

PCC 850 TOPICS: THEORIES AND TECHNIQUES OF GROUP DYNAMICS

Summer 2025 Intensive

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Office Hours: Upon Request

Course Description:

This intensive graduate-level course delves into the theoretical foundations, practical applications, and ethical considerations of group counseling and group work. Through a combination of theoretical exploration, experiential learning, and case studies, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics associated with group processes, effective leadership skills, and culturally responsive strategies for facilitating groups.

Course Objectives:

This course provides a rigorous exploration of group counseling and group work, equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and ethical awareness necessary for effective practice in diverse clinical and community settings. Through a blend of academic study, practical application, and experiential learning, students will develop the confidence and competence to lead and facilitate groups that promote healing, growth, and resilience among participants.

In this course, students will:

1. Explore the theoretical foundations underpinning group counseling and group work, including key theories and models.
2. Analyze the dynamics associated with group process and development, including stages of group development, roles within groups, and factors influencing group cohesion.
3. Examine therapeutic factors contributing to group effectiveness and their application in various group contexts.
4. Identify the characteristics and functions of effective group leaders, including communication skills, conflict resolution strategies, and ethical decision-making.
5. Evaluate approaches to group formation, including recruitment, screening, and selection of group members, with attention to diversity and inclusion.
6. Assess the application of technology in group counseling and group work, including virtual platforms, teletherapy, and online support groups.
7. Discuss different types of groups, settings, and considerations that influence the delivery of group interventions across diverse populations and settings.
8. Design culturally sustaining and developmentally responsive strategies for facilitating groups that honor the unique backgrounds and experiences of participants.

9. Examine ethical and legal considerations relevant to the delivery of group counseling and group work, including confidentiality, informed consent, and mandated reporting.
10. Engage in direct experiences as group members in small group activities approved by the program, totaling a minimum of 10 clock hours over one academic term, to apply theoretical concepts and enhance personal and professional growth.

CACREP-alignment: This course is designed in alignment with the 2024 CACREP Standards, Section 3, Subsection F for Group Counseling and Group Work.

Required Text(s):

- Atieno Okech, Jane E., Deborah J. Rubel, and William B. Kline. 2024. Interactive Group Work. Second edition. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association. ISBN: 9781556203978, 1556203977 | ACA - \$46 (members); Wiley - \$50
- Brown, R. (2000). Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups, 2e. Oxford: Blackwell. ISBN: 9781118719299, 1118719298 | Amazon - \$36

Course Assignments:

- Group Learning Activities | This activity involves participation in a group designed to help you learn more about yourself as a group member. This group experience is consistent with the core training standards of the Association for Specialists in Group Work and CACREP requirements. The purpose of these groups is to teach you about group dynamics, how you perceive others, how others perceive you, how the group process can inform your work in a variety of group settings, and for you to experience what it means to be a member of a group. These group meetings represent another vehicle for you to learn about groups in action.

You are asked to be an active participant and to monitor your level of self-disclosure. The learning that comes from being a member of an on-going group can make a valuable contribution to your development as an effective group leader and effective group member. These groups will meet during the last part of class meetings. All participants in these groups will be bound by confidentiality. At the conclusion of each of these groups, you will have the opportunity to provide written feedback to the group facilitator/instructor.

- Course Participation | Active participation (verbal and otherwise) is required of each student in this course. Students should be prepared to contribute to the group process and learning each session.
- Group Learning Process Journal | Each group participant (student of the class) will write/type a 1-2 page personal process summary of their group experience. This is intended to be solely about the individual's personal process in the group meetings

Journal Requirements: Each day you will turn in a journal that day's class. The journal will consist of a section for each of the following headings:

Description of the group as a whole: identifying

- a) The mood (e.g., what changes, if any, did you notice?)
- b) Topic of greatest interest to the group, and
- c) Activity level (e.g., what changes did you notice?)

Self-appraisal: identifying

- a) Your mood (e.g., what changes, if any, did you notice?)
- b) Topic of greatest interest to you, and
- c) Your activity level (e.g., what changes did you notice?)

Theoretical Engagement of another group member's behavior

Something you noticed as a characteristic placed in conversation with a course theory, topic, or text.

- Chapter Presentation | As a small group (where possible), students are asked to lead/facilitate a discussion (45-50 minutes in length) on a chapter from the textbook. Students can choose any chapter from Chapters 3-10. At least 3 concepts should be presented from the chapter and at least one theory. The format for the discussion is open, so please do not simply use a PowerPoint presentation. You are encouraged to be creative and use innovative formats, such as creating games, debates, role-playing, video clips, and other original learning techniques.
- Final Assignment: To be negotiated as a group.

Course Outline (Intensive)

		Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Focus		Understanding Groups and their Interactions	Group Development & Theory	Group Leadership and its Challenge	Group Leadership (cnt'd)	Ethical Group Practice/ Contemporary Applications
D U E	<i>IGW</i>	Chapters 1, 2, 14	Chapter 3	Chapters 4-7	Chapter 8-11	Chapters 12, 13
	<i>GD</i>	Chapters 1-3		Chapters 4-5		Chapter 6-8
9:00		Orienting Dialogue	Orienting Dialogue	Orienting Dialogue	Orienting Dialogue	Virtual Group Activities
10:00		Group Activities	Group Activities	Group Activities	Group Activities	Virtual Group Activities
11:00		Reflection/Journaling	Reflection/Journaling	Reflection/Journaling	Reflection/Journaling	Closing Dialogue
12:00		Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break
1:00		Orienting Discussion	Orienting Discussion	Orienting Discussion	Orienting Discussion	Case Study Analysis and Theoretical Application
2:00		Group Activities	Group Activities	Group Activities	Group Activities	
3:00		Reflection/Journaling	Reflection/Journaling	Reflection/Journaling	Reflection/Journaling	
4:00		Closing Dialogue	Closing Dialogue	Closing Dialogue	Closing Dialogue	