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

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

Professor: Janet Finn

Office: Rankin Hall 109

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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’s 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 and community practice. Course materials and assignments will focus on principles and processes of group work, leadership, and skills and strategies for 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 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 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. Identify and practice skills needed to initiate and facilitate community action groups engaged in assessment and planning, implementation, and evaluation of community-based projects.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of six strategies of community change: mass mobilization, social action, citizen participation, public advocacy, popular education, and local services development.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Develop guidelines for organizing with diverse populations.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. Identify evaluation 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 and engagement in processes of personal, organizational and community change and development. The combination of in-class exercises and outside learning focuses on both individual learning and teamwork. 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. 13 (25 points)

Read and critique one article, published in a professional social work journal, that addresses the use of groups for social work intervention with individuals, families or communities. Consider the following questions in your assessment: What type of group is described? What processes and outcomes are addressed? How is effectiveness assessed? Does the article provide evidence of contributions to individual, interpersonal, organizational or community capacity building and empowerment? What lessons regarding group work could you draw from this article? Essay should be no more than 3 pages.

2. Mutual Aid Group Facilitation Report. (30 points. Due the Wednesday following the group meeting in which 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. They 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 Wednesdays. Each class member will have the opportunity to plan and facilitate one group session. When serving as 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.

3. Leadership Essay: Due March 11 (25 points)

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. Maximum length is 4 pages.

4. Public Meeting Analysis: Due April 1 (30 points)

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? Maximum length 3 pages.

5. Challenges and Possibilities for Community Change Essay. Due April 22 (40 points)

Drawing from course pack readings, 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 (FP, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). 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? How is leadership practiced? Draw from Checkoway (FP 9) and Homan in developing a structure for your essay. 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. (Portfolio 30 points; case study and presentation 70 points).

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.

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 (Homan, pp. 299-300); 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. Each group member will receive the same grade for this project.

Quizzes:

There will be two short answer essay quizzes during the course of the semester. Quiz 1: February 24; Quiz 2: April 11. 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. The finals week meeting will be used for presentation of action group projects.

Grading:

Group Work Article Critique	25
Leadership Essay	25
Group Facilitation Report	30
Public Meeting Analysis	30
Community Change Essay	40
Action Group Portfolio	30
Action Group Case Study & Presentation	70
Quizzes (2 @ 25 pts each)	50
Total Points	300

Points Earned Final Grade

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

Course Outline and Reading Assignments: (Subject to Change)

Week One: 1/28 – 1/30: Introduction and Overview: Defining groups and communities; historical connections; linking individual, group and community development. Creating the learning climate. Readings: FP 1, “On the Beginning Phase with Groups;” FP 2, “Starting and Leading Therapy Groups.”

Week Two: 2/4 – 2/6: Group Formation: Belonging, Difference and Relationship: Principles and processes of mutual aid. Listening and trust building. Engagement and teaching-learning. Readings: FP 3 “Processes of Mutual Aid”; FP 4 “Ten Self-Help Principles.” FP 5 “Individual and Social Benefits of Mutual Aid and Self-Help Groups.”
Homan, Ch. 1 and Ch. 12, pp. 295-303. Mutual Aid group meeting #1

Week Three: 2/11 – 2/13: Creating a Foundation: Thinking for Group and Community Work. The Just Practice perspective. Team work and collaboration as a basis for social justice work. Leadership and participation. Readings: FP 6 “There’s Self-help and then there’s self help: Women and the Recovery Movement.” Homan, Chs. 2, 3. Mutual Aid group meeting #2

Week Four: 2/18 – 2/20: (Holiday 2/18) Working: Different Patterns, Different Consequences: Timing and pacing; meaning and (mis)interpretation; communication and conflict; action and accompaniment; decision making. Interplay of individual and group. The praxis approach. Readings; FP 7 *Just Practice* excerpts (excluding the “Lost Boys” story). Homan Chs. 4, 7. Mutual Aid group meeting #3

Week Five: 2/24 – 2/26: Quiz 2/24. Power and Participation. Possibilities of social enactment. Negotiating difference. Leadership revisited. Readings: Homan, Ch. 8, 9 Mutual Aid group Meeting #4.

Week Six: 3/4 - 3/6: Endings and Transitions: From Mutual Aid to Social Action Reflection, celebration and evaluation. Brainstorming community concerns. Readings: FP 8 “Universal Organizational Elements.” Homan, Chs. 5, 6. Mutual Aid Group Meeting #5.

