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

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Social Work 360.01 Spring 2003
Social Work Intervention Methods II: Groups and Communities

Professor: Janet Finn

Office: Rankin Hall 109

Phone: 243-5583

Office Hours: Monday 3:30 –5:00 or by appointment

Class Time: MW 1:10-3:00

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

“Without practice there is no knowledge.” Paulo Freire, 1990

Introduction: This course is the third in a series of generalist practice courses. It introduces students to work with groups, organizations and communities, and it explores the relationships among individual 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 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, inequality, 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 the 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 relationship between personal and social change and examine the opportunities for change through group, organizational, 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, and community 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 and teaching one another as they develop and participate in groups that promote individual and community change. Regular attendance and active participation in both in-class exercises and out-of-class projects are expected.

Course Objectives: Upon successful completion of the course participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the relationship of group and community practice to an empowerment approach to generalist social work.
2. Describe elements of the mutual aid group process.

3. Define leadership and the skills identified as contributors to effective leadership development.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of group process, group decision-making, and the impact of power and authority on individual and group dynamics.
5. Identify and practice skills of mutual-aid group work including: group formation, assessment and planning, group development and intervention, and evaluation and termination.
6. Describe a process of organizational assessment.
7. Identify and practice skills needed to initiate and facilitate community action groups engaged in assessment and planning, implementation, and evaluation of community-based projects.
8. Demonstrate knowledge of strategies of community change including 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 the decision-making processes of community-based groups.
10. Discuss the relationship of factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and age to the development and facilitation of small groups and to the implementation of community change efforts.
11. Describe and practice a collaborative process of needs assessment and data gathering through which those affected by the identified problem have a meaningful voice in understanding and 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 and ethics of the social work profession (i.e. respect for human diversity, social justice, self-determination, and equality) influence the development and implementation of intervention strategies with groups and communities.
15. Identify evaluation methods for assessing the effectiveness of intervention efforts with groups and communities.

Course Readings:

Course Pack of selected readings on groups, organizations and communities.
Kahn, S. (1991). *Organizing*. Silver Spring, MD: NASW.

Assignments:

The assignments in this course are geared to promote students' knowledge of and engagement in the contexts and processes of groups, organizations, and communities. The combination of in-class exercises and outside learning focuses on both individual learning and teamwork. Preparation, attendance, and participation are essential to the learning process. All written assignments are to be typed. All references are to be appropriately cited according to APA guidelines.

1. Group Work Article Critique. Due Feb. 24 (10% of grade)

Select ONE of the following course pack articles that give examples of social work with groups (FP 11, FP 12, or FP 13). Read the article carefully and write a review and critique. Provide a concise summary of the type of group, methodology, and findings and consider the following questions. What data is presented? How is effectiveness assessed? Does the article provide evidence of contributions to individual, interpersonal, organizational, or community capacity building and empowerment? How does the article address themes from course readings and discussions on group work? What lessons regarding group work could you draw from this article? Essay should be no more than 3 pages.

2. Mutual Aid Groups. (20% of grade. Attendance and feedback sheets due weekly, facilitation report due class after you serve as facilitator)

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 as social workers. The groups 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 first hour of class on Wednesdays. A full-group debriefing and discussion of group work skills and processes will follow. Each class member will have the opportunity to plan and (co)facilitate one group session. When serving as (co)facilitator, the student prepares 1) a plan for the session, 2) a summary assessment of the session, 3) a summary of the "Assessing Your Group" feedback sheets from group members, and 4) an assessment of personal strengths and areas for growth as a facilitator. The report should be no longer than 3 typed pages. The grade for this assignment is based on 1) attendance and participation in the group sessions, 2) member assessment of each session, and 3) facilitation report. The group sessions will take place each Wednesday, 1:10-2:00 from February 5 to March 12.

3. Leadership Essay: Due March 10 (5% of grade)

Write an essay that addresses the topic of leadership. The essay will respond to the following questions: 1) What are characteristics of an effective leader? 2) What are some ways to develop leadership skills? 3) How would you assess your own leadership skills and strengths? 3) How can you build on these strengths? The essay should draw on personal reflections and course readings and lectures. Maximum length is 3 pages.

4. Public Meeting Analysis: Due April 2 (10% of grade)

Attend one **public** meeting (e.g. City Council meeting, neighborhood council meeting, School Board meeting, a public hearing, etc) and write an analysis of the process and outcome. Consider the following in your observation and analysis: How is the meeting

structured (e.g. formal and informal rules, physical arrangements, etc)? What forms and skills of leadership can you identify? Who participates and how? How are decisions made? How does power play out? Check local media (newspaper, television) for coverage of the meeting. If there is media coverage, how does the media report compare to your own observations? Maximum length 3 pages.

5. Community Change Essay: Due April 23 (10% of grade): Drawing from course pack readings, write a brief 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 (FP 17 - 26). Be specific in your discussion. What are some 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? What lessons for community practice can you learn from your analysis? Maximum length 5 pages.

