



**Spring Special Trimester, 2026  
OT 530  
Group Dynamics**

## SYLLABUS AND TOPICAL OUTLINE

Instructor Information	
<b>Faculty</b>	Professor Morgan Villano, MPA, MSPS, OTR/L
<b>Contact</b>	<a href="mailto:villanom11@sacredheart.edu">villanom11@sacredheart.edu</a>
<b>Office Hours</b>	By appointment
<b>Office Location</b>	N121
<b>Phone</b>	860-833-9318 (cell)

### Course Overview

Course Information	
<b>Course Meeting Times</b>	Thursdays Section A 12:30-2:30pm Thursdays Section B 3-5pm
<b>Format</b>	Adapted TBL: iRAT, tRAT, Mini-Lectures, In-Class Experiential Participation/Observation. Group Presentations, Individual Presentation on Group Engagement, Midterm and Final Exams held in S 205 @ CHE
<b>Location</b>	Building location: CHE, 4000 Park Avenue, Fairfield, CT <b>Class location: S 205</b>
<b>Credit &amp; Workload</b>	This course is offered in a 16-week semester calendar. One (1) credit hour represents 45 hours of work over the course of a term, which includes activities such as lectures, discussions, group work, individual work, and experiential activities For a two (2) credit hour course, the total expected workload is 90 hours. In a 16-week course, this course averages approximately 5.6 hours per week.
<b>Prerequisites</b>	Fall Special Trimester courses 2025.

### Course Information

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION and PURPOSE:**

Description: The Group Dynamics course provides Occupational Therapy Students (OTS) exposure to Yalom therapeutic group dynamics content, application of Yalom's content to OT psychiatric group settings, and provides OTS the opportunity to learn and experience how to integrate OT Frames of References and Models into OT group therapy. The intention of the course is to prepare entry level OTS to use group therapy dynamics content across the Lifespan population, at both individual and group levels, as well as expose entry level OTS to the process



and procedures for facilitating therapeutic groups to address the symptomology of a varied of psychiatric diagnoses, in varied therapeutic treatment environments.

Purpose: In this course students will develop an understanding of group theory, group processes, and group practice. Additionally, the course focuses on how occupational therapists utilize therapeutic groups for assessment and intervention using frames of reference and theoretical models.

### COURSE RELATIONSHIP TO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE AND AOTA VISION 2030

“Vision 2030 is:

- *The guiding force and definitive aspiration for the profession, to which AOTA aligns its organizational, strategic, and operational plans for maximum mission impact over the next five years.*
- *Inextricably linked to AOTA’s mission to advance occupational therapy practice, education, and research through standard setting and advocacy on behalf of its members, the profession, and the public.*
- *Essential to the profession’s ongoing viability and success,” (AOTA, 2025).*



**Vision Statement:** Enriching life for ALL individuals and society through meaningful engagement in everyday activities.

Foundational Pillars			
<b>Inclusive and Equitable Professional Community</b>	<b>Evidence-Based, Client-Centered, and Innovative Practice</b>	<b>Universally Recognized with Valued Excellence</b>	<b>Occupational Justice and Advocacy</b>
Creates a supportive environment fostering belonging, collaboration, networking, and continuous learning for all professionals to enhance growth and development.	Delivers high-quality and skilled care using latest research, focusing on individual client needs and goals while encouraging innovative approaches to enhance treatment outcomes.	Establishes occupational therapy’s importance across various settings, demonstrating its unique value in improving individuals’ quality of life and functional abilities.	Promotes education, advocacy, accessibility, and the right for ALL to engage in meaningful occupations through collaboration with consumers, other professionals, and policymakers.

**RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM DESIGN:** The Sacred Heart University occupational therapy program curriculum-design is based on the longstanding symbol of occupational therapy, the profession, going back to our professional history and roots, to that of weaving. Weaving is the craft of fabric production, in which two distinct sets of yarns or threads are interlaced at right angles to form a fabric or cloth. The visual representation of a piece of cloth shows the intersections of the warp and weft of the woven fabric. Our curriculum design utilizes the warp as a representation of the values of the profession, the program, and the university.



