



SYLLABUS

EDSR 7315 Group Counseling
SEMESTER: Fall 2025

T - 7:00 p.m.

PROFESSOR: [Dr. Samuel Garcia, LPC-S](#)

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VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS: ANYTIME

PLEASE CALL or EMAIL TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR IN-PERSON APPOINTMENTS:

Required Text:

Corey, G (2023). Theory & Practice of Group Counseling, 10th ed. Cengage Learning, Inc.
ISBN: 978-0-357-62295-7

Recommended Texts:

None

Course Prerequisites:

You must have successfully completed **ED 5314 – Personality and Counseling Theory** and **ED 7303 – Techniques of Counseling**, prior to enrolling in this course.

Course Purpose:

This course will provide students with an experiential and interactive opportunity to develop awareness and competence in counseling diverse groups of individuals through the exploration of group dynamics, processes, and therapeutic interventions.

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide counseling graduate students with an understanding of the theories and an appreciation for the practices of group counseling and psychotherapy. Group counseling is

considered an effective, efficient modality of treatment and is preferred to individual counseling in some clinical settings. While there is some overlap in the skills, strategies, and techniques employed in both individual and group counseling, there are also profound differences. This course allows students to explore and experience the therapeutic group as a participant while simultaneously observing the demonstrations of effective group counseling. Group counseling is essentially about exploring, discovering, and implementing new and previously unimaginable possibilities.

Course Goal:

The primary goal of this course is to provide counseling students with an authentic group experience in which they will learn the theoretical and conceptual foundations of group counseling while simultaneously developing the skills, strategies, and techniques necessary for conducting effective therapeutic groups. Students will incorporate their observations, assumptions, and experiences into their emerging and evolving integrated personal approach to counseling and psychotherapy. As one of the first “hands-on” classes of the Counseling Program, the students will demonstrate professional competencies in the knowledge and skills that are essential for the facilitation of effective and culturally relevant group counseling experiences.

Counseling Program Objectives:

Upon successful completion of the Counseling Program, the candidates for the degree of Master of Education in Counseling will clearly and unambiguously demonstrate to the Counseling faculty that they:

- Understand traditional and contemporary personality and counseling theories and apply appropriate counseling interventions and strategies in individual and small-group counseling.
- Identify and utilize basic assessment principles related to standardized assessments and design an appropriate treatment plan.
- Comprehend the role and function of the counselor in a variety of work settings.
- Know and apply the professional standards of practice and the relevant code of ethics.
- Attend to their personal growth, as well as that of their students and clients, through utilizing supervision, valuing interpersonal feedback, and engaging in mindful self-examination.
- Possess the knowledge and skills necessary to practice as a highly competent counseling professional.
- Employ personal self-awareness and professional sensitivity to the divergent values, behaviors, traditions, and counseling needs of all students and clients regardless of gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, ability, language, religion, ethnicity, or race.
- Engage in compassionate cultural sensitivity by applying core counseling concepts, mindfulness-based skills, and professional practices with diverse populations the bilingual and bicultural students and clients living in the South Texas border region.
- Model intellectual curiosity and a strong personal commitment to continually expanding their counseling knowledge and proficiency through lifelong learning and professional development.

In Accordance with CACREP best practices standards for all counselors-in-training development, the following areas will be promoted in this course:

CACREP Standard	Activity	SLOs
Common Core for all students:		
1. History and philosophy of the counseling profession (IIF1a);	Assigned Textbook Reading Chapter 1, Test Appendix A	1,3
2. The multiple professional roles and functions of counselors across specialty areas and their relationships with human service and integrated behavioral health care systems, including including interagency and interorganizational collaboration and consultation (IIF1b);	Assigned Reading Chapters 1-14 Tests, Lecture Group Proposal Assignment, Group Facilitation presentation Discussion Board	1,2,3
3. Self-care strategies appropriate to the counselor role (IIG1l);	Assigned Reading Chapters 1 and 3. Test, Lecture	1,2
4. The role and process of the professional counselor advocating on behalf of the profession (IIF1d);	Assigned Reading Chapter 1, 2,3,4; Lecture; Testing; Proposal Development Assignment, Group Facilitation Presentation	1,2,3
5. Professional organizations, including membership benefits, activities, services to members, and current issues (IIF1f);	Chapter 2 Lecture	3
6. Advocacy processes needed to address institution and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for clients (IIF1e)	Assigned Reading Chapter 8, Lecture Test	2,3
7. Ethical standards of professional organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling (IIF1i);	Assigned Reading Chapters 8,9,10 Test, Lecture	1,2,3
8. multicultural and pluralistic trends, including characteristics and concerns within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally (IIF2a);	Assigned Reading Chapters 8,9,10 Lecture & Test	2,3
9. the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's view of others. (IIF2d);	Assigned Reading Chapters 8,9,10 Lecture Test	1,2,3
10. multicultural counseling competencies (IIF2c);	Assigned Reading Chapters 8,9,10 Lecture Test	1,2,3
Standards for Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) track		

