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SW 360.01: Social Work Intervention Methods II- Groups and Communities

Kala Conway

University of Montana - Missoula

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Social Work 360
Social Work Intervention Methods II: Groups and Communities
Syllabus: Fall 2003

Professor: Kala Conway (Adjunct)

Phone: 543-5107 (Home) Please leave a message with times you are available and I will return your call as soon as possible.

E-mail: kala@gardener.com

Office Hours: By appointment

Class Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:10-11:00

Prerequisites: SW 350, 2.5 GPA and approval of application to enroll in upper division SW courses

"(The small group is a way of exchanging) the music of isolated voices (for) the volume and strength of the chorus."

-Jane Addams

Introduction: This course is the third in a series of generalist social work practice courses. It introduces students to work with groups, organizations, and communities and it explores the relationship among individual, group, community and societal change. Group work and community practice have been essential components of social work throughout its history. They were key parts of early social work efforts to both change oppressive social conditions and promote democratic participation. Groups have been used to strengthen individual skills and capacities, enhance organizational functioning, improve the quality of community life, and to advocate for more just social policies, institutions, and practices. Most social work practice occurs in organizational settings, requires collaboration with others, and is shaped by community context. Further, the problems confronting individuals and groups cannot be effectively understood or addressed outside of the larger contexts in which they occur. Personal struggles are intimately tied to social issues of poverty, violence, and discrimination. Group processes of critical reflection, power analysis, and participatory planning, action and evaluation provide an important bridge between personal struggles and public issues. Effective social work practice calls for effective group participation, leadership skills, and engagement in social change efforts. It is through ongoing learning and teaching of skills of group work and community practice that we craft spaces for collaborative action and create opportunities for people to participate in the decision-making that affects their lives.

Course Description: In this course we will explore the dynamic relationships between personal and social change and examine the opportunities for change through group and community practice. Course materials and assignments will focus on principles and processes of group work, leadership, skills and strategies for organizational and community assessment, participation, and change. Class members will put knowledge and skills into practice and experience the potential of both individual and social change through the use of mutual aid and community action groups. Students will have hands-on opportunities to develop skills in group leadership and facilitation. Lessons for practice will be drawn from case studies set in diverse historical, political, and cultural contexts that document group and community efforts to change oppressive social conditions and promote social justice. Students will be learning from teaching one another as they develop and participate in groups that promote individual, organizational,

and community change. **Regular attendance and active participation in both in-class and out-of-class projects are expected.**

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Discuss the relationship of group, organizational, and community work to an empowerment approach to generalist social work practice.
2. Describe the elements of the mutual aid group process.
3. Define leadership and identify the skills that contribute to effective leadership.
4. Appraise personal leadership skills and develop a plan for continued development in this area.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of group process, group decision-making, and the impact of power and authority on individual and group dynamics.
6. Discuss the theory that supports and practice the skills necessary for mutual-aid group work including: group formation, engagement, assessment and planning, group development and intervention, critical reflection, and evaluation and termination.
7. Identify and practice skills needed to initiate and facilitate community action groups.
8. Demonstrate knowledge of six strategies of community of community change: mass mobilization, social action, citizen participation, public advocacy, popular education, and local services development.
9. Describe how historical, cultural, political and economic factors impact the community context, public attitudes, available resources and decision-making processes of community-based groups.
10. Discuss factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation and age and their affect on the development and facilitation of small groups and to the implementation of community change efforts.
11. Describe and practice a collaborative method of needs assessment and data gathering in which those affected by the identified problem have a meaningful voice in changing the situation.
12. Develop guidelines for organizing with diverse populations.
13. Make connections between local and global issues by identifying lessons learned from community change in an international context and considering their potential for local problem solving.
14. Discuss how the values of the social work profession (i.e. respect for human dignity, social justice, self-determination, and equality) influence the development and implementation of intervention strategies with groups and communities.
15. Identify and evaluate methods for assessing the effectiveness of intervention efforts with groups and communities.

Course Texts:

Homan, Mark (1999). *Promoting Community Change: Making It Happen in the Real World* (2nd Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

Course pack of selected readings on groups, organizations and communities.

Assignments:

The assignments in this course are geared to promote students' knowledge of engagement in processes of personal, organizational and community change and development. The assignments include a combination of in-class exercises and outside learning to enhance student's individual learning and practice skills. All assignments are to be typed. All references are to be appropriately cited according to APA guidelines. All assignments are due on the date specified. Points will be deducted from late assignments, 5 points for each class period the assignment is overdue.