Week Seven: 3/11 – 3/13: Reflection as a Starting Point for Action Reflection on the mutual aid groups. Assessment and planning for community change. Readings: Homan, Ch. 12, FP 10 “Walking our Talk in the Neighborhoods;” FP 9 Checkoway, “Six Strategies of Community Change.” Community Change action group #1.

Week Eight: Spring Break!

Week Nine: 3/ 25 – 3/27: From Assessment to Action: Possibilities, Challenges and Strategies for Community Change. Comparing strategies and considering implications for practice. Readings: FP 11 “Alternatives for Girls,” FP 12 “Activism and American Indian Issues;” FP 13 “Young People as Competent Community Builders.” Homan, Ch. 11, 13.

Week Ten: 4/1 – 4/3: Action and Accompaniment: Possibilities, Challenges and Strategies for Community Change continued. Learning from practice; differing contexts and common threads. Reflecting on the historical, cultural, and political contexts. Readings: FP 14 “Finding a Voice”, FP 15 “The Women of Villa Paula Jaraquemada.” FP 16 “We’ve Got Some Work To Do.” Homan, Ch. 14.

Week Eleven: 4/8 – 4/9: Community and Diversity: Negotiating Belonging and Difference. The limits of “community.” Reflection on the making and meaning of difference. Lessons for practice from the literature, case studies, and our experiences. Film, “Salt of the Earth.” Readings: FP 17, 18. Homan, 15, 16.

Week Twelve: 4/15 – 4/17: Making Local and Global Connections: Reflections on “Salt of the Earth.” Cross-border organizing. The women building community project. Readings: FP 7 “Lost Boys excerpt.” FP 18, continued.

Week Thirteen: 4/22 – 4/ 24: Making Local and Global Connections, continued. La Victoria’s story. Learning from local struggles.

Week Fourteen: 4/29 –5/1: Personal, Organizational and Community Development. Evaluation and Reflection

Week Fifteen: 5/6 –5/8: Reflections on the Journey and Action Group Presentations

Week Sixteen: Monday, May 13, 3:20 –5:20. We will use the final exam meeting time to complete Action Group Presentations.

Social Work 360: Course Pack Readings

1. "On the Beginning Phase with Groups"
2. Zastrow, C. (1993) *Social Work with Groups* Chicago: Nelson Hall, Chapter 16.
3. Excerpts from Finn and Jacobson (2002). *Just Practice: A Social Justice Approach to Social Work, Processes of Mutual Aid.*"
4. Riessman, F. (1997) "Ten Self Help Principles," *Social Policy*, 27 (3): 6-11.
5. Humphreys, K. (1997). "Individual and Social Benefits of Mutual Aid and Self-Help Groups. *Social Policy* 27 (3): 12-19
6. Rapping, E. (1997). "There's Self-help and Then There's Self-Help: Women and the Recovery Movement" *Social Policy* 27(3):56-61.
7. Finn and Jacobson (2002). *Just Practice* excerpts.
8. "Universal Organizational Elements"
9. Checkoway, B. (1990). "Six Strategies of Community Change," Arnulf Pins Memorial lecture, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
10. People Helping People (1997) "Walking Our Talk in the Neighborhoods: Building Professional/Natural Helper Partnerships *Social Policy* 27(4): 54-63
11. Good, A. (1992). "Alternative for Girls: A Community Development Model for Homeless and High-Risk Girls and Young Women." *Children and Youth Services Review* 14: 237-252.
12. Weaver, H. (2000). "Activism and American Indian Issues: Opportunities and Roles for Social Workers," *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 11(1): 3-22.
13. Finn, J. and Checkoway, B. (1998). "Young People as Competent Community Builders: A Challenge to Social Work," *Social Work* 43(4): 335-345.
14. Lordan, N. (2000). "Finding a Voice: Empowerment of People with Disabilities in Ireland," *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 11(1): 49-69.
15. Finn, J. (2001). "The Women of Villa Paula Jaraquemada," *Community Development Journal*, 36(3): 183-197.
16. Morrison, G. (1994). "We've Got Some Work to Do," *Third Force* 2(2): 20-24
17. Brooks, E. & Tate, W. (1999). "After the Wars: Cross-border organizing in Central America. *NACLA Report on the Americas* 32(4): 32-36.
18. Websites/examples of grassroots activism: La Fuerza Unida; Southwest Organizing Project; Border Environmental Justice Campaign; SEIU Justice for Janitors; La Mujer Obrera; Gray Panthers