1. Roles and setting of clinical mental health counseling (CMHC:VC1a);	Assigned Reading Chapters 1-4, Lecture, Test. Assigned Proposal, Group Facilitation Presentation	1,2,3
2. Knows the roles and setting of clinical mental health counselors (CMHC: VC2a)	Assigned Reading Chapters 1-7 Lecture, Proposal, Group Facilitation Presentation	1,2,3
3. Knows the professional organizations, preparation standards, and credentials relevant to the practice of clinical mental health counseling (CMHC:VC2k);	Assigned Reading Chapter 1-4 Lecture, Appendix C	1,2,3
4. Is aware of legal and ethical considerations specific to clinical mental health counseling (CMHC:VC2l);	Assigned Reading Chapters 8-9; Lecture, Proposal, Group Facilitation Presentation	2,3
5. Applies knowledge of legislation and government policy relevant to clinical mental health counseling (CMHC:VC2i);	Assigned Reading Part 2 Chapters 8, 9, 10	1,2,3
6. Understands effective strategies for interfacing with integrated behavioral health care professionals (CMHC:VC3d)	Assigned Reading Chapter 1-14, Lecture Assigned Discussion Board	3

Group Counseling and Group Work (Section 5 Core 6)		
a. theoretical foundations of group counseling and group work	Assigned Reading Chapters 1-4, Lecture, Test. Assigned Proposal, Group Facilitation Presentation	1,2,3
b. dynamics associated with group process and development	Assigned Reading Chapters 1-7 Lecture, Proposal, Group Facilitation Presentation	1,2,3
c. therapeutic factors and how they contribute to group effectiveness	Assigned Reading Chapter 1-4 Lecture, Appendix C	1,2,3
d. characteristics and functions of effective group leaders	Assigned Reading Chapters 8-9; Lecture, Proposal, Group Facilitation Presentation	2,3

e. approaches to group formation, including recruiting, screening, and selecting members	Assigned Reading Part 2 Chapters 8, 9, 10	1,2,3
f. types of groups and other considerations that affect conducting groups in varied settings	Assigned Reading Chapter 1-14, Lecture Assigned Discussion Board	3
g. ethical and culturally relevant strategies for designing and facilitating groups	Assigned Reading Chapter 1-14, Lecture	1,2,3
h. 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	Lecture 1 - Experiential Group process facilitated by instructor (6 hours); Testing; Proposal Development Assignment, Group Facilitation Presentation –Students acts as both facilitator and member, (6-8 hours)	1,2,3

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Student will be able to:

1. Define and distinguish among group guidance, group counseling, group psychotherapy, support groups, and advantages and disadvantages of group approaches versus individual counseling.
2. Discuss theories of group counseling including methods, techniques, and research findings, including group work with substance abuse and addiction.
3. Identify major persons and factors in the historical development of group counseling.
4. Discuss legal and ethical issues with group counseling, including how to make referrals.
5. Describe the various stages of the group process and roles of leaders and members at each stage.
6. Explain group dynamics in terms of cause and effect.
7. Describe different styles of leadership and leadership skills and techniques appropriate for each stage of the group process.
8. Explain characteristics of group leaders that affect group process; demonstrate personal awareness of his/her own strengths, weaknesses, values, prejudices, etc. and the effects on others.
9. Describe the implications of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity on groups.
10. Discuss methods of evaluating the effectiveness of groups.
11. Describe how he/she would implement groups in his/her work.
12. Demonstrate knowledge of methods to continue learning about group process and group leadership.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate their ability to apply within guidance and counseling, their knowledge of human development, diversity, and factors that affect client's ability to achieve their potential
2. Demonstrate their ability to plan, implement, and evaluate a developmental counseling program, this program will incorporate assessment, as well as individual and group counseling services utilizing appropriate theoretical frameworks, techniques, and interventions to address personal, interpersonal/social, and educational needs.
3. Demonstrate the ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with others in diverse settings, including the community in order to facilitate client success, and will demonstrate the ability to apply ethical, legal, and professional standards.

COUNSELOR EDUCATION MARKETABLE SKILLS:

1. Graduates will demonstrate oral and written communication skills to apply in careers related to mental and behavioral health including school counseling.
2. Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of ethics, social justice issues, and multicultural concerns to apply in careers related to mental and behavioral health including school counseling.
3. Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of human growth development throughout the lifespan to apply in careers related to mental and behavioral health including school counseling.

SMARTTHINKING:

With Blackboard, you will note two tabs on the left, a Smarthinking Handbook tab and a Smarthinking tab. Sul Ross State University is providing this writing tutorial program, free of charge, to currently enrolled students. Smarthinking is a proven, excellent writing tutorial program and user friendly. When you are ready to submit your draft paper to Smarthinking, you may do so through the Smarthinking tab.

