

Doane College COU 634  
**Group Theory and Processes**  
Course Syllabus

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Professional counselors must possess the ability to apply social science theory in the assessment and treatment of an individual within the context of their environment and their social system, and possess a thorough understanding of the clinical issues associated with treatment of individuals in group therapy and group settings. Successful group intervention requires a thorough understanding of theory and research, adequate training and preparation, and an ability to apply clinical skills in a group setting.

**Course Description:**

This is a three credit hour course that examines group theories and research, practice and methods, and group processes as they occur in intervention counseling groups (therapy, psycho-educational, support), in group treatment settings, and in professional work groups (treatment and case management teams, committees, and work teams). The course is designed to increase students' awareness and develop the knowledge and skills necessary for successful participation in and facilitation of groups. In addition, the student will develop a comprehensive understanding of how individuals are affected by their identification with and membership in primary and secondary groups.

**Textbook(s)**

**Required**

Corey, M.S., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2008). *Groups: Process and Practice* (8<sup>th</sup> edition)., Brooks/Cole ISBN 978-0-495-60076-3

**Research reviews as assigned**

**Other recommended study materials**

Corey, M.S., & Corey, G. (2008) . *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* (8<sup>th</sup> edition), Brooks /Cole

Yalom, I. (2005) *Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)  
New York: Basic Books

Forsyth, Donald R. (2005) *Group Dynamics* (5<sup>th</sup> edition), Wadsworth Publishing

**Course Objectives**

Professional counselors and therapists must possess a thorough understanding of best practice standards and skills necessary for the effective treatment of individuals in group settings. The successful professional must possess knowledge related to group theory and research, the different types of groups, the developmental stages of groups, training

and preparation standards for group leadership, and an ability to apply clinical skills effectively in a variety of group settings. Students will examine group theory and research, practice and method, and group processes as they occur in psychotherapy, counseling, psycho educational, task, and support groups. Students will become familiar with the basic skills necessary for successful participation in a group both as a leader/facilitator and participant. Leadership styles and skills, the therapeutic value of groups, and cultural and ethical issues will be examined.

Through classroom experiences, exams, presentations, discussions, role plays, videos, live observation, participation and analysis of a treatment, support, or growth group, and the development of a comprehensive group intervention plan the following competencies will be demonstrated::

- A. a thorough understanding of the principal's of group dynamics including the components of group process, developmental stage theories, roles and behaviors of group members, and the therapeutic factors associated with group work
- B. a demonstrated ability to define and distinguish different types of groups, the goals associated with each, and the tasks and roles of the leader and members of each type of group.
- C. an ability to describe different leadership styles and approaches, skills and techniques appropriate for each stage of the group process, and the roles of leaders and members within each phase
- D. familiarity with theories of group counseling, including commonalities, distinguishing characteristics and research literature associated with its application in practice.
- E. a demonstrated ability to discuss different applications of group techniques related to setting and the developmental/life stage of the population being served
- F. demonstrated competency in discussing the legal and ethical issues associated with group counseling and familiarity with ASGW Best Practice Guidelines
- G. an ability to describe the implications of socio-cultural factors and dynamics when working with groups.
- H. a thorough understanding and demonstrated ability to apply best practice standards associated with planning, selection and screening, orientation, and evaluating the effectiveness of the group experience.
- I. competency in discussing and demonstrating group counseling methods and techniques, and in analyzing group leader orientation and behaviors.
- J. an ability to clearly describe how to apply theory in practice and implement groups in professional work settings.
- K. a demonstrated ability to learn through participation in a group experience.

### **Methods of Instruction**

This will be an interactive course which requires an elevated level of classroom participation utilizing brief lectures and presentations by the instructor and students,

discussions of reading materials with an emphasis on application in practice, video demonstrations of group work, modeling and demonstrations of group work skills by the instructor and students, experiential learning through participation in a group and role plays, and a comprehensive final requiring the application of all learning objectives in the course and a self assessment. Students will be required to integrate content, knowledge, and application in practice. Active participation is essential to your learning. **Due to the emphasis on experiential learning, lateness and absences cannot be made up. Written assignments are due on the date indicated in the course schedule. Students will lose 1 point for every day over the due date.**

### **Basis for Student Evaluation**

**A. Attendance and participation:** Each student will attend all classes and actively participate in all discussions and experiential learning opportunities. The course includes both didactic and experiential components with an emphasis on laying framework upon which to design and conduct groups as a professional in your field. Due to the emphasis on developing skills and application of theories your success depends upon actively engagement in the classroom with your peers and the instructor. At the conclusion of **each class session** the instructor will award up to three (4) points in this area. An absence, no matter what the reason will result in no (0) points earned for that session.

