

**IPS 505: PASTORAL COUNSELING IN GROUP SETTINGS  
EGANS**

**FALL 2010**

**SYLLABUS**

**Overview:**

In its widest view, this course is designed to sensitize the student to the value of the small group, whether counseling group or other small groups formed for other purposes. In fact, many of you will find yourself designing groups which have other purposes besides counseling per se: for example, social empowerment, reduction of personal isolation, change in oppressive social structures. Today, there is an enormous need for group experiences and there is a rich flowering of groups of every kind to answer this need. The reason for this pressing need is the unprecedented loss of natural community (extended family and neighborhood community) in industrially developed societies. This loss has led to a striking rise in the past century of a variety of mental disorders, especially depression, and a loss of political empowerment. In America, particularly, decisions that affect us most intimately are made by the “Principalities and Powers” of our societies: the large corporations, media, political structures, the military and security establishments over which as individuals we have little control. In addition, there are societal norms, whose power extends to all societies, regardless of their stage of industrial development, norms that control attitudes to women, gays, disabled, etc. Only the formation of small groups focused on the empowerment of their members can remove some of the sense of hopelessness, isolation and oppression which these forces impose. We hope that your training in group process and leadership will empower you to engage in the formation and leadership of the sort of group that will respond to these needs.

More specifically, this course is designed to introduce the student to a rich array of group approaches to pastoral counseling. There are, of course, an enormous diversity in counseling and pastoral counseling groups. We will give a brief introduction to some of the classical approaches. But the emphasis will be on structured approaches, “common theme,” groups because they require less advanced leadership training and because they are much more in demand today and much more likely to be financed by third party payers (insurance companies and government agencies). This emphasis will disappoint some students who may have expected to learn how to do classical group therapy with participants with a mix of significant clinical issues. We will see a DVD of this kind of therapy. It will be clear from that DVD and what we will have to say, that the achievement of these skills is something that extends far beyond the limits of any one course. The nature of this model can be described by the following: unstructured, heterogeneous, open-ended, with an emphasis on spontaneous “cross talk” among clients, with regulation over this cross-talk by the leader kept to a minimum.

On the other hand, in this course we are concerned with providing some basic group leadership skills to students who have little experience with and confidence in

leading pastoral counseling groups. We want to make sure that the early experiences of all our students are successful and confidence-building. The key to positive experiences in group leadership is the structure of a common-theme group. In contrast to the classical theories mentioned above, these common theme groups are highly structured, homogeneous and time-limited. Group behavior is regulated by structured interventions of the group leader. He or she plans the design of each meeting beforehand in such a way as to facilitate the achievement of the group goal. We realize that some of our students have had significant experience leading pastoral counseling groups and we will adjust, as best we can, to the needs of these students to develop a group design that emphasizes greater spontaneity and flexibility. Another characteristic of common theme groups is their tendency to restrict cross-talk. The common types of client talk in theme-centered groups are self-disclosure, support talk and requests for clarification. Confrontation tends to be restricted. In classical group therapy, on the other hand confrontation tends to be encouraged. This emphasis in the classical group therapy is one of the primary reasons why special training and experience are required in this type of group.

However, it is essential to understand that the distinction just made is not meant in an exclusive way. The distinction is not disjunctive but refers to points on a continuum. Theme-centered groups may be less structured and designed to facilitate a more free-flowing, spontaneous interaction among the members. Unstructured groups may involve at times highly structured interventions by the leader. But it is important to emphasize that the less structured the group, the more training and experience required of the leader and the more important the need for close supervision of the leader.

A set of DVDs which illustrate various points on this continuum will be available on Reserve in the library for private viewing.

The course will familiarize the students with a variety of common theme formats and a number of leadership strategies. To make these learning experiences more meaningful, students will be asked to participate in the model formats and to bring to their participation some genuine personal issues of their own. The degree of participation is of course completely voluntary.

Finally students, alone or in teams of two, will be given an opportunity to design and lead a group format of their choosing for a brief session (about 45 minutes) at the end of the course. The group experience chosen by the student or team should involve some sort of common theme format. Further suggestions about this exercise will emerge as the course progresses. This exercise is a central part of the course and will be a major determinant of the student's final grade

### **Pastoral orientation:**

This course starts from the conviction that the contemporary experience of church has been weakened by a loss of community that is endemic in industrialized societies, and that envisions pastoral counselors in their role as facilitators of community in the parish or other community structure in which they function. Individuals in contemporary society are often isolated in their own negative version of themselves and the problems they

encounter. Not only can pastoral counseling groups help them out of their isolation and deal with their issues more effectively, but in the process they learn to value and participate more effectively as members of the communities in which they are members. In addition, small counseling groups and other church groups over which the pastoral counselor presides are seen as a school in which the skills of community participation and the building of church are learned. This theological-ecclesiological perspective resonates with a growing awareness among mental health professionals that contemporary industrialized societies have lost many of their strong, intimate communities and that this loss renders the members of these societies much more vulnerable to a host of emotional disorders.

### **Textbooks:**

Jacobs, E.E., Masson, R.L., Harvill, R. L. (2006). *Group counseling: strategies and skills* (5th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. (required)

Yalom, I.D. & Leszez, M.(2005). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy. (5th ed.)*. New York: Basic Books. (strongly suggested; but it is not critical to get the latest edition.)

### **Entering Knowledge and Skills:**

1. Interpersonal and small group skills.
2. A basic knowledge of the theories and skills of individual counseling.
3. Understanding of the fundamentals of psychopathology.
4. Some understanding of the impact of culture and gender on the counseling process.

