

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Introduction to Group Therapy

18:821:547

Fall 2022

Wednesdays 4:45 pm – 7:30 pm

Room 301 (on the Ph.D. side of the Psychology building)

Instructor: Terri Lipkin, Psy.D.

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Office hours: While I don't have scheduled office hours, I am always open to meeting with students individually as needed or desired. Please don't hesitate to contact me to schedule an individual meeting at any point during the semester to clarify your understanding of course material, to discuss any concerns that may come up for you during the semester, or just generally to seek support in your development as a therapist.

Course Description: I strongly believe that the best way to learn about groups is to have experience in groups. I also strongly believe that the more self-aware we are and the greater our ability to acknowledge and communicate about our experience, the more effective we can be as therapists. Therefore, this course is designed to be largely experiential and encourages self-reflection and discussion of challenging topics. While the first half of each class session will have a didactic focus, I encourage you to participate, ask questions, and offer your own thoughts on the various topics. The second half of each class will entail participation in a here-and-now process training group, so you can learn through experience about the development of a group, group dynamics that arise, and how to work through those dynamics, as well as about yourself in a group context and working with the thoughts and feelings that arise.

Course Goal: The goal of this course is to provide the foundation for students to have the knowledge, skills, and awareness to begin providing supervised group psychotherapy.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students:

1. Will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of group psychotherapy.
2. Will have increased awareness of and skill in addressing the sociocultural and identity factors in group.
3. Will be able to differentiate among intrapsychic, interpersonal, and group-as-a-whole dynamics and interventions, and to provide examples of each.
4. Will be able to name and define group therapeutic factors and discuss their relative value and impact on group members.
5. Will understand how to interview, select, and prepare patients to form a group.

6. Will have a basic understanding of the here-and-now process group and the role of the leader.
7. Will be able to discuss the advantages and limitations of group therapy, both in person and via telehealth.
8. Will have deeper understanding of their personal actions and reactions in a group context and how these can inform their work in the role of group leader.

Class structure:

4:45 – 6:00 pm: Didactic portion of class (may include lecture, discussion, video, roleplays, and/or structured activities)

6:00 – 6:15 pm: Break

6:15 – 7:15 pm: Experiential training (process group experience)

7:15 – 7:30 pm: Reflections and analysis

Textbook and Readings:

Required Text:

Yalom, I. & Lezsz, M. (2005). *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*, 5th edition. Basic Books.

Chapters in the book and articles to be read are listed in the weekly schedule on the day that they will be discussed. Articles will be posted on Canvas as well.

Please let me know if you are interested in further information about any given topic in the class and I will gladly provide you with recommendations of additional relevant books, articles, websites and/or online videos.

Assignments:

Weekly reflection journal: As the instructor of this class, I am considered a non-confidential employee, meaning I am subject to certain reporting requirements. That being said, this assignment is intended to be private. I will be the only one reading it, and you will not be expected to share anything you write in class. It is an opportunity for you to reflect informally on your experience in the process group portion of class - to deepen your awareness and observational skills in the group and to begin to analyze the group according to theories we are discussing in class. The following questions are prompts, but you are not required to answer all of them in every entry. Write whatever feels most significant and most comfortable for you to share each week. **Entries are due by 11:59 pm on the Friday immediately following each class.**

- What was the level of participation by you and the other group members? What do you think contributed to this?
- What communication patterns and nonverbal behaviors did you notice?
- What was(were) the overall emotional tone(s) of the group?
- What thoughts, feelings, and/or sensations did you notice in yourself and what triggered these?
- What group dynamics as described in the readings did you notice occurring in the group?

- What did you like and/or dislike about the interventions I made or did not make as group leader? What might you have done differently?

Final paper: The purpose of this paper is to integrate your understanding of group theory with your understanding of yourself in a group context and to begin conceptualizing your work as a group leader. This is meant to be a scholarly paper, not an extended journal entry. Papers should be written according to APA style, 8 – 10 pages in length, double-spaced, using citations of readings provided in the course and/or supplemental readings you have found on your own. Papers should include the following:

- What have you learned about yourself, e.g. the development of your role in the group, the development of your self-awareness in a group context - considering your experience of one or more of aspects of your identity, your valency for certain roles in group, your transference and countertransference reactions, resistances, your sense of authority, power, privilege, competition, sibling dynamics, your ability to give and receive interpersonal feedback, etc.
- Discuss how your personal experience was intertwined with the development of the group, your experience of me as the group leader, the occurrence of subgroups or possible scapegoating, interpersonal here-and-now process that occurred, the group-as-a-whole and/or the larger system.
- Choose the most salient aspects of your experience among these and discuss how the theories we have studied inform your understanding of them.
- Finally, discuss how you envision this understanding can inform your work as a group leader in the future.

The rubric for this paper will be posted on Canvas and you will be asked to assess your paper yourself in terms of the criteria listed. I will consider your assessment with my own and provide appropriate feedback to guide you in what I hope will be your ongoing journey in group work. **Papers are due by noon on December 7, 2022.**

Statement on Disabilities: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you and your instructors with a Letter of Accommodations. Please discuss your accommodations with me as early in the course as possible. To begin this process, please complete the [registration form](https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration) (<https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration>).