**Total possible points to be awarded in this area = 36**

**A. Group experience:** Students will be required to engage in learning through observation and participation in groups during class sessions and outside of the class sessions. These **two distinct learning opportunities** will provide the student with an awareness of the vast array of groups available in the community, an opportunity to observe and analyze group process, and experience as a facilitator, member, and observer.

- 1) Each student will be **required to attend 6 consecutive sessions of an existing OPEN psycho educational, or support group in the community.** This must be the same group for all six sessions. Students will be strongly encouraged to explore groups that are related to their areas of interest or areas in which they have limited experience. Reviewing local papers or doing an internet search might be helpful in contacting a group for attendance. Prior approval of the group you will be attending will be required. Groups available in the community will be discussed in the first class session as well as guidelines for selection and attendance. A process journal will be required. In this journal you will focus on your observation of the group process including developmental stages, leadership style, norms and roles, curative factors observed, individual roles, and analysis of communication patterns and sources of influence. Additionally you will be asked to discuss your own experience in the group and how it related to group process and becoming a group facilitator. **Do not include any names of group members.** The journal is not intended to be a report of group content but an opportunity to experience and analyze group processes. An outline for journal

entries will be provided during the first class session. This journal will be due the 8<sup>th</sup> week of the term. You will be asked to give a brief presentation related to the group and your learning experience. The journal will be graded using the following criteria in equal weights: group selection and attendance, use of course information and theory, demonstrated ability to apply information and engage in critical thinking, and form and structure of written work.

**Total possible points to be awarded in this area = 18**

**(2) Students will be expected to facilitate a group in class, and participate in class discussion of the group process after the group using the Checklist of Group Leadership Skills.** The length of the group will be approximately 30 minutes. The topic of the group will be determined by the instructor. This is a skills training group. Group members will be expected to come prepared to perform the task of the group. The purpose of the group is to practice and demonstrate basic group leadership skills including:

- Stating a clear purpose
- Setting norms
- Linking members
- Monitoring the group
- Reflecting content, feelings and meaning
- Holding the focus
- Direct teaching on specific points
- Cutting off members
- Drawing out members
- Using rounds
- Encouraging appropriate expression of differences
- Giving feedback
- Balancing participation in the group
- Clarifying goals (group and member)
- Providing structure (beginning, working focus, processing and closure)

**Points for this are included in classroom participation**

**B. Mastery of theory:** Students will be assigned a specific group theory on which to prepare a presentation. The student will become the “expert” on the particular group theory and techniques. Each student will be assigned a date to present the assigned theory and should have examples, handouts, and other materials that could be used in your particular group. If a power point is used, students should provide copies for the instructor and classmates. Each presentation should be approximately 30 minutes and should give each class member a good overview of the theory, specific techniques associated with that theory, and population for which that theory is most appropriate. Following the presentation, the student should involve the class in demonstrating the techniques. This portion of the presentation should be approximately 30 minutes.

**Total points awarded based upon the Presentation Evaluation Form= 10**

**C. Synthesis of course content:**

1) **Quizzes:** There will be weekly quizzes covering the assigned reading material. Quizzes will be multiple choice and worth 4 points each. Each student will be allowed to take scores from the top 2 quizzes.

**Total points to be awarded using the top 2 quiz scores = 8**

2) **Final Exam:** The final exam represents a comprehensive evaluation of mastery related to the course objectives. Each student will be required to write a 15-20 page proposal for a group including the demographics of the target population, the setting, the type of group, the theory and techniques selected, decisions related to planning and the group environment, decisions related to member selection including referral, screening, and orientation, leadership role, style and skills, the developmental stages of the group including the task, member experiences, events/interactions/behavior, group content, and the role tasks and style of the leader as it is related to each stage. Additionally the paper will discuss post group issues including evaluation and follow-up, significant curative factors related to the group, elements necessary for the success of a group, possible negative side effects of the group experience, and major ethical and cultural issues relevant to the practice of group counseling.

