Group Counseling in the Schools

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much"

-Hellen Keller

Instructor Information

Chris Chapman, Ph.D.

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435-797-1012

Office Hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistants

Loryn Anderson

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the theories of group counseling as well as group dynamics, group leadership, group procedures, and group counseling skills. Students will engage in didactic and experiential learning related to the group counseling process with a special emphasis on the role of group counseling in K-12 school settings.

Course Objectives

1. Develop foundational knowledge related to the group counseling process
   1. Understand theories of group counseling, stages of group growth and development, and the purpose and function of didactic and process groups
   2. Awareness of ethical standards and issues related to group counseling
2. Demonstrate proficiency in group counseling skills
   1. Practice and display competency in group leadership skills.
   2. Learn to conduct a group screen, begin a group, identify group dynamics, and successfully close a group.
3. Advance critical thinking and professional development
   2. Examine the research and develop a group of your own with week-by-week agenda and materials.

Course Objectives- Specific

*In this course you will be trained on specific competencies to help you develop your skills in multicultural counseling. These competencies have been outlined by CACREP as standard for school counselors. These items will be addressed week by week as a fundamental part of your training as counselors in this class.

1. Theoretical foundations of group counseling and group work
2. Dynamics associated with group process and development
3. Therapeutic factors and how they contribute to group effectiveness
4. Characteristics and functions of effective group leaders
5. Approaches to group formation, including recruiting, screening, and selecting members
6. Types of groups and other considerations that affect conducting groups in varied settings
7. Ethical and culturally relevant strategies for designing and facilitating groups
8. Direct experiences in which students participate as group members in a small group activity, approved by the program, for a minimum of 10 clock hours over the course of one academic term

Required Readings
The readings for this course come from a variety of different sources to help diversify your training in group counseling. Instructions for weekly reading assignments are posted on Canvas.

Erford, B. (2016). *Group Work in Schools*

Selected Readings from peer reviewed articles and other authoritative sources on group counseling will be posted on Canvas and noted on the reading schedule below.

**Class Format**

Class sessions will include two components:

1. Lecture - Class Discussion of Content (approximately 2 hours). A tentative schedule of discussion topics is provided below. You are expected to have completed all readings prior to the class meeting and actively participate through informed discussion.

2. Most class sessions will have 2 hours of experiential group practice. Outside of the first two demonstration groups, class members will lead these groups. Student leadership will rotate among the counseling group participants. The task of the counseling group is to model approaches to group and to practice leadership skills. You can model anything from an Elementary-level Social Skills Group to a High School level Grief Recovery Group. As group members, you don't have to “role-play” the intended age group—be yourselves and participate as appropriate. Students will be given opportunities to sign up for leadership opportunities during the first week of class. The groups will last 45 minutes, to be followed by a 10 minute group feedback session. We will hold 2 groups each week starting week 3.

**Objectives of the counseling group experiences:**

- To experience/observe the processes and issues pertinent to the establishment of a new growth group.
- To experience/observe the development of the group as a modality for achieving the goals of the group members.
- Become explicitly aware of the different aspects of group process and group dynamics.
- Provide a format for members to experiment with and understand new perspectives.

**Course Requirements**

**Group Personal Journal (20 points):** Counseling group participants are required to keep an ongoing journal of their group experiences. Entries should include the following: (a) a brief (1 paragraph) summary of the group and their reaction to it; (b) 2 things they liked about the group and would consider using in their own groups; and (c) 2 things the group leader could have done to improve the group experience. In all, your journals should be about 1.5-1 page long. You will submit them via Canvas by the Friday following class. Some class days you will participate in 2 groups as a participant; this means you do 2 journals. In all you will complete up to 8 journals member journals (depending on your group size; some will do 7). I will allow you to drop 1 member journal.