This service does not detect plagiarism; you will still need to use SafeAssign for similarity detection. The Smarthinking Writing Center is designed to assist secondary, post-secondary, and graduate students become stronger writers. Students receive a detailed, personalized critique of any written assignment, such as an essay, paragraph, report, or creative work. When applicable, students can select specialists such as ESL, Technical Writing, or Creative Writing experts. Students can submit writing 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students in this class are required to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be timely, prepared, and focused. Meaningful, respectful, and pertinent online participation is also expected.

Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: submitting work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation.

SAFE ASSIGN:

The Safe Assignment Tool is an advanced plagiarism prevention system deeply integrated with the Blackboard Learning Management System. SafeAssignment compares student papers submitted to Blackboard against an enormous wide range of sources and provides instructors with detailed Originality Reports. Because of SafeAssignment's flexibility, this product is an effective plagiarism prevention system that helps instructors to raise student awareness about plagiarism and to educate

students about the ways to avoid plagiarism. You can check your similarity report and make corrections if needed. With your similarity report, you will note highlighted areas that have similarity noted between your paper and another source. You will click on the tab within the colored square to see the percentage of the similarity. Percentages above 20% must be corrected. It does not matter if the source that is being noted for similarity is not the same source that you used. The system is telling you what you have written is too similar to another source and you need to make corrections. You may need to change up some of the wording or order of information to make it your information. More than three or four words in a row that are identical to the originating author can be detected. You can submit your paper as many times as you would like. This system is designed to assist students with increasing awareness of plagiarism. Typically, plagiarism is an accidental occurrence and occurs when students do not realize their writing is overly similar to another source.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)

SRSU DISABILITY SERVICES:

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the Student's responsibility to initiate a request. Please get in touch with me, Mr. Ronnie Harris, LPC, or Mary Schwartz Grisham, M.Ed., LPC-S, Director/Counselor, Accessibility Services Coordinator, Ferguson Hall (Suite 112) at 432.837.8203; mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832. Students should then contact the instructor as soon as possible to initiate the recommended accommodations.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

You are responsible for reviewing the university policies on Absences and Class Attendance in the SRSU Student Handbook.

PARTICIPATION POLICY:

Since EDUA 7315 is an Asynchronous course, participation will be evaluated based on your virtual engagement during the class date and time. This course is set up for volunteer meeting time every Tuesday and Thursday at 7:00 p.m. to review chapter reading material and information. Students who attend and interact will not be required to complete the needed discussion assignment. Students who do not attend will be required to review the class recording and complete a three (3) paragraph reflection in the discussion section of the recording for a participation grade. For you to remain enrolled in ED 7315, you must reply to the Blackboard Discussion Board "Online Participation Policy" forum by the deadline posted on the Due Dates listing contained in this syllabus. It is policy at Sul Ross State University that if a student is enrolled in an online course and fails to stay active for a period of 3 weeks, fails to submit assignments, and/or does not reply to emails from the instructor, he/she will receive a final grade of "F."

Virtual Participation:

As your instructor, **I place heavy emphasis on Individual class participation.** The interactive component of this course is critical. Your active, reflective, and timely participation in your discussion boards and assignment completion will determine the degree of involvement. Please feel free to contact me anytime if you run into any difficulties.

Late Work:

Assignments must be turned in weekly. Students will work on completing and submitting at least two modules per week.

Grading/Feedback:

Most grading is technologically driven, and grades are posted immediately. However, some quizzes require professor review and grading. In cases where grading is not instantaneous, I will complete all grading weekly. This will provide ample time for students to review their outcomes. Students are welcome to contact me anytime to schedule a meeting virtually to address any questions. In the event I do not answer the phone, please leave a message so that I may return your call, I respond to all my calls within 24 hours.

Sub Sections	Point Scale	Grade
Collaborate Class Recordings: Discussion Board Assignments	A-100-Completion of all Discussion Board Entries B- 90-mnissing one Discussion Board Entry C- 80-missing two Discussion Board Entry D- 70-missing three Discussion Board Entry F- 60-missing more than three Board Entries 10 Possible Points Each (15 Recordings-Discussions)	A= 90-100 B= 80 - 89 C= 70 - 79 D= 60 – 69 F= <60
Quizzes (14)	100 Points	All Points will be added and divided by 7, which will reflect your average points and a letter grade will be assigned accordingly.
Video Reflections (15)	120 Potential Points Each	
Group (4-hours) Marathon Encounter	100 Potential Points Each	
Group Proposal	100 Potential Points Each	
Termination Letter	100 Potential Points Each	
Final Exam	100 Potential Points Each	

Comprehensive Group Study Guide	100 Potential Points Each
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Collaborate Class Recordings:
Discussion Board:

This course is asynchronous, and it does not require students to attend class. Consequently, students must demonstrate a higher level of responsibility and maturity to complete class assignments and gain the developmental skills necessary to care for clients experiencing mental health problems. You are required to enter a narrative piece reflecting on the Collaborate class recording.

As your instructor, I place heavy emphasis on Individual class participation. The interactive component of this course is critical; it will enhance your reasoning skills, which is very important to the counseling process. A student's participation will facilitate others in improving their reasoning Skills by drawing from other students' rich experiences. The intercultural experiences of students add tremendously to everyone's learning in class.

