

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

Department of Educational Psychology

### **Group Counseling: Theory and Practice (15:297:505)**

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Hours: By arrangement.

#### **Course Summary:**

The course provides an overview of theories of group counseling as well as group dynamics, group leadership, group procedures, and group counseling skills. Students will participate in counseling group and observation group experiences, providing them with insight into group process as both a leader and a participant.

#### **Course objectives:**

1. To introduce theories of group counseling.
2. To introduce the principles of group dynamics, group formation, and group leadership.
3. To introduce the stages of group growth and development and facilitate understanding of the therapeutic characteristics and critical problems in each stage.
4. To present ethical and legal issues in-group counseling (CACREP II.K.6.g).
5. To introduce issues affecting group counseling and dynamics in a diverse society.
6. To increase students' multicultural knowledge, awareness of self and others, and group counseling skills for working with diverse client populations.
7. To provide the student with experience in a small group setting as both participant and leader.
8. Identify the personal characteristics of group leaders that have an impact on group members.
9. Explain why classroom guidance and group counseling are integral components of comprehensive school counseling programs as well as clinical settings.
10. Identify appropriate counseling topics and interventions across the life span; including classroom guidance in a K-12 setting as well as counseling adult and elderly populations.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of appropriate group formation, including conceptualization of purpose of group and participant screening methods.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of group dynamics as well as the stages of group development as evidenced by participation in counseling and observation groups.
3. Compare and contrast different types of interactive groups and group leadership as evidenced by lecture, readings, class presentations, and counseling and observation groups.
4. Demonstrate an ability to identify roles that the group members are playing and describe how group leaders facilitate the progress of the group as evidenced by class discussion, counseling group participation, and group process papers and personal journals.

Demonstrate an ability to develop group goals as evidenced by participation in counseling group and class presentations.

5. Demonstrate an understanding of group development and the techniques necessary to facilitate group growth and development as demonstrated by class presentations, observation group discussions and group process papers and final group project.
6. Demonstrate an understanding of how human diversity affects the group process as evidenced by class discussion and presentations, Observation group discussions and papers, and participation in the counseling group.
7. Demonstrate an awareness of themselves as racial/cultural beings and how they relate and are perceived by others in a group through working in their counseling group and personal journals.
8. Design, participate in, and lead a counseling group as evidenced by counseling group experience, and group proposal/ presentation.

**Class components:**

Class sessions will include three components:

**1. Lecture - Class Discussion of Content & Group Presentations** (approximately 1 hour). A tentative schedule of discussion topics is provided below. You are expected to have completed all readings prior to the class meeting and actively participate through informed discussion. The final 4 lectures will consist of the group presentations.

**2. The *counseling group* (student led and co-facilitated by the instructor).** Every class session will (**10 hours total**) have a group experience. These groups will be led by class members and co-facilitated by the course instructor. First few groups will be led by this instructor so as to demonstrate leadership. Student leadership will rotate weekly among the counseling group participants. **The task of the counseling group is to discuss issues surrounding your professional development.**

3. **The *observation (facilitated by the instructor)*.** This group will follow the *counseling group* and discuss the various aspects of group functioning and process that were observed in the counseling group.

The two groups will take on a “fishbowl” format in which the counseling group will be seated in a circle in the center of the room with the observation group on the perimeter. The observation group will silently observe the work of counseling group, and will discuss their notes during the remaining minutes of class.

***Objectives of the counseling and observation group experiences:***

- To experience/observe the processes and issues pertinent to the establishment of a new growth group.
- To experience/ observe the development of the group as a modality for achieving the goals of the group members.
- Become explicitly aware of the different aspects of group process and group dynamics.
- Provide a format for members to experiment with and understand new perspectives of

**Required Text:** Available at Rutgers Bookstore on Albany St. (If you get it elsewhere, be sure you have the correct edition.)

Corey, M.S.; Corey, G.; Corey, C. (2006). *Groups: Process and Practice (8<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Brooks/Cole, Belmont, CA.