**Group Leadership Experience Journal (40 points):** Students will be asked to lead a group during the semester. You will be asked to make an agenda for a 45-minute group session with your small group. In your journal you will include the notes for your group agenda, and on a separate document, write about (a) “what did I feel went well with my group”; (b) “what could I improve on”; (c) “What am I learning about my own strengths and weaknesses as a group leader.” Along with your agenda notes, this should be 1-2 pages, worth 40 points.

**Group Feedback Journal (20 points):** Students will be asked to lead the “feedback session” at the end of the group once during the semester. Your job will be to conduct a 10-15 minute feedback discussion and fill out the brief feedback form (see under "Files" tab) and give it to the group leader. Also, you will send me a copy of the feedback form for me to review.

**Reading Reaction Questions (10 points):** Students will be asked to write at least one question on each of the assigned readings for the week. Those questions may be posed to the class before lecture as a way to discuss the readings. You may pose your questions on any of the readings required, but you cannot ask multiple questions.
about the same reading. Out of 6 possible Reading Reaction question assignments, you will be asked to complete 5. They are due midnight the night before class. Your total grade on these assignments will be calculated out of 50.

**Participation (100 points):** Over the semester I will grade you on your participation. This grade will involve two components: 1) Attendance and 2) Participation in class discussions. During class you will at times be prompted by the instructor to form small groups and will be given a topic to work on together. These will vary week by week. They will challenge you to think about logistical, ethical, and process challenges in creating and running groups in your schools.

**Possible Topics:**

1. Group recruiting- working with teachers
2. How to advertise group effectively
3. Pitching groups to administration effectively
4. Addressing fears about group with students
5. Getting parents on board with group: tips
6. Encouraging diversity in group: tips and challenges
7. How to craft attention-grabbing activities
8. Dealing with poor participation
9. Effective icebreakers- what works and what doesn’t
10. Correcting misbehavior in group: what is effective, what isn’t

**Group Proposal (75 points) and Presentation (25 points):** You will work in a team to create a group that you could run as a school counselor. This presentation will serve as your final grade and should demonstrate the culmination of your learning. Choose the type of group that you would be likely to lead or co-lead in your actual or anticipated work place.

This assignment will consist of two parts: (i) working as a task group to prepare a group proposal (75 points); and (ii) 10 minute recorded presentation to class (25 points).

Students are required to develop a clear and convincing proposal for a psychoeducational or counseling group in a K-12 school. The group should be targeted toward a specific population and should reflect research related to that population. The description, rationale, and goals of the groups should be informed by the scientific literature. All group proposals are due: **August 13**

Proposals should include:

1. Description of the Problem: under this header, describe the issue you wish to address in your group. Why is it important? Who is it impacting? Use research to back your statements.
2. Group Proposal: Under this header, talk about how you plan to address the issue. What will your group focus on? What interventions will you use that have (at least some) evidence of effectiveness? Use research to back your statements.
3. Multicultural and Diversity Issues: How do these issues impact minoritized student populations (immigrants, LGBTQ+, people of color, etc)? How will you run the group in a way that is inclusive of these populations while being useful and relatable to them? How will you recruit these populations who often are underserved?
4. Objectives: Clearly defined, attainable, and measurable goals for the group
5. Logistics: A description of the logistics (e.g., selection and screening of members, length of group etc.)
6. Outcomes: A plan for evaluating the behavioral outcomes of the group
7. Specific session outlines for at least eight (8) group sessions using the following format:
   1. Statement of purpose for the session
   2. Goals of the session
   3. Time Required
   4. Materials Needed
   5. Agenda (questions, materials, activities, and procedures used at each of the following stages of the group session)
6. Discussion topics/teaching topics
7. Conclusion (wrap-up, homework, etc)

Grading
Final grades are based on individual performance. Students who accumulate 92.5% to 100% of the required 230 points will earn an A; 89.5-92.4% = A-; 86.5-89.4% = B+; 82.5-86.4% = B; 79.5-82.4% = B-; 76.5-79.4% = C+ and so forth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Journals (8 possible; 6-7 required)</td>
<td>160-140 (based on group size)</td>
<td>140-120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Journal</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback Journal</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Proposal</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Reaction Questions (6 possible; 5 required)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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Total Possible Points
500-480 480-460