1. Group Work Article Critique: Due September 30th (35 points)

From the Course Pack read and critique one article that addresses the use of groups in social work intervention with individuals, families or communities (#6, 7, 8,). Essay should be no more than 3 pages. Discuss the following questions in your critique:

- What type of group is described?
- What processes and outcomes are addressed?
- How is effectiveness assessed? If not stated what suggestions would you have for assessing effectiveness?
- Does the article provide evidence of contributions to individual, interpersonal, organization or community capacity building or empowerment?
- What lessons regarding group work could you draw from this article?

2. Mutual Aid Group Facilitation Report: Due the Thursday following the group meeting you facilitated (30 points)

Beginning the second week of the semester, students will participate as members and facilitators in mutual aid groups. The focus of the groups is personal and professional development. The group experience will provide an opportunity for integrating "knowing, feeling and doing" through discussion and reflection. The groups will meet for 45 minutes, once a week for six weeks during the second hour of class on Thursdays. Each class member will have the opportunity to plan and facilitate one group session. When serving as facilitator, the student prepares a report no longer than 3 pages that covers:

- A plan for the session
- A summary assessment of the session
- A summary of the "Assessing Your Group" feedback sheets from group members
- An assessment of personal strengths and areas for growth as a facilitator.

3. Leadership Essay: Due October 21st (35 Points)

Write an essay that addresses the topic of leadership. Cite course readings and personal reflections to support your responses. The essay no longer than 3 pages will respond to the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of an effective leader?
- What are some ways to develop leadership skills?
- How would you assess your own leadership skills and strengths?
- Suggest a plan to build on these strengths.

4. Challenges and Possibilities for Community Change Essay: Due November 20th (50 points)

Drawing from the course pack reading, write an essay addressing the strategies, challenges and possibilities of community change. Your essay is to include a comparative analysis of *at least two* of the articles that focus on case studies of community change or specific issues of activism (#12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17). Be specific in your discussion of the articles:

- What are some of the common themes and important differences?
- What strategies of community change are in use?
- How do questions of meaning, power, and history play out?
- How is "difference" addressed?
- How does the context shape and constrain the possibilities for social justice-oriented action?
- How is leadership practiced?
- What lessons for community practice can you learn from your analysis?

Draw from Checkoway () and Homan (Text) in developing a structure for your essay.
Maximum length 5 pages.

5. Action Group Portfolio, Case Study and Presentation. Presentations will be scheduled during the last week of the semester and final exam session. Case Study and Portfolio are due December 9th. Portfolio 30 points; Case study and Presentation 70 Points. Each Group member will receive the same grade for this project.

Beginning the 7th week of the semester, students will form small groups for community action. Students will begin by brainstorming to select an area of concern. The groups will then assess needs and possibilities, develop an action plan, and carry out a modest project in response to the identified concern. Given the limited time available, the project needs to be realistic and achievable. One hour of class time each week will be used for action group meetings. However, students should expect to conduct group activities and project implementation outside of class.

Social Action Portfolio

Group members will build a portfolio documenting the group's activities. The Portfolio should include:

- Minutes of group meetings
- Log of group members' activities and contacts
- Action plan, timeline, and member responsibilities
- Summary of outside meetings and interviews (where applicable)
- Overview of the group decision-making process
- Press release announcing the group's class presentation.

Social Action Case Study and Presentation

Each group prepares a summary case study of their project. The case study should an introduction and overview, statement of initial concerns and assessment of needs and possibilities, summary of the action plan and its implementation; discussion of group process (decision-making, leadership etc.); discussion and evaluation of the outcome(s); critical successes, challenges and surprises; and lessons for group and community practice learned.

The paper should be no longer than 8 pages, and it should include relevant citations from course materials. Each group will give a 20-30 minute in-class presentation on their project.

Quizzes:

There will be two short answer quizzes during the course of the semester. Quiz 1: September 16th and Quiz 2: November 4th. They will be one hour in length and worth **25 points each**. They will focus on integration of course readings and discussion and the application of course concepts. **There will be no final exam.**

Grading:

Group Work Article Critique	35
Leadership Essay	35
Group Facilitation Report	30
Community Change Essay	50
Action Group Portfolio	30
Action Group Case Study and Presentation	70
Quizzes: 2 @ 25 points each	<u>50</u>
Total Points	300

Points	Final Grade
276-300	A
251-275	B
226-250	C
195-225	D
< 195	F

Grading Criteria:

- ✓ Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
- ✓ Indications of thoughtfulness and critical reflection
- ✓ Balance between thoroughness and concise expression of ideas
- ✓ Well organized showing clarity of thoughts
- ✓ Goes beyond reporting surface content to interpretation, analysis, and original ideas
- ✓ Integration of class readings and class discussions

Late Assignments: 5 point reduction for each class period the assignment is late.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments: (Subject to Change)

Week One: 9/2 & 9/4: Introduction and Overview

Topics: Defining groups and communities; historical connections; linking individual, group, organizational, and community development. Creating a learning climate.