**Recommended Texts:**

\*Greenberg, K. (2003). *Group counseling in K-12 schools: A handbook for school counselors*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. **\*(Recommended for Students in School Counseling)**

\*Yalom, I. & Leszcz, M. (2005). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Madison, WS: Basic Books. **\*(Recommended for Students in Counseling Psychology)**

**Required Readings:**

Akos, P. (2000). Building empathic skills in elementary school children through group work. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 25, 214-223.

American Counseling Association. (2005). *Code of ethics and standards of practice*. Retrieved December, 2008, from <http://www.counseling.org/Resources/CodeOfEthics/TP/Home/CT2.aspx>

Association for Specialists in Group Work. (2007). *ASGW best practice guidelines*. Retrieved December, 2008, from <http://www.asgw.org/>

Association for Specialists in Group Work (2000). *Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers*. Retrieved December, 2008, from <http://www.asgw.org/>.

***Suggested Readings:***

Furr, S.R. (2000). Structuring the group experience: A format for designing psychoeducational groups. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 25, 29-50.

Horne, A., Stoddard, J., & Bell, C. (2007). Group approaches to reducing aggression and bullying in school. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and*

Jones, K.D., & Robinson, E.H., III. (2000). Psychoeducational groups: A model for choosing topics and exercises appropriate to group stage. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 25, 356-366.

Kottler, J. A. (1994). Working with difficult group members. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 19, 3-10.

Paone, T., Packman, J., Maddux, C., & Rothman, T. (2008). A school-based group activity therapy intervention with at-risk high school students as it relates to their moral reasoning. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 17(2), 122-137.

Piper, W., Ogrodniczuk, J., Joyce, A., Weideman, R., & Rosie, J. (2007). Group composition and group therapy for complicated grief. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 75(1), 116-125.

Ripley, V. V., & Goodnough, G. E. (2000). Planning and implementing group counseling in a high school. *Professional School Counseling*, 5, 62-66.

Steen, S., Bauman, S., & Smith, J. (2007). Professional school counselors and the practice of group work. *Professional School Counseling*, 11 (2), 72-80.

Wanlass, J., Moreno, J.K., & Thomson, H.M. (2006). Group therapy for abused and neglected youth: Therapeutic and child advocacy challenges. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 31, 311.

## LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

**Week 1. Introductions, Course requirements, group work discussion, Homework:**

Readings: ACA (2005). *Code of ethics and standards of practice.*; ASGW (2007). *ASGW best practice guidelines*; ASGW (2000). *Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers*. Gladding Chapters 4 & 9

**Week 2. Leadership skills and Group theory**

Readings: Chapters 1 & 2

**Week 3. Group Ethics and Process**

Readings: Chapters 3 & 4

**Week 4. Group Stages: Initial – Transition**

Readings: Chapters 5, 6

**Week 5. Group Stages: Working - Termination**

Readings: Chapters 7, 8

**Week 6. Types of Groups: Children and Adolescents**

Readings: Chapters 9, 10

**Week 7. Types of Groups: Young Adults, Adults**

Readings: Chapters 11

**Week 8. Multicultural Issues: Race, Age, Gender, And Sexual Identity**

Readings: Chapter 1 and Handouts

**Week 9. *\*\*MIDTERM DUE\*\** Introduction to group guidance: Developing/leading a lesson plan for group guidance.**

**Chapter 9 and 10 as a guide and research (class discussion) see reference list.**

**Week 10. Running a College Student Group: Handouts**

**Week 11. Introduction to Special topics counseling (i.e., psychoeducation, depression, grief, addiction, focus, etc.)**

**Week 12. Termination and final stage of groups**

**Week 13. Group Presentations**

**Week 14. Group Presentations**

**Week 15. Group Presentations**

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

**1. Attendance and Group Membership:** There can be no substitute for Attendance in this class. Much of your learning will take place as a result of your Membership and participation in the group. **Before beginning this class, you Should make a commitment to be present, on time, and actively involved at each Session.** Unexcused absence will result in lower your total grade by 5%. Three or more absences will result in an incomplete grade.