Assignment Make-Up Policy
This course is designed to allow for flexibility in the expectable unexpected events that all of us experience over the course of our lives (e.g., partial credit, "skippable" papers). For this reason, I do not allow make-ups or extensions of assignments. If you are having a particularly difficult semester and cannot complete most assignments, please see me immediately to discuss a possible incomplete or withdrawal.

Classroom behavior
The Golden Rule can be described as an “ethic of reciprocity”. Students will be presenting to the class in informal and formal ways. Visualize yourself presenting to the class and consider how you would answer these:

- Where would you like students to be looking when you’re talking?
- How would you like cell phones set?
- How would you like computers to be present in the room?
When would you like others to arrive and depart from class?

Whatever those answers are, they will also apply to how others will want you to behave when they are presenting.

You can read more about the University’s Classroom Civility Policy which can be found on the web at: [http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/student_conduct/classroom_civility.cfm](http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/student_conduct/classroom_civility.cfm)

### Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is maintained when students generate original work and acknowledge the sources of existing work (whether published or not) in their written or oral communication with others. Academic honesty allows us all the freedom to express our ideas with excitement and without fear. It is the foundation for trust between professionals.

I expect students to engage academic honesty thoughtfully and deliberately. Because academic dishonesty shakes the foundation of trust, I consider it a very serious offense. If I understand a student is engaging in academic dishonest behavior, I will approach that student (see APA standard on informal resolutions to ethical violations) and discuss my concerns. Consequences can vary from a verbal reprimand to an “F” for the course grade. In extreme cases, I may report the incident for university-level disciplinary proceedings (see section VI-1 of the Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University: [http://www.usu.edu/studentservices/pdf/StudentCode.pdf](http://www.usu.edu/studentservices/pdf/StudentCode.pdf)).

### Accommodations

Students with documented disabilities who need accommodations in completing requirements or taking part in class in any manner should speak with me during the first week of class to arrange these accommodations. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) at Utah State University (a) evaluates requests for reasonable accommodation from University students to ensure adherence to the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act, (b) provide academic, personal, and career counseling to assist students in the development of personal and financial independence, and (c) provide supportive services to individuals with disabilities, including academic assistance, adaptive equipment, counseling, readers, transcribers, interpreters, and advocacy to ensure equal access to education, employment, and other University programs, among many other things. Students who suspect they may have a disability, or who have a disability should contact the DRC for further information and support: (435) 797-2444.

### Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>READINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/1/2021</td>
<td>Introduction to class/Why groups?/Intro Concepts/Types of groups/Group evaluation forms/Curative factors</td>
<td>Chris Demo 1</td>
<td>Chapters 2, 5; Articles 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/8/2021</td>
<td>Ethical considerations/Group basics(prep for initial training groups)/Planning group/Assessing group/recruitment/Pre-group meetings/How to be a group member</td>
<td>Chris Demo 2</td>
<td>First two group pairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/15/2021</td>
<td>Group structuring/Breaking the ice/Forming/Cohesion/ Group project overview</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 4, 7, 17; Articles 3, 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/22/2021</td>
<td>Working Phase/Group process/Facilitating member interactions/ Mastering experiential exercises and activities/Group project time</td>
<td>Next two group pairs</td>
<td>Chapters 8, 9, 15; Articles 5, 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/29/2021</td>
<td>Building a supportive emotional climate/Group leader tasks/Termination and conclusion/Populations (elementary, middle school, high school)</td>
<td>Next two group pairs</td>
<td>Chapters 6, 7, 8; Articles 7, 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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8/5/2021  Multicultural competence/Groups and crisis

8/12/2021 Troubleshooting/Problems/Proposal Presentations.