Within this course, the values of *authenticity, justice, integrity, altruism, and open-mindedness* are emphasized. The weft are the threads or streams of occupational therapy content, knowledge, skills, the experiences that comprise the foundation of our program (occupational performance analysis and interpretation, enabling occupations, scholarship, professional communication, interpersonal skills, and professionalism).



**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:** Course content will be provided primarily in facilitation of Team Based Learning opportunities, which include mini-lectures, in-class discussion, demonstrations, readings, and experiential opportunities. Students will experience a variety of “hands-on” activities, role-plays, videos, and demonstrations. There will be both a midterm and a final exam.

**COURSE POLICIES:** All university programs and courses adhere fully to the University Policy on Academic Integrity, as stated in the [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs](#) and on the [Academic Integrity Web Page](#). Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, and other unethical behavior) could result in a grade of F for the assignment and/or course. This syllabus and course outline are subject to change by the instructor during the semester. Changes may be necessary because of students’ specific interest(s), general class progression, and class cancellations. If such changes are implemented, they will be announced in class and posted online. This syllabus and any addendums attached shall not be construed by the student as a contract, implied or expressed, between the student and/or the professor and the University.

**STUDENT BUDGET FOR COURSE SUPPLIES:** You may be asked to bring supplies from your home, such as colored pencils, paper, etc. If you do not have the supplies, you can contact your instructor directly. There should not be any other purchases required, supply wise, for the course.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES:** Each program in OT must meet the same Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) standards. How they are met varies from program to program. In each program, each standard must be addressed in at least two courses. The standards that are addressed in this course are listed in the table below. This link will allow you to review the ACOTE standards: [ACOTE](#)



The course objectives, program objectives, the mission and vision of the department and the overall curricular design are all linked to the ACOTE standards. Table 1 shows the connection between the entire course series objectives, the program objectives they are linked to, and the ACOTE standards that are addressed in this course, as well as how we plan to meet and measure the learning objectives for this course.

**Table 1- Course, Learning, & Program Objectives, ACOTE standards, Learning Outcomes & Measures**

Course Objective	Program Objective	ACOTE Standard	Learning Objectives	Assessment Strategies
Reflect on how group theories/group process, and OT models of practice and frames of reference shape OT group interventions.	Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist, including critical thinking and clinical reasoning Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills, professional competence and reasoning, required of an entry-level occupational therapist, including critical thinking, professional and clinical reasoning, and culturally responsive approaches that promote occupation and equitable participation in human occupations.  Engage in continual learning and evidence-based practice	B.2.1 Apply, analyze, and evaluate scientific evidence, theories, models of practice, and frames of reference that underlie the practice of occupational therapy to guide and inform interventions for persons, groups, and populations in a variety of practice contexts and environments.	Readings, lectures and discussions on group therapy theories/ research and on the application of OT frames of reference to group interventions	Yalom Group Presentations  Midterm and Final Exams  Participation in class experiential learning opportunities  Photo Story Assignment  Group Intervention/Protocol Assignment



	with intellectual open-mindedness Students will stay engaged in ongoing learning and using reliable evidence to guide decisions, while remaining open to new ideas and perspectives.			
Monitor and reflect on group leaders' and members' behaviors and interactions as seen in different group contexts.	Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist, including critical thinking and clinical reasoning Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills, professional competence and reasoning, required of an entry-level occupational therapist, including critical thinking, professional and clinical reasoning, and culturally responsive approaches that promote occupation and equitable participation in human occupations.  Engage in continual learning and evidence-based practice	B1.2: Apply and analyze the role of sociocultural, socioeconomic, and diversity, equity, and inclusion factors, as well as lifestyles in contemporary society to meet the needs of persons, groups, and populations. Course content must include, but is not limited to, introductory psychology, abnormal psychology, and introductory sociology or introductory anthropology.  B.2.2: Analyze and evaluate occupational therapy history, philosophical base, theory,	Readings/lectures on group process, dynamics and roles; participation in discussion of videos/descriptions of group therapy interventions	Yalom Group Presentations  Midterm and Final Exams  Participation in class experimental learning opportunities  Photo Story Assignment