6. Action Group Portfolio, Case Study, and Presentation. Presentations will be scheduled during last week of semester and final exam session. Case Study and Portfolio due May 8. (25% of grade).

Beginning the 7th week of the semester, students will form small groups (4-5 members) for community action. Students will initially engage in 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. Grade is based on individual attendance and participation in the project and quality of the group portfolio and presentation.

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 group decision-making processes
- 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 include an introduction and overview; statement of the initial concern and assessment of need and possibilities; summary of the action plan and its implementation; discussion of the group process (decision-making, leadership, etc); discussion and evaluation of the outcome(s); critical reflection on group effectiveness and pitfalls; 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 action group will give a 20-30 minute in-class presentation on their project. The group prepares a single case study, and each member will receive the same grade for this component of the project.

Quizzes: (10% of grade each)

There will be two quizzes during the course of the semester. Quiz 1: March 3; Quiz 2: April 16. They will focus on integration of course readings and discussion and the application of course concepts. There will be no final exam. The finals week meeting will be used for presentation of action group projects.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments: (Subject to Change. Additional readings on library reserve may be assigned)

Week One: 1/27 – 1/29: Introduction and Overview: Introduction to groups, organizations, and communities; making historical connections. Creating the learning climate. Introduction to the beginning phase of group work. Readings: FP 1 “Types of Groups;” FP 3 “On the Beginning Phase with Groups.”

Week Two: 2/3 – 2/5: Group Formation: Belonging, Difference, and Relationship: Principles and processes of mutual aid. Listening and trust building. Engagement and teaching-learning, stages of group development. First mutual aid group meeting. Readings: FP 2 “Starting and leading therapy groups;” FP 4 “Engaging Groups;” FP 5 “Processes of Mutual Aid.” FP 6 “Deanna’s Dilemma.” Kahn, Intro, Ch. 1

Week Three: 2/10 – 2/12: Group Development: The Beginning Phase. Group work, self help, and mutual aid. Leadership and participation. Tasks of the beginning phase. Readings: FP 7 “Individual and Social Benefits of Mutual aid and Self Help.” FP 8 “There’s Self-help and then there’s self help: Women and the Recovery Movement.” Kahn, Ch. 6

Week Four: 2/19 (Holiday 2/17) Work Phase I: Different Patterns, Different Consequences: Timing and pacing; communication and conflict; interplay of individual and group. Readings: FP 6 Deanna’s Dilemma,” cont. FP 9 “What could happen and what couldn’t happen.” FP 10 “Pink Soap and Stall Doors;” FP 13 “Hoop Groups.” Kahn, Ch. 18. (Note: Class members may have opportunity to participate in NASW Lobby Day on 2/19. More info forthcoming).

Week Five: 2/24 – 2/26: Work Phase II: Power, participation, and possibilities: Group work with diverse populations. Discussion of case studies. Group development and leadership revisited. FP 11 “An exploration of helping processes in an online self-help group focusing on issues of disability. FP 12 ‘Physicians’ mutual aid group.” FP 13 “Hoop Groups” cont. Kahn, Ch. 2

Week Six: 3/3 - 3/5: Organizational Context of Practice.

Assessing organizations. Norms, rules, roles, and decision-making. Organizational context of group and community work, examples from practice. Preparation for the ending phase of group work. Readings: FP 14 “Assessing Organizations and Communities;” “Guidelines for Participatory Planning and Decision Making.” Kahn, Ch. 3, 4. Quiz 3/3.

Week Seven: 3/10 – 3/12: Endings and Transitions: From Mutual Aid to Social Action

Reflection on the mutual aid groups. Assessment and planning for community change. Brainstorming session. Readings: FP 16 “Community Organizations as Family;” FP 17 “Six Strategies of Community Change.” Kahn, Ch. 5, 7.

Week Eight: 3/17 – 3/19: From Assessment to Action: Possibilities, Challenges and Strategies for Community Change. Comparing strategies and considering implications for practice. Organizational constraints and supports. Crafting partnerships. Children and youth as change agents. Readings: FP 18 “People Helping People;” FP 19 “Young People as Competent Community Builders;” FP 20 “Children and the Environment.” Kahn, Ch. 8.

Week Nine: 3/ 24 – 3/26: Spring Break!

Week Ten: 3/31 – 4/2: Action and Accompaniment: Possibilities, Challenges and Strategies for Community Change continued. Difference, diversity, and oppression; social justice and empowering possibilities; building and sustaining critical alliances. FP 21 “Activism and American Indian Issues;” FP 22 “Finding a Voice;” FP 27 “We’ve Got Some Work To Do.” Kahn, Ch. 10.

