UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA - RENO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
MSW PROGRAM

Course Title and Number: SW 721
Intervention Approaches with Small Groups

Instructor:

Contact Information:

Credits: 2

Prerequisites: SW 421 or SW 621

Co-requisite: SW 781

Meeting Day / Time: [Location]

Course Description
This is the third in a series of three direct practice courses with a focus on integrating advanced theory and evidence-informed knowledge with practice skills. The focus of this course is on students learning to develop and facilitate therapeutic groups from the perspective of selected theoretical frameworks. This course builds on students’ knowledge of systems theory and of the special properties of groups that can be used as a mechanism for improved coping and change for group members. Students are given opportunities to practice group facilitation skills and experience group dynamics in a controlled setting. Special attention is paid to the influence of culture and diversity on group dynamics. Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to critically examine the theoretical bases of group work models to determine their potential implications in work with vulnerable and at-risk populations.

Linkages with Other Courses
This course builds on knowledge, skills, and values introduced either in the BSW program or in the foundation year of the MSW program. In particular, this class builds on the knowledge of group dynamics and theories of group behavior attained in SW 421/621. Students will also apply the knowledge of human functioning and behavior attained in SW 310/610 and SW 311/611 (Human Behavior in the Social Environment I and II). Students will apply the knowledge of mental health and mental dysfunction that they are learning in SW 710 to better differentiate the concepts of group dynamics and individual mental health. The course also builds on CAS 154 or SW 674 Substance Abuse Intervention and Treatment.
Relevant Competencies and Associated Practice Behaviors

2.1.1 Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
- Provide social work leadership within practice contexts and as a member of the profession.

2.1.2 Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
- Is able to critique ethical issues within complex environments to formulate innovative responses and approaches.

2.1.3 Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
- Question, evaluate, select, and implement appropriate assessment, intervention, and evaluation strategies for use within complex, multidimensional settings.

2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice.
- Manage potential conflicts between diverse identifies within and among individuals, families, groups, and organizations.

2.1.7 Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. Integrate understandings from a variety of theoretical perspectives to formulate complex and multifaceted assessments and interventions.
- Integrate understandings from a variety of theoretical perspectives to formulate complex and multifaceted assessment and interventions.
- Identify and question the underlying theoretical and ontological assumptions about human behavior in guiding practice.

2.1.10 Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with groups.
- Practice independently as capable professionals, within multiple roles and responsibilities able to deal with unique, value-laden, unstable and complex situations.

Course Objectives/ Educational Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

721.1 Provide a strengths based, person-in-environment social work perspective as a member of a multidisciplinary team.

721.2 Students will demonstrate a professional use of self as evidenced by an understanding of the core conditions required for change, an understanding of transference and countertransference, and the ability to seek and use feedback, supervision and consultation.

721.3 Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to explore and resolve dilemmas encountered.

721.4 Incorporate life-long learning into their practice—through a professional development plan delineating strategies for keeping updated on current theory and research about interventions with groups.

721.5 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to groups.

721.6 Integrate understandings from multiple sources of information and research to inform assessments and problem setting.
721.7 Develop skills in building a therapeutic relationship including developing self-awareness, affect management, cultural humility and effective relationship building techniques with groups.

721.8 Students will incorporate information from a comprehensive assessment into specific interventions including strengths as well as weaknesses, risks as well as protective factors, inter-cultural factors, and include an assessment of the individual's readiness for change.

721.9 Students will autonomously navigate diverse, ambiguous, and changing practice context through ongoing assessment of their work with groups.

721.10 Students learn how to apply a range of intervention models in working with groups.

721.11 Students are expected to learn the evidence behind a range of intervention models and to understand the pro and con positions on the empirically supported intervention movement.

721.12 Students will evaluate the impact of interventions on groups.

Instructional Methods

In addition to lectures and readings, this course will implement a variety of experiential/collaborative learning techniques, including in-class discussions, exercises, and small group activities.

Course Policies

- **Class Attendance and Participation:** As much of the learning in this class is dependent upon class member contributions, you will be expected to come prepared and ready to actively participate in every class meeting. Active participation will include: involvement in class activities and discussions, timeliness to class, and collegial conduct.

Absences from class will be excused only due to extreme personal or family emergencies. If you are experiencing such an emergency, please contact the instructor by telephone or e-mail prior to or immediately following the missed class meeting. Each missed class will result in a deduction of two (2) percentage points from your total points. Missing more than three (3) classes may result in a failing grade for the course.

- **Disabilities:** Students who have documented disabilities that may affect their learning or performance in this class should contact the UNR Disability Services Office (Thompson Student Services Building, room 101). The instructor will make those accommodations that are requested in writing by the aforementioned office.