	with intellectual open-mindedness Students will stay engaged in ongoing learning and using reliable evidence to guide decisions, while remaining open to new ideas and perspectives.	and sociopolitical climate and their importance in meeting society's current and future occupational needs as well as how these factors influence and are influenced by practice.		
Identify different client populations that can benefit from a particular type of a group intervention	Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist, including critical thinking and clinical reasoning Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills, professional competence and reasoning, required of an entry-level occupational therapist, including critical thinking, professional and clinical reasoning, and culturally responsive approaches that promote occupation and equitable participation in human occupations.	B.1.2: Apply and analyze the role of sociocultural, socioeconomic, and diversity, equity, and inclusion factors, as well as lifestyles in contemporary society to meet the needs of persons, groups, and populations. Course content must include, but is not limited to, introductory psychology, abnormal psychology, and introductory sociology or introductory anthropology.	Readings, lectures and discussions on group therapy theories/ research and on the application of OT frames of reference to group interventions with diverse populations.	Midterm and Final Exams  Class experiential learning opportunities  Group Intervention/Protocol Assignment



	Engage in continual learning and evidence-based practice with intellectual open-mindedness. Students will stay engaged in ongoing learning and using reliable evidence to guide decisions, while remaining open to new ideas and perspectives.			
Select group interventions while integrating literature/ research evidence, expert opinion and personal experience.	Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist, including critical thinking and clinical reasoning. Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills, professional competence and reasoning, required of an entry-level occupational therapist, including critical thinking, professional and clinical reasoning, and culturally responsive approaches that promote occupation and equitable participation in human occupations.	B.2.1 Apply, analyze, and evaluate scientific evidence, theories, models of practice, and frames of reference that underlie the practice of occupational therapy to guide and inform interventions for persons, groups, and populations in a variety of practice contexts and environments.	Readings, lectures and discussions on group therapy theories/ research and on the application of OT frames of reference to group interventions; participation in class discussions.	Midterm and Final Exams  Participation in class experiential learning opportunities  Yalom Group Presentations  Group Intervention/Protocol Assignment



	<p>Engage in continual learning and evidence-based practice with intellectual open-mindedness. Students will stay engaged in ongoing learning and using reliable evidence to guide decisions, while remaining open to new ideas and perspectives.</p>			
<p>Reflect on personal traits and abilities and determine areas for personal growth and professional development to ensure therapeutic use of self as a group leader.</p>	<p>Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist, including critical thinking and clinical reasoning. Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills, professional competence and reasoning, required of an entry-level occupational therapist, including critical thinking, professional and clinical reasoning, and culturally responsive approaches that promote occupation and equitable participation in human occupations.</p>	<p>B.2.1 Apply, analyze, and evaluate scientific evidence, theories, models of practice, and frames of reference that underlie the practice of occupational therapy to guide and inform interventions for persons, groups, and populations in a variety of practice contexts and environments.</p>	<p>Readings, lectures and discussions on the therapeutic use of self as a group leader; participation in class discussions</p>	<p>Midterm and Final Exams.  Varied assignments per T.O.  Photo Story Assignment</p>



	<p>Engage in continual learning and evidence-based practice with intellectual open-mindedness. Students will stay engaged in ongoing learning and using reliable evidence to guide decisions, while remaining open to new ideas and perspectives.</p>			
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## TOPICAL OUTLINE AND COURSE SCHEDULE:

