

# **Group Dynamics in Marriage and Family Therapy and Congregations**

PC 221-3  
Spring 2011  
Monday 2:00-4:50

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Schlegel 204

## **Course Description**

This course provides theological, theoretical and practical foundations for an exploration of group counseling and group therapy for the practice of marriage and family therapy and preparation for leadership in congregations. Master of Divinity students are welcomed. Utilizing theories and literature from group dynamics, group psychotherapy, marriage and family therapy and practical theology, students will learn how to organize and facilitate groups for therapy, support and education within pastoral ministry. Readings and lecture will focus on systemic methods of understanding and treating human problems in group settings, specific concepts of group psychotherapy, psycho-education and family systems theories and approaches. Emphasis will be placed on theological reflection and individual subsystems and how they operate in small group dynamics.

## **Objectives**

1. To demonstrate advanced knowledge and understanding of group theory and group process
2. To demonstrate skill in the design and leadership of group theory in therapeutic groups
3. To have knowledge of and understand the implications of various models of therapeutic group
4. To have a knowledge of the implications of current group research approaches
5. To reflect theologically on group dynamics in counseling and congregational settings
6. To meet selected core competencies of AAMFT

## **AAMFT Core Competencies**

Domain 1: Admission to Treatment  
Domain 2: Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis  
Domain 3: Treatment Planning and Case Management

Domain 4: Therapeutic Intervention  
Domain 5: Legal Issues, Ethics, and Standards  
Domain 6: Research and Program Evaluation

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

1. Participation: 30%  
Participation will be evaluated based on
  - a. Accurate use of reading material assigned
  - b. Attention to and ability to appropriately engage the contributions of classmates
  - c. Openness to reflect critically on the implications and ideas discussed from readings and presentations
  - d. Prompt, regular attendance; absences and/or tardiness will impact your participation grade
2. Group leadership: 20%  
Each class member will design and lead the class using group theory format. Student group leaders are expected to:
  - a. provide the class with a paper that outlines of the author's approach, to be discussed in class
  - b. incorporate theological reflection on the reading,
  - c. be creative in an interactive format to involve the class in the material to be presented
  - d. creatively facilitate class involvement and discussion of the reading material
3. Weekly group journal entries: 30%
  - a. Critical reflection entries describing how the content of each area of study can be used in your work setting.
  - b. Critical reflection entries that describe the integration of group work and the pastoral care emphasis for that day.
4. Final Take Home Exam 20 %

### **Required reading on library reserve**

Richardson, Ronald. (1996). *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life*.  
Yalom, I. D. (2005). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*. (5<sup>th</sup> edition) New York: Basic Books, Inc.

----- (1980) *Existential psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.

----- (2002) *The gift of therapy: An open letter to a new generation of therapists and their patients*. New York: Harpers Collins.

### **Recommended reading on library reserve**

Ashbrook, J. B. (1996) *Minding the soul: Pastoral counseling as remembering*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Jaco Hamman. ( 200 ) *Becoming a Pastor*.

McManus, G. (1996). *Structured exercises for promoting family and group strengths*. New York: Haworth Press.

Tudor, K. (1999). *Group counseling*. London: Sage Publications.

Graham, L. K. (1992). *Care of persons, care of worlds*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press

Jacobs, E. E., Riley, L. H., & Masson, R. L. (1988). *Group counseling: Strategies and Skills*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

### **Methodology**

This course will be taught using lecture, class discussion, role play, and reflective journal writing. Within the class discourse pastoral theological reflection will focus on the collective and personal human experience. For example, “How do we honor the sacred potential of humanity and at the same time contain the human capacity for sin and evil? How does one’s theology inform the clinical models of therapeutic group theory and practice presented in this course?

### **Use of Inclusive Language**

Learning is fundamentally concerned with communication, self-expression, and personal and social transformation. Learning in this setting respects individuals, their feelings, their value and worth, and their particular potential for contribution to common knowledge and community virtue. Learning is fundamentally and intentionally inclusive.

Since all learning is inherently ethical and political, and theological discourse has been traditionally patriarchal and gender exclusive, the Seminary has established a policy, in the interest of constructing an inclusive and egalitarian community, that the language (symbols, metaphors) used in all our class discussions and written work shall be gender inclusive and respectful of all persons and groups as valued human creatures of God. Racism also permeates our society and is detrimental to any learning environment. We need to use language, symbols, and metaphors that honor our commitment to racial inclusiveness.

## Academic Honesty

Be careful to fully document any information included in your papers that is not original. Also, be aware when you summarize information, even when you give the complete documentation information, your summaries should be in your own words and not retain too much of the original author's style. A paper that presents the ideas or writing of someone else as if they were one's own is considered plagiarism, and school and departmental policies on academic honesty will be followed. The Academic Support Center has handouts, and/or the Library can be of assistance.

## Evaluation of Written Assignments

Graduate level writing is expected in this course. This includes clear organization, correct grammar, careful proofreading and proper citation of sources. Double-spaced 12 fonts, one inch margins are considered standard in this class unless otherwise specified. Grading of all written material will be affected by careless writing. The Academic Skills Center provides instruction on all of these matters.

## Attendance

In line with Seminary policy, prompt attendance at class sessions is expected out of respect for your fellow classmates as well as the instructor. Learning is a complex activity that requires conceptual and experiential participation by those who wish to learn. While circumstances may require an adult learner to miss class occasionally, absences of more than 10% of the classroom experience will affect student learning and consequently, the student's grade. Extreme circumstances, such as major health problems, family concerns, etc., must be discussed with the instructor **prior** to multiple missed classes. Students unable to attend at least 75% of classes will be advised to drop the class prior to the registrar's WP deadline, or receive a failing grade.

- Caution: The course syllabus and schedule are subject to change at the discretion of the professor prior to the beginning of the upcoming semester.

## Class Schedule

**February 14** Introduction to the course, review of syllabus and student assignments

**February 21** Topic: Life, Death and Anxiety

Reading:

Yalom: Existential Psychotherapy, Chapters 1-3

Richards, Chapter 1

**February 28** Topic: Death and Psychopathology & Psychotherapy and Freedom

Reading:

Yalom: Existential . . . Chapters 4-7

Richards, Chapter 2

**March 7** Topic: Isolation and Meaninglessness

Reading:

Yalom: Existential . . . Chapters 8-11

Richards, Chapter 3

**March 14** Topic: Therapeutic Factors; Interpersonal Learning; Group Cohesiveness

Reading:

Yalom: Group Psychotherapy, Chapters 1-4

Richards, Chapter 4

### March 21-25, Research and Study

**March 28** Topic: The Role of the Therapist

Reading

Yalom: Group . . . Chapters 5-7

Richards, Chapter 5

**April 4** Topic: Patient Selection, Group Composition, The Creation of Groups

Reading

Yalom: Group . . . Chapters 8-10

Richards, Chapter 6

**April 11** Topic: The Beginning and Advanced Group

Reading

Yalom: Group . . . Chapters 11-12

Richards, Chapters 7-8

**April 18** Topic: Specialized Groups; Problems, Formats and Procedural Aids

Reading

Yalom: Group . . . Chapters 13-15  
Richards, Chapter 9

### **April 21-22 Easter Recess**

**April 25**      Topic: Group Therapy and Encounter Groups & Training the Group Therapist  
Reading

Yalom: Group . . . Chapters 16-17  
Richards, Chapters 9-10

**May 2**      Topic: the Gift of Therapy  
Reading

Yalom: Gift . . .  
Richards, Chapter 11-12

**May 9**      Topic: The Gift of Therapy  
Reading

Yalom: Gift . . .  
Richards, Chapter 13