**Total points awarded = 28**

**D. Professional Development**

Students will be required to complete a self assessment upon completion of the course. The outline for this will be provided and the assessment will be due with the final exam. **The final will be considered incomplete without the self assessment and subject to loss of point for lateness.**

**There are a total of 100 points possible in this course. The following table represents the points required for grading assignment:**

| <b>Points earned</b> | <b>Percentage of total</b> | <b>Grade earned</b> |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>98-100</b>        | <b>98-100%</b>             | <b>A+</b>           |
| <b>91-97</b>         | <b>91-97 %</b>             | <b>A</b>            |
| <b>90</b>            | <b>90%</b>                 | <b>A-</b>           |
| <b>88-89</b>         | <b>88-89%</b>              | <b>B+</b>           |
| <b>81-87</b>         | <b>81-87%</b>              | <b>B</b>            |
| <b>80</b>            | <b>80%</b>                 | <b>B-</b>           |
| <b>78-79</b>         | <b>78-79%</b>              | <b>C+</b>           |
| <b>71-77</b>         | <b>71-77%</b>              | <b>C</b>            |
| <b>70</b>            | <b>70%</b>                 | <b>C-</b>           |

**Course Outline**

**Classroom Hours**

**Introduction**

- Overview of course

- Orientation activities
- Historical perspectives Combining research and practice
- Group work defined
- Types of groups
- Stages of group
- Process vs content
- Analysis of groups – research theories
- Introduction to ASGW guidelines

**Leadership 3**

- Personal issues and concerns
- Characteristics of effective leaders
- Overview of group leadership skills
- Integrative models of leadership
- Competence related to diversity
- Co-leadership

**Ethical Issues 2**

- Group membership and participation
- Confidentiality
- Competence and training issues
- Ethical standards of preparation and practice
- The counselor’s personal values
- Special issues related to diversity

**Overview of Theories of Group Counseling 8**

- Emphasis or assumption
- Techniques
- Goals
- Stages
- Application

**Pre group issues 2**

- Preparation
- Developing a proposal and working within the system
- Screening and orientation
- Practical considerations
- Co-leadership

**Stages of Group 8**

- Characteristics of each stage
- Tasks and process
- Leaders role

- **Member role**
- **Process issues to be addressed in this stage**

**Post Group Issues** **2**

- **Evaluation**
- **Follow up**
- **Referrals**

**Therapeutic Factors and Issues** **4**

- **Curative factors common to effective groups**
- **Difficult group members**
- **Difficult group dynamics**
- **Co leadership and leadership issues**
- **Conflict resolution and confrontation**
- **Diversity competence**
- **Negative effects of group experiences**

**Application of Group Process for Differing Populations and Settings** **4**

- **Children**
- **Adolescents**
- **Adults**
- **Older Adults**
- **Individuals with disabilities**
- **Families as a primary group**
- **Educational settings**
- **Correction settings**
- **Residential and Treatment settings**
- **Community and Outpatient settings**
- **Rural**

**In addition to 36 hours of classroom time, student should expect to spend a minimum of 90 hours outside of the classroom reading, reviewing research, attending a live group, journaling, writing reflections, preparing for in class group work, and writing a comprehensive group proposal.**

**XI. Expectations of Students**

- 1) Students are expected to read course assignments and research articles assigned prior to the class session and are expected to apply the concepts during discussions and the experiential portion of the class.
- 2) Students are expected to be active learners. This means that students should arrive on time, have cell phones and computers off during class, and remain in class throughout the duration of the session.
- 3) Students are expected to experience some discomfort as they work to gain skills. As learners, students are not expected to be experts in group

facilitation skills. Expect to make mistakes and remember that those mistakes are a valuable part of the learning process.

- 4) Students are expected to be respectful, open to feedback and willing to provide feedback, willing to role play clients or assume leadership roles, and be open to both personal and professional change.
- 5) Students will be expected to abide by all ethical standards governing confidentiality and professionalism.
- 6) Students will be expected to use resources in addition to the text to enhance learning and complete academic tasks.

**COU 634**

**Course schedule**