Week Eleven: 4/7 – 4/9: Community and Diversity: Negotiating Belonging and Difference. Intergenerational community building; age and activism; Strategies and tactics of community change revisited. FP 24 “Building supportive ties and a sense of community among the inner-city elderly;” FP 25 “The Gray Panthers.” FP 26 “Majesty Gardens.” Kahn, Ch. 15.

Week Twelve: 4/14 – 4/16: Making Local and Global Connections: Women and social action; Latin American Perspectives. The Women Building Community Project. Readings: FP 23 “The Women of Villa Paula Jaraquemada.” Quiz 4/16. Kahn, Ch. 16.

Week Thirteen: 4/21 – 4/ 23: Making Local and Global Connections, continued. La Victoria’s story. Culture, citizenship, and community change. Learning from local struggles. Reading: FP 28 “Southwest Organizing Project.” Kahn, Ch. 17.

Week Fourteen: 4/28 –4/30: Linking Personal, Organizational and Community Development. Evaluation, Critical Reflection, and Celebration

Week Fifteen: 5/5-5/7: Action Group Presentations
5/5 – class period for action groups to meet. 5/7 Action group presentations.

Week Sixteen: Wednesday, May 14, 3:20 –5:20. We will use the final exam meeting time for Action Group Presentations.

Course Readings

1. Zastrow, C. (1993) "Types of groups, their nature, and development." Ch. 1 in *Social Work with Groups*. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 3-25.
2. Zastrow, C. (1993). "Starting and leading therapy groups." Ch. 16 in *Social Work with Groups*. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 289-305
3. On the Beginning Phase with Groups: A Summary Guide
4. Finn, J. & Jacobson, M. (2003). "Engaging Groups". Brief excerpt from *Just Practice: A Social Justice Approach to Social Work*. Peosta, IA: Eddie Bowers Publishing.
5. "Processes of Mutual Aid"
6. Hurn Mather, J. & Rivas, R. (1996). "Deanna's dilemma." Ch. 17 in R. Rivas and G. Hull, *Case Studies in Generalist Practice*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 117-121
7. Humphreys, K. (1997). "Individual and social benefits of mutual aid and self-help groups." *Social Policy* 27(3), 12-19
8. Rapping, E. (1997). "There's self-help and then there's self help: Women and the recovery movement." *Social Policy* 27(3), 56-61
9. Malekoff, A. (2002). "What could happen and what couldn't happen: A poetry club for kids." *Families in Society*, 83(1), 29-34.
10. Malekoff, A. "Pink soap and stall doors." *Families in Society* 80(2), 219-220.
11. Finn, J. (1999). "An exploration of helping processes in an online self-help group focusing on issues of disability" *Health and Social Work*. 24(3). 220-233.
12. Garside, B. (1993). "Physicians mutual aid group: A response to AIDS-related burnout." *Health and Social Work* 18(4), 259-268.
13. Pollio, D. (1995). "Hoop groups: Groups work with young "street" men." *Social Work with Groups*. 18(2/3), 107-122.
14. Garvin, C. & Seabury, B. (1997). "Assessing organizations and communities." Ch. 11 in *Interpersonal practice in social work: Promoting competence and social justice*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 251-284.
15. Guidelines for Participatory Planning and Decision Making
16. Brice Heath, S. & McLaughlin, M. (1991). "Community organizations as family." *Phi Delta Kappan*. 72(8), 623-627.
17. Checkoway, B. (1990). "Six strategies of community change." Arnulf Pins Memorial Lecture, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
18. People Helping People (1997). "Walking our talk in the neighborhoods: Building professional/Natural helper partnerships." *Social Policy*, 27(4). 54-63.
19. Finn, J. & Checkoway, B. (1998) "Young people as competent community builders: A challenge to social work." *Social Work* 43(4), 335-345.
20. Meucci, S. & Schwab, M. "Children and the environment: Young people's participation in social change. *Social Justice* 24(3), 1-10.
21. Weaver, H. (2000). "Activism and American Indian issues: Opportunities and roles for social workers." *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 11(1), 3-22.

22. Lordan, N. (2000). "Finding a voice: Empowerment of people with disabilities in Ireland." *Journal of Progressive Human Services*. 11(1). 49-69.
23. Finn, J. (2001). "The women of Villa Paula Jaraquemada: Building community in Chile's transition to democracy." *Community Development Journal*. 36(3), 183-197.
24. Minkler, M. (1985). "Building supportive ties and sense of community among the inner-city elderly: The Tenderloin Senior Outreach Project." *Health Education Quarterly*, 12(4), 303-314.
25. The Gray Panthers – Website Information, www.graypanthers.org
26. George, V. (2001). "Majesty Gardens: From dependence to growth with partnership." *Community Development Journal* 36(3), 246-248
27. Morrison, G. (1994). "We've got some work do to." *Third Force* 2(2), 20-24
28. Checkoway, B. & Finn, J. (1992). "Southwest Organizing Project." In *Young People Creating Community Change*. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
29. Methods of Community Participation
30. Assessing Your Group