*Subject to change per instructor*

**Table 2: Topical Outline**

Week	Readings	Content	Assignments	Assessment Strategies
<p><b>1</b> Jan 8</p>	<p>Cole Text Chapter 1  PPT</p>	<p>Course Introduction  Review of Assignments  Introduction to Groups  Introduction to Cole's 7 Steps</p>	<p>Predominantly lecture based today  Focus of this class is to take notes on assignments, ask questions about assignments and then begin to digest the class content.</p>	<p>Class Participation</p>
<p><b>2</b> Jan 15</p>	<p>Cole Text Chapter 2  Cole Text: Chapter 3  PPT</p>	<p>Group Development Stages  Group goals  Group Norms  Group Roles  Characteristics of effective</p>	<p>Quizzes, Seminar, and Group discussion In-class learning experiences and activities</p>	<p>iRAT Cole Chapters 1, 2, 3 – in class, unless otherwise instructed  tRAT on Cole Chapters 1, 2, 3 – in class  Class Participation</p>



		groups/problems and challenges in groups		
<b>3</b> Jan 22	Brene Brown Audio link – listen to before class  Yalom, Chapter 1 and part of Chapter 2 per Bb  PPT	Introduction to Yalom Therapeutic Factors, and the Relationship Group Dynamics	Quizzes, Seminar, and Group discussion In-class learning experiences and activities	iRAT Yalom Chapter 1 and part of Chapter 2 – in class, unless otherwise instructed  tRAT Yalom Chapter 1 and part of Chapter 2 per Bb- held in class  Class Participation
<b>4</b> Jan 29	Yalom Chapter 7 – pages 201-229  PPT	Introduction of Transference and Transparency	Quizzes, Seminar, and Group discussion In class learning experience is to prepare for your Yalom Therapeutic Factors Presentation for week 5	iRAT on Yalom Chapter 7 pgs 210-229- in class, unless otherwise instructed  tRAT on Yalom Chapter 7 pgs 201-229- held in class.  Class Participation
<b>5</b> Feb 5	N/a	Yalom presentations	In class Yalom Therapeutic Factors PPT and live group facilitation demonstrations— <b>GRADED PRESENTATION</b>	All sections will be combined 12:30-2:30 for the presentations.  3-5pm will be a special Topics Presentation for all sections.  Class Participation  This could be changed.
<b>6</b> Feb 12	Cole Text: Chapter 8  Cole Text: Appendix B	Models/Frames of reference as it applies to Group Therapy: Developmental/Lifespan	Quizzes, Seminar, and Group discussion  In-class learning experiences and activities	iRAT on Cole Chapters 8, 11 & Appendix B- in class, unless otherwise instructed  tRAT on Cole Chapters 8 & 11 and Appendix B- held in class.  Class Participation



	Cole Text: Chapter 11  PPT			
<b>7</b> Feb 19	Cole Text: Chapter 6  PPT	Models/Frames of reference as it applies to Group Therapy: Behavioral Cognitive Continuum	Quizzes, Seminar, and Group discussion  In-class learning experiences and activities	iRAT on Cole Chapter 6- completed in class  tRAT on Cole Chapter 6- held in class.  Class Participation
<b>8</b> Feb 26	Midterm	Midterm on: Cole Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 11 and Appendices B&E.	Midterm Held in S205	Midterm Held in S205
<b>9</b> Mar 5	Spring Break No Class	Spring Break No Class	Spring Break No Class	Work on Photo Story assignment
<b>10</b> Mar 12	Cole Text: Chapter 5  Cole Text: Appendi x C  PPT	Models/Frames of reference as it applies to Group Therapy: Psychodynamic  <i>Psychodynamic focus, Freudian concepts in groups Group evaluation, interventions and occupational therapy Group leadership</i>	Quizzes, Seminar, and Group discussion  In-class learning experiences and activities	iRAT on Cole Chapter 5 and Appendix C- in class, unless otherwise instructed  tRAT on Cole Chapter 5 and Appendix – held in class.  Class Participation  Group Intervention/Protocol Assignment
<b>11</b> Mar 19	Cole Text: Chapter 7  PPT	Models/Frames of reference Cognitive Disabilities	Quizzes, Seminar, and Group discussion  In-class learning experiences and activities	iRAT on Cole Chapter 7- in class, unless otherwise instructed  tRAT on Cole Chapter 7- completed in class.



