- Provide each audience member with at least one relevant handout; a group brochure or flier is highly recommended.
- You may want to include a demonstration during your presentation.
- Be sure to incorporate concepts discussed in class and found in the course text. You will need to read all assigned chapters of the text so that you can fully incorporate course material into your presentation.
- See below for grading scheme. All group members will receive the same point allocations for content, integration of ideas, social work values, handouts, and input from class feedback. Points and overall grades may vary according to presentation skills and intra-group evaluations.

Presentation Grading Scheme (100 points total)

1. Content (25)
 - a. Importance/relevance to social work
 - b. Accuracy and thoroughness of knowledge
 - c. Reflects course concepts and material
2. Integration of Ideas (20)
 - a. Presentation flows; ideas are well organized
 - b. Group displays understanding of ideas
 - c. Information presented explains ideas
3. Social Work Values (15)
 - a. Reflects social work values
 - b. Inclusion of material addressing human diversity
4. Presentation Skills (10)
 - a. Ability to explain content

- b. Holds attention of audience
 - c. Presents in an interesting and meaningful way
 - d. Appropriate use of audiovisuals
 - e. Ability to answer appropriate questions
 - f. Participation of all group members adequate
5. Handout(s) (10)
 - a. Useful/ relevant
 - b. Easy to read/ comprehend
 - c. Appropriate citations if applicable
 - d. Spelling/grammar/punctuation
 6. Input from Class Feedback(10)
 7. Intra-group Evaluations (10)

Family Paper (Competency 1; Competency 7)

- To demonstrate your ability to professionally assess families, to apply the concepts covered in this course, and to engage in personal reflection as it relates to social work practice, you will research, analyze, and write about your own family of origin (the family you were raised in). You will write about the items listed below, reflecting on your family from the time of your own birth until the present or until you became independent from your parents (if this has already occurred). *If, at any point, you are uncomfortable with asking certain questions or addressing certain topics with your family members, you may make up the answers.* That is okay. Note in the paper your feelings/thoughts, and skip that portion. Be sure that you are putting in the same amount of work. I am not going to accept being uncomfortable as an excuse for a paper that is too short. (5 page minimum)
- You will be able to gain much of the information needed for this paper through reflection, but may need to interview various family members for further information and insights.
- Your paper should include the following:
 1. How you are defining family—relate to various definitions for family in chapter 2 of Collins text
 2. A genogram of your family depicting at least three generations—see chapter 7 of Collins text
 3. A family timeline—see chapter 7 of Collins text
 4. A family ecomap—see chapter 7 of Collins text
 5. Identifying and descriptive information for each immediate family member, including yourself
 - Name, address, telephone number
 - Birthdate and place of birth
 - Description of physical appearance
 - Educational level reached
 - Work status/ Income
 - Religion/ spiritual identification/ church membership
 - Significant extended family & friends (support system)
 - Significant health issues
 - Significant mental health issues
 6. Family interactions with significant agencies & Institutions (political, educational, criminal justice, social service, recreational, social, religious, medical, mental health) and the impacts of these interactions
 7. Discussion of issues/problems that might have benefitted from referral/intervention but in which support was not received/sought
 8. Assessment of family functioning/dynamics—see chapters 3 and 7 of Collins text
 - Family boundaries and rules (both spoken and unspoken rules)
 - Family rituals
 - Problem solving
 - Affective responsiveness and involvement
 - Communication
 - Role behavior
 - Autonomy
 - Modes of behavioral control
 - Parenting skills
 9. Family Strengths
 10. Summary