Reading: #1 "On the Beginning Phase with Groups;" #2 "Starting and leading Therapy Groups;" #3 "Processes of Mutual Aid."

Week Two: 9/9 & 9/11: Group Formation: Belonging, Difference and Relationship

Topics: Principles and process of mutual aid. Engagement and teaching-learning.

Speaker: community group work practitioner.

Reading: #4 "Ten Self-Help Principles"; #5 "Individual and Social Benefits of Mutual Aid and Self-Help Groups." Homan: Chapter 1 & 12.

Mutual Aid Group Meeting # 1

Week Three: 9/16 & 9/18: Creating a Foundation: Thinking for Group and Community Work

Topics: The Just Practice perspective. Teamwork and collaboration as a basis for social justice work; leadership and participation.

Readings: # 6 "There's Self-Help and then there's self help: Women and the Recovery Movement." # 7 "Dreaming Their Way Into Life: A group Experience with Oncology Patients." Homan: Chapters 2 & 3.

Mutual Aid Group Meeting # 2

Week Four: 9/23 & 9/25: Working: Different Patterns, Different Consequences

Topics: Timing and pacing; meaning and (mis)interpretation; communication and conflict; action and accompaniment; decision making. Interplay of the individual and group. The praxis approach.

Readings: #8 "The Power of Group Work with Kids: A practitioner's Reflection on Strength-Based Practice". Homan: Chapters 4 & 7.

Mutual Aid Group Meeting # 3

Week Five: 9/30 & 10/2: Power and Participation

Topics: Possibilities of social enactment; negotiating differences, meanings of resistance, power and participation; addressing anger; leadership revisited.

Readings: Homan: Chapters 8 & 9

Mutual Aid Group Meeting # 4

Week Six: 10/7 & 10/9: Endings and Transitions: From Mutual Aid to Social Action

Topics: Reflection, celebration and evaluation. Brainstorming community concerns.

Reading: # 9 "Universal Organizational Elements." Homan: Chapters 5 & 6.

Mutual Aid Group Meeting # 5

Week Seven: 10/14 & 10/16: Organizations: Understanding Culture, Power and History

Topics: Organizational culture, street-level bureaucrats; surviving and influencing organizational change; the art and skill of functional non-capitulation.

Readings: # 10 "The "Culture" of Non-Profit Organizations" # 11 "The Policies of Thriving and Surviving".

Activity: Panel of Community Agency Leaders

Mutual Aid Group Meeting # 6

Week Eight: 10/21 & 10/23: Reflections as a Starting Point for Action

Topics: Reflections on the mutual aid groups. Assessment and planning for community change.

Readings: # 12 " Walking our Talk in Neighborhoods"; # 13 "Six Strategies for Community Change."

Community Change Action Group Meeting # 1

Week Nine: 10/28 & 10/30: From Assessment to Action: Possibilities, Challenges and Strategies for Community change

Topics: Comparing strategies and considering implications for practice.

Readings: Homan: Chapters 11 & 13; # 14 "Activism and American Indian Issues"; #15 "Young People as Competent Community Builders".

Community Change Action Group Meeting # 2

Week Ten: 11/4 & 11/6: Action and Accompaniment: Possibilities, Challenges and Strategies for Community (continued)

Topics: Learning from practice; differing contexts and common threads. Reflecting on the historical, cultural and political contexts.

Reading: Homan: Chapter 14, #16 "Finding a Voice". #17 "The Women of Villa Paula Jaraquemada"; # 18 "We've Got Some Work to Do".

Community Change Action Group Meeting #3

Week Eleven: 11/11 (Holiday) & 11/13: Community and Diversity: Negotiating Belonging and Difference

Topics: The limits of "community". Reflection on the making and meaning of difference. Lessons for practice from the literature, case studies and our experiences.

Reading: Homan: Chapter 15

Community Change Action Group Meeting #4

Week Twelve: 11/18 & 11/20: Making Local and Global Connections

Topics: Cross-border organizing. The women building community project.

Reading: # 19 "After the Wars: Cross-border organizing in Central America"

Community Change Action Group Meeting # 5

Week Thirteen: 11/25 & 11/27 (Holiday): Making Local and Global Connections (continued)

Film: "Salt of the Earth"

Week Fourteen: 12/2 & 12/4: Rethinking Assessment: Tools for Understanding Community

Topics: Listening surveys; teaching-learning for community change; generative themes; assets-based community development

Community Change Action Group Meeting # 6

Week Fifteen: 12/9 & 12/11: Reflections on the Journey and Action Group Presentations

Week Sixteen: Meeting Date TBA: We will use the final exam meeting time to complete Action Group Presentations