Since attendance is not required, I will upload Collaborate Ultra class recordings and require each student to watch and write a narrative that reflects their understanding of the reading/video content and the professor's instructional recording. Please use the video reflection rubric to write your reflection and upload your paper accordingly. Each discussion entry has a 120-point Potential, which will convert to a letter grade. The sum of all discussion board grades will be Divided by 16 and will render a final letter grade.

Quizzes:

Weekly quizzes are designed to assess each class's comprehension of the reviewed content. Every student will complete a quiz weekly. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure you understand the assigned reading. There is a total of thirteen (14) quizzes, each worth 100 points. Each quiz will have a different number of questions related to the chapter or Video Reflection content and will include true and false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. Performing well on your quizzes should help you do well on the final exam. You are allowed to use your quizzes as study tools for the final exam.

Students will be required to complete the quiz immediately after finishing the video reflection, which is done right after the class session. This will allow me to provide grading and feedback for potential class discussions.

Group Proposal:

When writing an outline proposal for developing a counseling group, start by clearly defining the group's purpose and objectives. Begin with a title that reflects the focus of the group, followed by an introduction that explains the need for the group and its expected outcomes. In the main body of the proposal, include sections such as the target population, group format (e.g., weekly sessions, duration), and the specific topics or themes to be covered. Also, outline the methods and techniques

that will be used during the sessions, as well as any materials or resources required. Lastly, conclude with an evaluation plan to measure the group's effectiveness and identify any potential challenges.

If you are designing a PowerPoint presentation to accompany your proposal, make sure each slide matches the sections of your outline. Start with a title slide, then add an agenda slide that outlines the main points you will discuss. Use clear bullet points to highlight key information and include visuals such as charts or images to improve understanding and engagement. Be sure to have a slide for the evaluation plan and a final slide for questions and discussion. Keep the design simple and professional, using consistent fonts and colors throughout to create a unified look. Remember to rehearse your presentation to ensure clarity and confidence when delivering your proposal.

Marathon Group Event:

Participating in a four-hour counseling group marathon requires preparation to fully engage in the team-building and self-reflection activities planned for the session. If you are attending in person in San Antonio, please arrive at the venue a few minutes early to settle in and get familiar with the surroundings. The session will include various team-building activities designed to promote collaboration and trust among participants. These activities will be followed by group self-reflection exercises, where you will have the chance to share insights and learn from others' experiences. Food and drinks will be provided so that you can stay energized and focused throughout the marathon.

For students unable to travel to San Antonio, participation will be provided through Collaborate Ultra. Make sure you have a reliable internet connection and access to a computer or device with audio and video capabilities. Log in to the Collaborate Ultra session a few minutes early to address any technical issues. Participate actively in virtual activities and discussions, just like you would in person. Remember to mute your microphone when not speaking to reduce background noise and use the chat feature to ask questions or share comments. Whether you're attending in person or virtually, your active involvement is essential to gaining the most from this valuable experience.

The “Who Am I in this Moment at This Time?” activity will play an essential role in the Marathon Group Event. One of the experiences we will share during our Encounter Group Marathon on Sunday, October 04, 2025, is a profoundly emotional and decisive moment where, without talking, each of us clearly and authentically shows the group who we are right now. When you are in the “hot seat,” you will genuinely express to the group who you are in this moment at this time through one song and three photographs (no larger than 5 x 7). There will be no talking; only the presentation of one single song and three photographs (no collages). When it is your turn to be in the “hot seat,” you will play your music and pass around your pictures. After the song is over, the rest of the group members and facilitators will share what sensations, images, and impressions they received in the integration of the music and photographs. The “observers” will share the communicative connections between their hearts and heads. The “hot seat” person will neither deny nor validate these ideas since he or she will be silent during this brief discussion.

When selecting the one song that truly reflects and represents who you are at this particular moment in time, you are free to choose English or Spanish (any language, for that matter) songs. You might choose the one single song because of the instrumental sounds and rhythms, or you might choose the song because of the particular lyrics. If you want group members to attend to the lyrics of

Specifically for the song, you are free to bring copies of the lyrics to share. You can bring your song on your cell phone or any small (phone-sized) digital device with Bluetooth capability or that can be docked.

Please do not bring your laptops, iPads, or tablets. Moreover, you will be expected to silence your phone (“Airplane Mode”) and leave it in another room (in your backpack, purse, or one of our “safe boxes”) where you will not have access to it during the marathon, except for this specific experience. If you are in step with other members of your age group, I can imagine that your day-long Separation from your phone or tablet could be difficult, scary, and confusing. I will help you face these uncomfortable feelings without fear. Please inform your family about the need for some uninterrupted time, unless there's an emergency. You will choose and bring three photographs that best show who you are right now. The photos should not be larger than 5” x 7”, and they cannot be collages of multiple images. Your pictures can feature anything that symbolizes, reflects, or represents you, such as people, animals, flowers, landscapes, seascapes, or abstract images. If you select photos from your digital collection, be sure to print copies to bring with you. You don’t need to print on glossy photo paper; regular paper is fine.