		<i>Allen's Cognitive Approach Six Cognitive Levels Groups – evaluation and interventions</i>		Class Participation
<b>12</b> Mar 26	Cole Text: Chapter 10  PPT	Models/Frames of reference MOHO and other occupation-based models	Seminar, and Group discussion  In-class learning experiences and activities	iRAT on Cole Chapter 10 – in class, unless otherwise instructed  tRAT on Cole Chapter 10-completed in class.  Class Participation
<b>13</b> Apr 2	Cole Text: Chapter 9  PPT	Models/Frames of reference: Sensorimotor Approaches/Groups  Ross – 5 Stage Group	Quizzes, Seminar, and Group discussion  In-class learning experiences and activities  Watch M. Ross video BEFORE class: <a href="https://echo360.org/media/1d38368f2f122dfb51b9649d752c624e6f2b922d310c28f2034fb200b101e4a6407cc2fba535cc6b/public">https://echo360.org/media/1d38368f2f122dfb51b9649d752c624e6f2b922d310c28f2034fb200b101e4a6407cc2fba535cc6b/public</a>	iRAT on Cole Chapter 9 – in class, unless otherwise instructed  tRAT on Cole Chapter 9-completed in class.  Class Participation
<b>14</b> Apr 9	Final Exam	Final on: Cole Chapters 5,6,7, 9, 10 and Appendix C	Final Exam	Final Exam: S 205, during your scheduled class time.
<b>15</b> Apr 16	Photo Story Presentations	N/a	Each section will have half of the section present their Photo Story	Each section will have half of the section present their Photo Story
<b>16</b> Apr 23	Photo Story Presentations	N/a	Each section will have half of the section present their Photo Story	Each section will have half of the section present their Photo Story

### Final Grades:

*Please read this section carefully.* Final grades will be determined by student performance according to the following:



Assignment/Assessment	Percentage of Grade
Individual Readiness Assessment Tests (iRAT)	8%
Team Readiness Assessment Tests (tRAT)	Each iRAT = 0.5 Each tRAT = 0.5
Jan 15, 22, 29	
Feb 12, 19	
March 12, 19	
Yalom Therapeutic Factors Presentation and Group Facilitation	12.34 %
Midterm Exam	15%
Group Intervention/Protocol Assignment	7.33 %
Final Exam	20%
Photo Story Assignment	30%
In class assignment due 3.26.26	7.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

The final letter grade is assigned in accordance with the university grading policy: [SHU Graduate Grading System](#).

## Student Expectations

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY and PARTICIPATION:** Please refer to the 2025-2027 O.T. Student Handbook.

**PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS:** Please refer to the 2025-2027 O.T. Student Handbook.

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PLATFORMS:** In accordance with Sacred Heart University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), the use of Artificial Intelligence platforms is on a case-by-case basis in the Department of Occupational Therapy. Students are permitted to use artificial intelligence chatbots (such as ChatGPT) **only when explicitly directed by the instructor**. If you are ever unsure whether the use of an artificial intelligence chatbot is allowed, please contact the instructor prior to using it.

**ATTENDANCE:** As per program policy, a 100% attendance rate for all courses is required. Absences from classes are allowed only under extraordinary circumstances, such as illnesses, emergencies, religious obligations, or important family events, e.g., wedding of an immediate family member. Documentation for an absence due to an important family event requires at least three weeks advance notice, and documentation of all other absences confirming circumstances that caused them are required within a week of returning to school. Please contact the course instructor in advance of an absence unless it is an emergency. In case of emergency, notify the department as soon as possible. Failure to follow these procedures will result in the total grade reduction of one letter grade increment for each unexcused absence. Please refer to COVID Contingencies policy in the Student Manual with regards to absences/isolation for colds and flu symptoms, or the SHU [Coronavirus](#) web page. Please note