- **Academic Success Services:** Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (784-4433) or [www.unr.edu/mathcenter/](http://www.unr.edu/mathcenter/), Tutoring Center (784-6801 or [www.unr.edu/tutoring/](http://www.unr.edu/tutoring/)), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or [www.unr.edu/writing_center](http://www.unr.edu/writing_center)). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.
• **Academic Dishonesty:** “Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses” constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student’s enrollment without a grade giving an F for the course of for the assignment. For more details, see the UNR General Catalog.

• **Audio or Video Recordings:** Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

**Course Requirements**

**Required Text:**

**Library Reserve Materials:** In addition to the assigned text reading, Students will be expected to complete additional readings as listed below. Articles will be identified in the proposed course schedule.
Assignments:
You are expected to participate in experiential exercises during class. These exercises are designed to enhance your knowledge, skills and self-awareness as related to group work. You will critique your own behaviors and interactions as well as participate in provision of feedback to peers.

- **Experiential Group Work:** Beginning in the first class, you will be assigned to a small group and will work with this group of individuals throughout the semester. You will have the opportunity to be both a group leader as well as a group member.
  - This course combines didactic and experiential methods in the training of group facilitation. I expect you to fully participate in the small group experience, both as a group member and as a facilitator under supervision. These supervised group sessions allow for an integration of learning related group process and the interpersonal styles of student participant-leaders. You will take on the persona of a client that you will develop. It is expected that your interactions in these small groups will be in character, and be based upon personal development that would be meaningful for the client that you create. In this course, you will also be expected to give feedback to others as well as listen to and consider feedback that you receive.

- **Written Assignments:** There are three short papers for this course. Each paper is worth 20% of the overall grade. All papers are to be written in APA format. Topics will include:
  - Diversity and cultural competence in group leadership
  - Reflection on the use of therapeutic techniques
  - Integration of personal framework for group practice

- **Group Curriculum Evaluation:** You will be given a practice scenario for which a group curriculum is required. Your assignment includes the identification of existing evidenced-based curriculums available, the engagement in a critical analysis of the feasibility of using the existing curriculum(s) as developed, and the necessary amendments for use with the scenario provided. This assignment will include:
  - A discussion of pertinent ethical and professional considerations related to the scenario.
  - A literature review, focusing a discussion of the most efficacious model(s) / framework(s) that will inform the content of this group.
  - An assessment of how cultural diversity was addressed within the curriculum.
  - A review of methods of evaluation of the curriculum content.
  - Development of amendments to the curriculum that would make it applicable to the scenario provided.

Grading:
Final grades will be based on the following –

- **Class Participation**
  - Participation in group activities, class exercises, class discussions 20%
    - (10% of this will be based on peer feedback)
- **Writing Assignments (20% each)** 60%
- **Group Curriculum Evaluation Assignment** 20%
Letter grades will be based on the following cumulative percentages –

“A” 1000 – 950
“A-” 949 – 900
“B” 899 – 850
“B-” 849 – 800

“C” 799 – 750
“C-” 749 – 700

Less than 69% is considered failing
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Text Reading</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 24th</td>
<td>Expectations and assignments Introduction to group work Scope of Practice Ethical and professional issues in group counseling / therapy</td>
<td>Chapter Two Articles One and Two</td>
<td>Bring ethics questionnaire</td>
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<td>January 31st</td>
<td>Applying “group stages” in counseling / therapy groups Applying the stages of change model</td>
<td>Chapter Four (pgs. 70-86) Chapter Five Articles Three and Four</td>
<td>Bring heterosexual questionnaire</td>
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<td>February 7th</td>
<td>Diversity issues in group counseling / therapy Basics on curriculum design and evaluation</td>
<td>Article Five Film: The Color of Fear</td>
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<td>February 14th</td>
<td>Psychodynamic Approaches Psychoanalytical and Adlerian Theories</td>
<td>Chapter Six Chapter Seven Article Six</td>
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<td>February 21st</td>
<td>NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>February 28th</td>
<td>Gestalt and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy</td>
<td>Chapter Eleven Chapter Sixteen Article Seven</td>
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<td>March 7th</td>
<td>NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 26th</td>
<td>Gestalt and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Gestalt Experience Paper</td>
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<td>April 4th</td>
<td>Cognitive Behavioral Approaches Cognitive Behavioral, Rational Emotive and Reality Theories</td>
<td>Chapter Thirteen Chapter Fourteen Chapter Fifteen Article Eight</td>
<td>Group Curriculum Project</td>
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<td>April 11th</td>
<td>NO CLASS - IP PRESENTATIONS</td>
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<td>May 2nd</td>
<td>Theory Integration</td>
<td>Chapter Seventeen</td>
<td>Integration Paper</td>
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Reference List for SW 721