Eventually, the facilitators will ask the “hot seat” person to speak and briefly explain (no more than five minutes) the intended vision and message of the one song and three photographs. Unfortunately, the co-facilitators will have to limit the amount of time spent on this rich experience; otherwise, it could easily run the entire marathon. We will allow a total of two and a half hours (150 minutes) for this marathon encounter. Together, we will all be mindful of the time restraints without minimizing the genuine intimacy of the exchanges and interactions.

Final Exam:

The test will consist of multiple-choice questions, and they are designed to assess comprehensive application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluative consideration of knowledge gained over the semester. The final exam primarily derives from the weekly quizzes, forum activities, and Collaborate content and has a 125-point potential.

Comprehensive Group Study Guide: One of the most important qualities of an effective group counselor is spontaneous creativity (called “therapeutic spontaneity”). Group counselors constantly need to “invent” therapeutic experiences instinctively. All students are expected to create a study guide that includes:

AUTHOR

Provide a biography of the author and a brief narrative on the theoretical framework that he or she builds on to promote healthy group therapy.

CONCEPTS

Expand on the theoretical framework and provide specific elements or concepts he or she focuses on to promote healthy outcomes.

ROLES AND FUNCTION

Provide the role each person assumes from the author's point of view and analyze the relevance of outcomes according to the author. Make sure to include the counselor's role as well.

TECHNIQUES

Please provide the stages and techniques of the group approach to therapy. Provide examples of what type of case would be an ideal application.

EVALUATION

Describe the procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the specific lesson or experience with the group members. Each session must be evaluated, and the complete group experience must also be evaluated.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM REVIEW GUIDE

1. Group Process in Guidance and Counseling
2. Jacob Moreno
3. Self-help support groups
4. Stages of groups
5. Group co-leaders
6. Beginning a group
7. Group leadership skills
8. Norming and storming
9. Group cohesiveness and/or lack of
10. Steps in the forming stage
11. Tasks of the beginning group
12. Group process and group dynamics

PROPOSED COURSE OUTLINE

DATE	MODULES
Aug 31	Introduction Module Due
Aug 31	Module 01 Assignments Due
Sep 07	Module 02 Assignments Due
Sep 14	Module 03 Assignments Due
Sep 28	Module 04 Assignments Due
Oct 05	Module 05 Assignments Due
Oct 04	Marathon Group Event

Oct 12	Module 06 Assignments Due
Oct 19	Module 07 Assignments Due
Oct 26	Module 08 Assignments Due
Nov 02	Module 09 Assignments Due
Nov 02	Module 10 Assignments Due
Nov 09	Module 11 Assignments Due
Nov 16	Module 12 Assignments Due
Nov 27	Thanksgiving Holiday
Nov 23	Module 13 Assignments Due
Nov 30	Module 14 Assignments Due
Dec 7	Module 15 Assignments Due Final Exam Due Comprehensive Group Therapy Guideline Due

GROUP PROCESS: Observation Guidelines

Did everyone have opportunities to participate? Were some members excluded? Did a few dominate the discussion? Was an effort made to encourage participation? If some members did not participate, how might you explain this? What needs to happen in the group for everyone to be involved?

Leadership

Did a leader, as such, emerge? Was a leader designated? Was leadership shared? Was there any structuring of the group? Were facilitation skills demonstrated? If so, by whom? If not, why not?

Structures

What were the rules that guided the group? Did you notice any new or emerging rules or norms? Which rules seem to be present but unspoken? How was power demonstrated? Where and how did power flow during the group experience? Did the group appear to be avoiding something? If so, what was it? How did the group handle member anxiety? Where is your group developmentally? What needs to happen for your group to progress further?

Roles

Who came up with ideas? Who supported them? Was anything blocked? Who helped move decisions forward? Was there an effort to summarize and combine ideas? Do some members tend to assume “caretaking” roles and responsibilities? Does someone seem to be the main figure? Does someone appear to be the antagonist?

Decision-Making

Did the group generate many ideas before deciding, or did it focus on just one? Did everyone agree with the decisions made? Who helped influence the decisions of others? What issues did the group seem to (not) resolve? Did the group experience conflict? If so, why? If not, why not?

Communication

Did people feel free to speak? Were there interruptions or instances of cutting others off? Did people listen to one another? Was there clarification of the points discussed? Who did people look at when they talked?

Trust and Safety

Did members show sensitivity to each other's needs and concerns? What feelings did you observe expressed verbally or nonverbally? What level of trust do you currently have in the group? In which situations would you still not feel safe with your group? What needs to happen for members to feel more trust and safety?

Group Counseling FAQs

What is Group Counseling?

In group therapy, six to twelve people meet face-to-face with one or more trained group counselors to discuss what is bothering them. Members also provide feedback to each other by sharing their feelings about what someone says or does. This interaction helps group members try out new ways of behaving and learn more about how they relate to others. The environment is unique because it is a closed and safe system. The content of the group sessions is confidential; what members talk about or disclose is not discussed outside the group.