**(A)** Come to class having read the text assignment and prepared to discuss the Reading. You will be evaluated on your participation in the discussions of the Information on group counseling **(10% of your total grade).**

**(B)** Come to class prepared to fully engage in the experiential group segment of the Class. Attempt to self-disclose as much as you can, and offer feedback to others in Your group. **Your behavior as a member of the counseling group will not be evaluated for a grade. However, your work in the observation group, including your process reports, will count toward 30% of your total grade.**

**2. Observation group's Process Papers (30% of final grade):** While observing the counseling group, student's will be required to write **3** papers (2-3 pages each, 10 points each) that will address a different issue or principles related to group function (i.e. roles, norms, communication, competition, leadership, group energy, safety, etc.) using specific examples from the in-class counseling group to support your work. **These papers will be submitted at dates discussed in class.**

**3. Counseling group's Personal Journal:** Counseling group participants are required to keep an ongoing journal of their group experiences. Entries should include members' personal reactions, their perceptions of the group's process and group leadership through answering the following questions: (a) "what I am learning about myself"; (b) "what I am learning about others"; and (c) "what I am learning about groups?" **This Journal will serve as the basis for your process papers.**

**4. Midterm Theory Paper (30% of final grade):** Discuss a theory of group therapy that best fits the way you believe groups work to facilitate change in-group members. Explain why your theory is preferred over other theories. You may add personal experiences from group sessions to support your arguments. **The theory paper is due week 9. It must be written in APA style and should be 6-8 pages in length (not including references). It must also include at least 10 references (30%).**

**4. Group Proposal (20% of final grade):** You and 1 other student will co-create a fictional group that you both might run as professional counselors. This presentation will serve as your final grade and should demonstrate the culmination of your learning. Choose the type of group that you would be likely to lead or co-lead in your actual or anticipated work place. Research your idea and include at least 10 references (*Note that all references should be properly cited in the body of the proposal as well as in a*

*reference list according to APA guidelines*). **Proposals are to be no more than 6 typed, double-spaced, 12-font pages (not including reference list or appendices). Guidelines for the various sections of the proposal are provided. Both students will receive the same grade (see group proposal guidelines).**

**5. Group Proposal Presentation (10% of final):** You and your co-facilitator also will be responsible for presenting a structured activity from your proposal to the class. **Both students will receive the same grade for this assignment.**

Plan a 15-20-**minute activity** to include the following:

- (a) Short explanation of the activity and its purpose
- (b) The actual experience of the activity
- (c) Processing by the class

Your group also is responsible for a 1-page summary of the activity. Make enough copies for each member of the class and the instructor. **Presentations will be held during the final four weeks of class. (Note: with respect to time boundaries, running over the allotted 30 minutes will count against your grade).**

**\*\*Course Confidentiality Requirements\*\***

**Due to the experiential nature of this course, you are expected to keep confidential all conversations taking place in your group. Any "malicious" breach of confidentiality will result in your failing the course.**

**You are also asked not to process with other group members outside of the group sessions those issues that need to be worked through within the group. What we are attempting to avoid is the resolution of in-group disputes outside the group, and the forming of coalitions which can disrupt our group process.**

**DESIRED GROUP PARTICIPANT BEHAVIORS:**

The expectation for your class participation will be that you are fully involved and contributing to the group process during the time that your body is present. Some hints as to how this can be done will follow:

1. At the start of the group session, take three deep breaths and focus on being in the room. This means that you should try to either leave your preoccupations at the door, or talk about them in the group if they continue to distract your focus during the group session.
2. Self-disclose as much as you can. This does not mean that you are expected to bring all your concerns to the group. It does mean, however, that you should attempt to say what's on your mind during the group.
3. Give useful feedback to other group members and invite feedback for yourself. It is rare that you have the opportunity to have relationships with others that are not masked by a superficial social ritual and decorum. Giving and receiving honest feedback can be a very liberating experience, so long as it is done with the intent to be helpful.
4. "Metatalk" the group process. Say what you think may be going on when the dynamics of the group become stagnant or confusing. Recap the interactions you have witnessed and ask for explanations from the group members. This is most effective when it is immediate.
5. Behaviors to be avoided include: Bombarding others with questions, Gossiping, Storytelling, Invasion of Privacy, Monopolizing, Diagnosing, Refraining From Contributing, and any other behaviors that demean group members or thwart the process of the group.