that, while classes might take place online (using Zoom, Webex, or Microsoft Teams) in case of inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances, attendance policies for the online classes are the same as for the in-person classes. To the extent permitted by federal and state copyright laws, the class lectures and materials provided by the professor are copyrighted. By participating in the class lectures, students consent to the video and audio recording of said lectures. As part of the requirements of the course, students are required to participate, whether in person or via electronic communications. At the professor's discretion, students may be required to leave their audio and video devices on during the class lectures.

**INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP WORK:** Students are responsible for independent reading of all materials. Students are responsible for independent work, unless there is a requirement for group work. If group work is a requirement, students are expected to participate fully, collaborate, share, and exchange in equal measure.

### **COURSE MATERIALS:**

Cole, M.B. (2025). *Group Dynamics in Occupational Therapy: The Theoretical Basis and Practice Application of Group Intervention*, (6<sup>th</sup> ed). Routledge.

Link to SHU Bookstore: [SHU Bookstore](#)

## **How We Support Your Learning at SHU**

### **UNIVERSITY STUDENT SUPPORTS**

**Our Commitment to Inclusive Excellence-** Inclusive Excellence is the recognition that our institution's success depends on how well we value, engage, and include the rich diversity of students, staff, faculty, administrators, alums, and surrounding community. For more information about inclusive excellence, visit the Office for Inclusive Excellence (OIE) [website](#), or call 203-365-7530.

If you believe you have witnessed or experienced bias, discrimination, or harassment in any way, you are encouraged to submit an Incident Report or contact <http://inclusiveexcellence@sacredheart.edu>. If you are experiencing challenges with accessing food, housing, technology, or other resources that may affect your performance, you are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students, Denise Tiberio, at [tiberiod@sacredheart.edu](mailto:tiberiod@sacredheart.edu). There are university resources available to support you.

### **UNIVERSITY SUPPORT OFFICES**

There are multiple support offices eager to support your learning and success at SHU:

**Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)** - offers tutoring, writing, and learning support for all SHU undergraduate and graduate students. Visit the PASS Portal to sign up for tutoring, submit



a paper for feedback through the Online Writing Lab (OWL), or look up peer-assisted learning opportunities for specific courses. Questions? Contact <http://CTLtutoring@sacredheart.edu>.

**Office of Student Advising & Success** – offers appointments with student success coordinators and advisors who are ready and eager to meet with you about exploring majors and programs, and key academic skills such as time management. Questions? Contact [studentsuccess@sacredheart.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@sacredheart.edu).

**Technical Support @ The Factory** – offers technical support, including Blackboard and classroom technology help, across walk-in, phone, self-service, help articles formats. Questions? Contact [techsupport@sacredheart.edu](mailto:techsupport@sacredheart.edu).

**University Library** – offers research and information support, in person and online. To begin your research now, you can book a study room, schedule an appointment with a librarian, and explore online tutorials all through the SHU Library website. Questions? Contact <http://reference@sacredheart.edu>.

**Counseling & Ministry Supports** - Students may experience a variety of challenges while enrolled at SHU. Information about undergraduate counseling and graduate counseling services are available via the Counseling Center website <https://www.sacredheart.edu/offices--departments-directory/counseling-center/>. Campus Ministry also provides faith-based support for students on their website <https://www.sacredheart.edu/offices--departments-directory/campus-ministry/>.

**Academic Accommodations & The Office of Student Accessibility**- Sacred Heart University provides equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of disability status. Students requesting accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility (OSA): <https://www.sacredheart.edu/offices--departments-directory/office-of-student-accessibility/>. Students must be registered with the Office of Student Accessibility and submit appropriate documentation to be granted accommodations. For further information, please contact Kathy Radziunas, Director of OSA, <http://radziunask@sacredheart.edu>.