The initial sessions of a group usually focus on building trust. During this time, members work to develop trust that allows them to speak personally and honestly. Group trust is established when all members commit to the group.

Why does Group Counseling work?

When people join a group and freely interact with other members, they often reenact the issues that brought them to group counseling initially. Under the expert guidance of a group counselor, the group can provide support, suggest alternatives, or gently challenge the individual. This process helps resolve the issue, teaches new behaviors, and allows the person to develop fresh social skills or ways of relating to others. During group counseling, participants begin to realize they are not alone. Many

feel their problems make them unique, but hearing others face similar challenges can be very encouraging. In the trustful environment of the group, members feel comfortable caring about and helping each other.

What are the goals of Group Counseling?

- Exploring issues in an interpersonal context more accurately reflects real life.
- Group counseling provides an opportunity to observe and reflect on your own and others' interpersonal skills.
- Group counseling provides an opportunity to benefit through active participation and observation.
- Group counseling offers an opportunity to give and get immediate feedback about concerns, issues, and problems affecting one's life.
- Group counseling members benefit by working through personal issues in a supportive, confidential atmosphere and by helping others to work through theirs.

What are the benefits of Group Counseling?

- An increased sense of support and connectedness
- A decrease in self-criticism and negativity
- Renewed hope in one's own abilities
- Increased resourcefulness in finding solutions
- Greater ease in identifying feelings and self-disclosure
- A deepened trust in oneself and one's instincts
- More confidence in trying out possible solutions
- What can I talk about in Group Counseling?

Discuss what initially brought you to the session. Share with the group what's bothering you. If you need support, let the group know; if you think confrontation is necessary, mention that as well. It's important to communicate your expectations to others. Unspoken feelings often cause difficulties. Sharing your feelings (self-disclosure) is a key part of group counseling and influences how much you benefit. Appropriate disclosures are those directly related to your current problem. How much you share depends on what you're comfortable with. If you're unsure about what might help, feel free to ask the group.

What are the common misperceptions about Group Counseling?

- “I will be forced to tell all of my deepest thoughts, feelings and secrets to the group.”

You control what, how much, and when you share with the group. Most people find that when they feel safe enough to share what is troubling them, a group can be very helpful and supportive. You are encouraged not to share what you are not ready to disclose. You can also benefit from listening to others and considering how what they say might relate to your own situation.

- “Group counseling will take longer than individual counseling because I will have to share the time with others.”

Group therapy is often more effective than individual counseling for two main reasons. First, you can gain from the group even during sessions when you say very little but listen attentively to others. You will realize that you have much in common with other members, and as they work through their concerns, you can learn more about yourself. Second, group members often bring up issues that resonate with you, but that you might not have been aware of or mentioned yourself.

- “I will be verbally attacked by the leaders and by other group members.”

It is crucial for group members to feel safe. Group leaders are there to foster a secure environment. Feedback can sometimes be hard to accept. As group members build trust and acceptance, they usually see feedback and even confrontation as helpful, similar to how a close friend would offer advice. One advantage of group counseling is the chance to get feedback from others in a supportive setting. It's uncommon to have friends who gently point out behaviors that might hurt yourself or others, but that's exactly what the group can provide. This is done in a respectful, gentle manner so that you can hear and use it effectively.

- “Group counseling is second-best to individual counseling and psychotherapy.”

If group counseling is being recommended for a client, it is because a counseling professional believes it is the best way to address your concerns. Group counseling is suggested when it is the most effective method to help clients.

- “I have so much trouble talking with people; I'll never be able to share in a group.”

Most people feel anxious about speaking in a group. Almost without exception, after just a few sessions, people begin to talk in the group. Group members remember what it feels like to be new, so you will most likely receive a lot of support when you start talking.

How to Recognize an Effective Group

1. Members do not ignore seriously intended contributions.

Each member needs to understand the impact of their remarks to improve their participation in the group. When other members do not respond, the speaker cannot know whether:

- They did not understand his/her remark
- They understood it and agreed with it
- They understood it but disagreed with it
- They understood it but thought it was irrelevant

When this principle is followed, the discussion is cumulative, and the group moves forward together. When it is not followed, the debate becomes scattered, the same points are repeated, and members feel like no progress is being made.

2. Members check to make sure they know what a speaker means before they agree or disagree with his or her contribution.

The question, “What is it?” should come before the question, “How do we feel about it?” For example, understanding comes before evaluation. Therefore, group members often use paraphrasing, perception checks, and provisional summaries to clarify their assumptions about what others are saying and feeling.

3. Each member speaks only for “self” and lets others speak for themselves.

Each member shares his or her reactions as his or her own. He or she does not attribute them to others or give the impression that he or she is speaking for others. Each member reports his or her reactions honestly. He or she understands that unless he or she is true to himself or herself, the group cannot consider his or her feelings.