### **Course Objectives**

**By the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:**

1. differentiate among different approaches to group counseling and explain what skills and experience are required of the leader in some of these different groups.
2. explain the characteristics of “common theme” groups.
- 3 identify what the “pastoral” aspect of group counseling means to him/her,
4. identify the major skills of an effective group member and demonstrate them in class groups.
5. explain the characteristics an array of commonly used common theme group formats.
6. design in detail a common theme group and explain it to the class.

7. effectively lead a session chosen by him/her from that design using volunteer classmates as members of the group..

### **Learning Activities:**

1. Mastery and discussion of textbooks and readings.
2. Instructors' input and discussion of that input.
3. Viewing and discussion of videotapes presenting learning about long term analytic group therapy, support groups and specialized leadership techniques.
4. Participation in the experience of the class group.
5. Discussion of demonstrations of leadership approaches and common theme formats by instructors.
6. Development and presentation by students of a group session involving a format chosen by the student.
7. A written report in which the format is described and discussed.

### **Course Evaluation:**

1. Participation in group discussion and group counseling demonstrations
2. Evidence of mastery of readings and instructors' input
3. Adequacy and effectiveness of student's final presentation and report and leadership in the group exercise.
4. Attendance is an essential requirement in an experiential course such as Group Approaches to Pastoral Counseling. There is no way to make up for a missed class. Attendance rules are the following: Absence from more than two classes (unless there is a good reason, e.g. sickness, and instructors are notified before the class [by phone or email]) will result in the lowering of the final grade by a letter grade. If a student misses more than three class sessions (one third of the course), regardless of the reason, he or she must show why the course should not be repeated.

### **Course Outline:**

**Note: this schedule is subject to change if the instructors and/or students feel that some change or substitution of topics is warranted.**

Part I: Theoretical Overview and Leadership Strategies:

**Before August 30, read Jacobs et al., chapters 1, 14, & 17.**

August 30: Session 1

Input and Discussion: Ethical considerations; confidentiality; overview of the

course.

Demonstration: Introductory structured group experience of group formation.

**Before September 13, read Yalom and Leszcz, chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5.**

September 6: No class; Labor Day

September 13: Session 2:

Input and Discussion: History of the group movement. Types of therapy groups: interactive vs supportive; homogeneous vs heterogeneous; structured vs unstructured. Unconscious currents in all therapy groups. The nature of unstructured, interactive, heterogeneous groups. Leadership in these groups.

Demonstration: Viewing and discussion of Yalom's interactive, unstructured, heterogeneous group: a simulated video.

**Before the September 20 read: Jacobs et al.: chapter 2 and 5. Yalom: chapters 3, 6 and 11: Handout by H.B. Andrews on Common Theme Groups.**

September 20: Session 3:

Input and Discussion: Basic elements of group dynamics with emphasis on group development. The "Pastoral" in Pastoral counseling Groups. The description and design of 'Common Theme' groups. Leadership in short-term, interactive, common theme groups.

Demonstration: Getting the group started. Leadership in the first session of an interactive, common theme group.

**Before September 27 read Jacobs et al.: chapters 3, 4, 15 and 16. Yalom: chapter 8, 9 & 10. Handout: Clinebell: *Basic types of pastoral care and counseling*, chapter 14.**

September 27: Session 4:

Input and Discussion: Group design; member selection; composition, group member training and related issues. Pastoral counseling and related groups.

Demonstration: Getting the group started (continued); the mood checks.

**Before the October 4 read: Jacobs et al.: 9, 10, 11 and 12. Yalom, chapter 14, especially pp. 442-448. Instructor handout from Nichols & Jenkinson "Leading a support group."**

Part II: Examples of Common Theme Groups:

October 4: Sessions 5:

Self help and Support groups: Video of a group for women with metastatic breast cancer.

**Before October 18 read: Handout: S. Horne's "From coping to change. The evolution of Women's groups; Jacobs et al.: chapters: 12 and 16. Paul Giblin will provide his own handouts at the beginning of his session.**

October 11: Midsemester break: no class.

October 18: Premarital and marriage enrichment groups.

October 25: Input and Discussion: Women's groups. Their special issues and styles.  
Demonstration: The women in class will be asked to take part in a women's group led by Jeanette, followed by discussion., “

**Before November 1 read: Handout: J. Sternbach's Techniques in group psychotherapy with men.”**

November 1: Session 8:

Input and Discussion: Special problems in and advantages of men's groups.  
Demonstration: Men in the class will be asked to participate in a men's group led by Gerry.

**Before November 8 read: Handout: M. Liebmann's “Art games and group structures.”**

November 8: Session 9:

Input and Discussion: The art therapy group; Use of art therapy as a common theme group or as a specialized technique.  
Demonstration: All students will be asked to participate in a session of an art therapy group led by Jeanette.

**Before November 15 read: Handout; L. Berube's “Demystifying dreams.”**

November 15: Session 10:

Input and Discussion: The use of dream therapy as a common theme group or as a specialized technique.

Demonstration: Jeanette will conduct a dream group using Berube's format

**Before the next November 22 read: Jacob et al: chapter 8; Yalom: pp. 361-368.**

Part III: Student Presentations: Session 11 & 13.

November 22: Session 11: Student Presentations. **Before November 29 read Gerry Egan's Group Insearch and a reading from Williams *et al. The mindful way through depression.***

November 29: Session 12:

Because the Thanksgiving Holiday ends at 4:15 PM, the first section's session is cancelled. We will devote the last section's session to the use of imagery and meditation in group counseling. We hope that as many members of the 1:00 PM session will be able to attend.

**Before December 6 read: Jacobs et al, Chapter 15.**

December 6: Session 13: Student Presentations. Termination exercise led by Jeanette.

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