Carefully read this page, sign, and return to the instructor:

**INFORMED PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT**

I understand that in order to complete this course I am required to be a member of a group in which I am asked to be honest and authentic. The group emphasis will be on self-disclosure and on honest feed-back to others in the group as to how their behavior affects me.

I also understand that while there will be a strong norm established with personal openness as the group goal, my grade will not depend on how well I fulfill this demand.

I pledge to keep confidential all conversations that take place within the group session, and to not gossip with other group members outside of class.

Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw from this course and take it with another instructor or at another institution, and that doing so will not affect my standing in my program.

Please read the above statements carefully before signing.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Group Proposal Guidelines

Below are guidelines for the various sections of your group proposal. Be sure to *clearly label* each section of the document. Proposals are to be no more than 8 typed, double-spaced, 12-point font pages, not including title page, reference list and appendices. NOTE THAT 80% OF YOUR GRADE ON THIS ASSIGNMENT IS BASED ON THE CONTENT YOU PROVIDE IN EACH CATEGORY BELOW. THE REMAINING 20% OF YOUR GRADE ARE BASED ON THE FORMATTING/ ORGANIZATION OF YOUR PROPOSAL.

### **1. Rationale**

What type of group will it be?

For whom?

What is the basic assumption underlying the group? (That is, why is the group approach the preferred method of treatment?)

Why is the group needed?

### **2. Theoretical framework**

What is the group counseling theory that will be used to facilitate this group?

Include a statement addressing the group counselor's orientation.

### **3. Goal and objectives**

What are the goal and objectives of the group?

What do you want group members to attain from their participation?

Be clear, specific, measurable, and feasible

### **4. Procedures**

When, where, for how long, and for how many sessions will the group meet?

How many members will be in your group?

What topics will be addressed?

Provide a breakdown of the topics and proposed activities for each session.

Be sure the topics and activities directly relate to your objectives

### **5. Ethical considerations**

Be sure you include (in an appendix) an Informed Consent addressing topics such as confidentiality, psychological risks of group membership, and responsibilities of both the group leader and group members.

### **6. Evaluation**

How will you evaluate the effectiveness of the group?

Be sure your evaluation methods directly relate to your goal and objectives.

In your appendix, include a copy of your evaluation instrument.

### **7. Screening questions and ground rules**

How will you determine who will be included in your group?

Develop a list of screening questions and include in the appendix.

Be sure they are age-appropriate and clear.  
In an appendix, provide a list of the ground rules for your group.  
Be sure they are stated in age-appropriate language.

### **8. Organization of proposal**

The formatting and organization of your proposal is very important for two major reasons: (a) professional appearance of your document and (b) ease of reading for the reviewer.

Pay special attention to the following suggestions:

- a) All references in the reference section and the body of your proposal must conform to APA guidelines.
- b) Be sure all citations in the reference section also are cited in the appropriate places in the body of the proposal. Additionally, be sure all citations in the body of the proposal are cited in the reference section.
- c) Develop a clear, measurable goal. Then, develop objectives designed to lead your group to the goal. One objective for each group session is suggested, though more than one objective may be met in a single session and/or more than one session may be devoted to a single objective. Be sure that group session directly and clearly relates to the objective(s).
- d) Present an outline of your topics for each session in the body of the proposal. More details can be provided in an appendix.
- e) Be sure your evaluation items directly and clearly relate to your objectives.
- f) Proofread your proposal for spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- g) Clearly label each section of your proposal.