1. All contributions are viewed as belonging to the group, to be used or not as the group decides.

A member who makes a suggestion does not need to defend it as “his” or “hers” against others. Instead, everyone accepts responsibility for evaluating it as the group's shared property.

4. All members participate but in different and complementary ways.

When some members fulfill task functions, others perform interpersonal functions. While some members provide information, others ensure it is understood and organized or identify points of agreement and disagreement. Each member does not always participate in the same way. Instead, they fulfill whatever function is appropriate to their interest in the task, their information, and the behavior of other group members.

6. Whenever the group senses it is having trouble getting work done, it tries to find the reason.

Some signs of difficulty include excessive hair-splitting, repeating points repeatedly, proposing ideas that are dismissed without consideration, private conversations within subgroups, two or three people dominating the discussion, members taking sides and refusing to compromise, ideas being attacked before they are fully expressed, and apathetic participation. When these signs appear, the group often shifts from working on the task to discussing its own interpersonal dynamics. Addressing interpersonal issues helps prevent pluralistic ignorance. For example, each member may be confused but believe they are the only one.

7. The group recognizes that what it does is a result of its choices. No group can avoid making decisions; it cannot choose whether to decide, only how to decide. Therefore, an effective group makes decisions openly rather than by default.

When a group faces an issue, it must decide. It may openly agree to act or to take no action. It may also decide by default to take no action. Deciding by default not to act has the same effect on

the problem as openly agreeing not to act. However, decisions by default are perceived as failures by group members and cause tensions among them. A group grows more by openly agreeing not to act than by not acting because they could not reach an agreement.

The group sees each decision as a temporary trial that can be made, assessed, and changed based on experience. It understands that each decision doesn't have to be absolute or permanent. When the group decides not to proceed, it recognizes that the real choice was to not act, even if the apparent choice was to act. The group openly explores why the apparent and actual decisions differed. They aim to understand why some members agree with the decision even if they don't feel personally committed to implementing it. The group adopts different decision-making methods depending on the issue and the significance of the outcome. They might vote, assign the decision to a specific subgroup, flip a coin, or require unanimous agreement. The key is that everyone agrees on how decisions are made.

8. The group brings conflict into the open and deals with it.

The members recognize conflict as inevitable. They know the choice is theirs as to whether the conflict will be open (subject to group control) or disguised (out of control).

9. The group looks upon behavior that hinders its work as happening because the group allows or even wants it, not just as the result of a “problem member.”

A person who repeatedly introduces irrelevant topics can only change the subject if others follow his or her lead. Instead of blaming “him” or “her” as the problem, the group sees this as a shared issue. They ask why everyone allows it to happen. Maybe the other members welcome his digressions as a way to avoid open conflict that would arise if the discussion stayed on track. Similarly, the person who talks excessively, jokes too often, continually attacks others, or never participates signals a problem that involves the whole group. The group should discuss it openly as “our problem” to prevent the disruption. The group offers helpful feedback to individuals about how their actions affect the group. However, it does not analyze, dissect, or criticize them harshly.

Mindfulness and Counseling:

Mindful counselors can interact more effectively with their personal and professional environments; they can respond rather than react to life's unexpected happenings; they are more effective communicators both professionally and personally; they are also more creative and effective agents of client-desired change. A routine personal mindfulness practice provides the counseling graduate student with the knowledge and skills to:

- Slow down or stop the cascade of automatic and habitual reactions.
- See oneself and others more clearly.
- Listen deeply and understand situations just as they are.
- Be open to creativity beyond conditioning.
- Respond effectively to complex and/or emotionally charged situations.
- Act competently and ethically.

- Achieve balance and resilience in personal and professional lives.

Professional Counseling Identity and Behavior:

When registering for classes in the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College, graduate students agree to attend scheduled classes, complete assignments on time, participate in discussions, and engage fully in all experiential learning activities. Counseling faculty members set specific attendance and participation standards for each course. They may impose academic penalties for absences from certain classes or experiences; however, such penalties will be outlined in each course syllabus, distributed at the start of each class, and a copy will be kept in the departmental office.

The Counseling Program has specific policies and procedures that give students a clear, step-by-step path of courses to follow. Students are responsible for knowing and adhering to these policies and procedures. By the time a student joins the Experiential Block, it is expected that they have thoroughly read and understood all policies, procedures, and recommendations in the latest issue of the Counseling Program Handbook. This document covers everything about the Counseling Program, from initial courses to passing the Comprehensive Oral Examination and earning a master's degree in counseling. This is not a single academic program aimed at preparing students for advanced teaching roles or entry-level administrative positions but is instead a completely different profession. Counseling is not suitable for everyone. During their training, some students realize (or are advised by faculty) that counseling may not be the right fit for them or that they are not suited for the field. The faculty of the Counseling Program will provide ongoing, honest, and realistic feedback to each student regarding their progress and suitability for the program.