Statement on Academic Integrity: By enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for familiarizing yourself with and adhering to the Academic Integrity Policy. If in doubt, please consult with me. Please review the Academic Integrity Policy at: <https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/current.pdf>

Names and Pronouns: The class roster is provided to me with each student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference at any time so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Respect for Diversity: I believe the diversity of the GSAPP community is one of its greatest assets. I look forward to our co-creating a classroom culture based on mutual respect and appreciation of our similarities and differences, in which we can all feel safe, learn from one another, and grow together. If ever you have an experience in class that diverges from this, please do not hesitate to speak with me about it so I can address your concerns.

Attendance: As this class is largely experiential, it is extremely important that you be present consistently throughout the semester. In the event of an unavoidable absence, please contact me directly at 732-259-3963 as soon as possible and we can discuss how you can make up the work that you miss. More than 2 unexcused absences and/or persistent lateness will negatively affect your grade and may result in loss of credit for the class.

Grading:

Attendance/presence in the experiential portion of the class 20%

Participation in the didactic portion of class 20%

Weekly journals (completion grade only) 30%

Final paper 30%

Weekly Schedule of Classes and Readings

(Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings listed for each date.)

September 7: Introductions and course overview; group contract; general orientation to group therapy including history of group therapy, the efficacy of group therapy, group vs. individual therapy, and the various types of therapeutic groups.

September 14: How do we understand and talk about the impact of sociocultural context and intersecting identities in the group experience?

Gitterman, P. (2019). Social identities, power, and privilege: The importance of difference in establishing early group cohesion. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 69(1), 99-125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207284.2018.1484665>

Stevens, F.L. & Abernethy, A.D. (2018). Neuroscience and racism: The power of groups for overcoming implicit bias. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 68(4), 561-584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207284.2017.1315583>

September 21: Group-as-a-Whole processes

Rioch, M.J. (1970). The work of Wilfred Bion on groups. *Psychiatry*, 33(1), 56-66.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1970.11023613>

September 28: A systems-centered theory of group

Agazarian, Y. & Gantt, S. (2003). Phases of group development: Systems-Centered hypotheses and their implications for research and practice. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 7(3), 238-252.

Gantt, S.P. & Agazarian, Y.M. (2010). Developing the group mind through functional subgrouping: Linking Systems-Centered Training (SCT) and interpersonal neurobiology. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 60(4), 514-544.
<https://doi.org/10.1521/ijgp.2010.60.4.514>

No class meeting October 5: In lieu of meeting in person, please watch the AGPA e-learning video entitled “DEI in Group Leadership (no CE)” The video shows 3 clips from the YouTube series GROUP and has a panel of group therapists discuss their perspectives on the group dynamics and the group leader’s interventions in each of the clips. Watch the video as though you were a member of this panel. Pause the video after each clip of GROUP is shown and write in your journal what you notice about group dynamics in terms of identity, authority, power, privilege, group-as-a-whole dynamics, and the impact of the sociocultural context. Note your reactions to the interactions that take place and the leader’s interventions, noting any interventions you would want to make as the leader of the group. Finally, after you have watched the entire video, write about what stands out for you in terms of the individual panelists’ comments and the interactions among the group of panelists, again noting both personal reactions and connections to the theories we have discussed in class. **This assignment will be graded for completion only. There are no right or wrong answers.** The purpose of this assignment is to further your self-awareness around these dynamics, to be able to identify these dynamics in a group, and to encourage you to begin to formulate your identity as a group therapist.

October 12: Therapeutic factors

Yalom & Leszcz (2005): chs. 1-4

October 19: The development of the group

Yalom & Leszcz (2005): chs. 5 & 11

October 26: The development of the group continued – working in the here and now

Yalom & Leszcz (2005): ch. 6

November 2: Transference to the leader, self-disclosure by the leader, and sibling transference

Yalom & Leszcz (2005): ch. 7

Ashuach, S. (2012). Am I my brother's keeper? The analytic group as a space for re-enacting and treating sibling trauma. *Group Analysis*, 45(2), 155-167.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0533316411436141>

November 9: Challenges in the group's development – resistance and difficult patients

Yalom & Leszcz (2005): ch. 13

November 16: The interpersonal interview, the selection of clients, and composition of the group

Yalom & Leszcz (2005): chs. 8 & 9

November 23 (online): Specialized formats: concurrent individual and group therapy; co-leadership; telehealth

Yalom & Leszcz (2005): ch. 14, pgs. 429-448

Weinberg, H. (2020). Online group psychotherapy: Challenges and possibilities during COVID-19—A practice review. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 24(3), 201–211.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/gdn0000140>

November 30: Recommending group therapy and preparing patients for group

Yalom & Leszcz (2005): ch. 10, pgs. 294-308

December 7: Recommending group therapy and preparing patients for group continued

Final papers are due by noon today.

December 14: Termination

Yalom & Leszcz (2005): ch. 12, pgs. 382-390

Leszcz, M. & Kobos, J.C. (2008). Evidence-based group psychotherapy: Using AGPA's Practice Guidelines to enhance clinical effectiveness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session*, 64(11), 1238—1260. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20531>