Unethical behavior, as outlined in the Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association, by a student enrolled in any counseling course will lead to that student's removal from the Counseling Program at International College and may also result in civil penalties. Professional conduct is always expected from every student across all counseling courses. Failing to uphold professionalism is considered unethical behavior. The Counseling Program emphasizes the importance of professional, personal, and academic growth as vital components in counselor education and training. Students are expected not only to succeed academically but also to comply with the professional and ethical standards of the field, demonstrate strong counseling skills and competencies, and focus on their personal development, as this impacts their ability to work effectively and ethically as counseling professionals.

Counseling students are expected to focus on their own social and emotional growth through deep self-reflection and mindfulness. They must be receptive to new and diverse ideas, prepared to examine their core values and assumptions, ready to acknowledge their prejudices and biases, willing to stay present with intense (sometimes painful) emotions that initially trigger the “fight- flight-freeze” response from the primitive limbic system, able to accept critical feedback from peers with an open mind and a compassionate heart, and capable of engaging in personal growth and transformation. Sometimes, this involves exploring one's own life experiences and making room for understanding inner struggles and emotional barriers to growth. Willingness to undertake this vital personal work is a key component of any counselor's professional training.

Therefore, graduation from the Counseling Program requires students to successfully complete both the academic and experiential requirements with careful attention to their professional and personal growth. Students must, in the professional judgment of the faculty and supervisors, understand and act in accordance with the professional standards of conduct, meet the necessary counseling competencies and skills to work effectively as professional counselors, and be free of any psychological or emotional impairments that could hinder effective interpersonal or therapeutic interventions. Throughout the counseling coursework and practical experiences, faculty members regularly evaluate student progress based on these key qualities:

- Openness to new ideas
- Flexibility
- Cooperativeness with others
- Willingness to accept and use feedback
- Awareness of own impact on others
- Ability to deal with conflict
- Ability to accept personal responsibility
- Ability to express feelings effectively and appropriately
- Attention to ethical and legal considerations
- Initiative and motivation
- Development of professional skills and competencies
- Psychological functioning and mindful self-management

WRITING RUBRIC FOR ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Sub-skill	Beginning 1	Basic 2	Proficient 3	Advanced 4	Exceptional 5	Score
Integration of Knowledge	The paper did not incorporate knowledge from the literature or class in relevant and meaningful ways	The paper somewhat incorporated knowledge from the literature in relevant and meaningful ways	The paper incorporated knowledge from the literature in relevant and meaningful ways	The paper effectively incorporated knowledge from the literature in relevant and meaningful ways	The paper very effectively incorporated knowledge from the literature in relevant and meaningful ways	
Organization and Presentation	The paper lacked topic sentences, transitions from one topic to another, relevant connections among topics, and a	The paper occasionally included topic sentences, transitions from one topic to another, relevant connections	The paper consistently included topic sentences, transitions from one topic to another, relevant connections	The paper consistently and effectively employed topic sentences, transitions from one topic to another,	The paper uniformly and very effectively employed topic sentences, transitions from one topic to another,	

Sub-skill	Beginning 1	Basic 2	Proficient 3	Advanced 4	Exceptional 5	Score
	seamless flow	among topics, and a seamless flow	among topics, and a seamless flow	relevant connections among topics, and a seamless flow	relevant connections among topics, and a seamless flow	
Focus	The paper's topic lacked focus and a clear direction	The paper's topic had occasional focus, direction, and purpose	The paper's topic had focus and clarity of direction and purpose	The paper's topic had effective focus and clarity of direction and purpose	The paper's topic had very effective focus and clarity of direction and purpose	
Level of Coverage	The paper lacked depth, elaboration, and relevant material	The paper occasionally included depth, elaboration, and relevant material	The paper included depth, elaboration, and relevant material	The paper effectively included depth, elaboration, and relevant material	The paper very effectively included depth, elaboration, and relevant material	
Grammar/ Spelling	The paper contained numerous errors of grammar and spelling	The paper contained some errors of grammar and spelling	The paper contained very few errors of grammar and spelling	The paper contained only one or two errors of grammar and spelling	The paper contained no errors of grammar and spelling	
References and Sources	The paper did not include content from peer reviewed journal articles and/or scholarly books/book chapters and instead cited web site material of questionable veracity	The paper included content from a few peer reviewed journal articles and scholarly books/book chapters and instead included material from web sites of questionable credibility	The paper included content from peer reviewed journal articles and scholarly books/book chapters and only included material from credible web sites	The paper effectively included content from peer reviewed journal articles and scholarly books/book chapters and only included material from credible web sites	The paper very effectively included content from peer reviewed journal articles or scholarly books/book chapters and only included material from credible web sites.	
APA Style	The paper did not use APA style	The paper was partly based on APA style	The paper was mostly based on APA style	The paper was based on APA style with only a	The paper was completely and	

Sub-skill	Beginning 1	Basic 2	Proficient 3	Advanced 4	Exceptional 5	Score
				few exceptions	accurately based on APA style	
Total Score						
Mean Score						

Comments: _____

Student Name: _____ A# _____

Assignment: _____ Date: _____