1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will employ multicultural and critical perspectives to understand individuals, families, and their interpersonal and group relationships, life span development, and theories of well-being, stress, coping, and adaptation. This course will emphasize knowledge about individuals and small social systems and the implications of this knowledge for all domains of social work practice. Students will be introduced to the concepts of risk and protective factors, with relevant examples at the individual and small system levels. Students will also consider the implications of this knowledge for intervening in social problems and supporting rehabilitation once problems have developed. Major components of the course will be concerned with the processes of oppression, privilege, and discrimination and factors that help people and small social systems to change. The knowledge presented will include the interrelationships between smaller and larger social systems, and in particular, how biological factors and the larger social and physical environments shape and influence individual and family well-being.

2. COURSE CONTENT

Content will include selected theories of human behavior, human development, families and small groups, and individual and small system change. Students will consider the processes through which relevant concepts have been developed, the types of knowledge and data that inform different theories, and the current gaps and controversies in biological, behavioral, and social science knowledge and theory. Emphasis will be placed on similarities and differences related to human diversity and dynamics of oppression and privilege, including ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation. In addition, this course will focus on how individual-level and small system-level factors and processes can facilitate attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, family characteristics, and group processes that either promote multicultural human well-being and social justice or help to recreate inequities and problems.
3. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge about and be able to critically analyze relevant theories of human behavior, human development, families and small groups, and individual and small system change through the life course emphasizing similarities and differences and the effects of oppression and privilege.

2. Articulate the concepts of risk and protective factors and give examples at the individual, group, and family levels.

3. Describe the impact of diverse dimensions such as ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation on risk and protective factors, human development, human interactions, and the structures of small social systems.

4. Identify the interrelations among smaller and larger social systems and describe how biological factors and larger social and physical environments interact to influence individual and family well-being.

5. Describe how relevant concepts have been socially constructed, what knowledge and empirical evidence support selected theories, some current gaps in knowledge, and key controversies about these theories and related knowledge.

6. Conceptualize how individual and small system factors and processes can either promote multicultural human well-being or recreate inequities and problems.

7. Examine theories of individual, family, and group change and their relevance for all types of social work practice towards a multicultural and socially just world.

8. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to human differences, social relationships, well-being, and change through the life course.

4. COURSE DESIGN

The instructor for this course will select required and recommended readings. In addition, the instructor will include a range of pedagogical methods, such as participatory discussions, films, written assignments, and experiential exercises related to course materials. Guest speakers may be invited to address special topics.

5. RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO CURRICULAR THEMES

Multiculturalism & Diversity:
Students will examine the ways in which the diverse dimensions affect individuals and small social systems. Emphasis will also be placed on the processes of oppression, privilege, and discrimination, as well as the factors that help people and small social systems to change.

Social Justice and Social Change:
Students will analyze selected theories in terms of the factors and processes that either promote social justice and change or help to perpetuate inequities and problems.
**Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation:**
Students will learn about social problems, as well as the spectrum of interventions and supportive rehabilitation currently used to alleviate these problems.

**Behavioral and Social Science Research:**
Students will critically analyze relevant theories of human behavior, human development, families and small groups, and individual and small system change through the life course. The research supporting these theories will provide a foundation for the content in this course.

**6. RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO SOCIAL WORK ETHICS AND VALUES**

As human development throughout the life course is so profoundly impacted by environmental and social conditions, this course will emphasize the critique and evaluation of various developmental theories from a multicultural perspective and a social justice perspective. This course will also consider potential ethical dilemmas that may arise for social workers working with individuals, families, and small groups. The impact of social conditions and social policy and the need for macro and micro intervention to improve the lives of clients will also be addressed.

**7. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**A. Academic Conduct and Integrity**

Please see the Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct in the Student Guide to the Master's in Social Work Degree Program (http://www.ssw.umich.edu/studentGuide/2007/) for a discussion of student responsibilities for academic conduct and integrity. Students who are found responsible for academic misconduct are subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the School of Social Work, revocation of degree, or any other sanction deemed appropriate to address the violation.

**B. Attendance, Participation & Support your Buddy (10% of your course grade)**

Three parts constitute 10% of your course grade:
(1) Attendance. Arriving on time and staying throughout the entire class time are required. In consideration of your classmates, please turn off cell phones, pagers, and all other potentially distracting devices during class. If you are on call, please set your pager to vibrate. More than two absences may result in a lower grade. You are responsible for obtaining lecture notes and handouts from your classmates if a class is missed.
(2) Participation. You are expected to read the assigned readings prior to class each week and actively participate in all class discussions and activities.
(3) Buddy system. Each of you should be a buddy of another student. In general, buddies help and support each other to learn and succeed. Specific tasks of the buddy include: (a) listen and provide feedback to ideas about the assignments particularly the multidimensional assessment assignment, and (b) review and give comments before the work is submitted to the instructor. In other words, you should give a copy of your pre-submitted work to your buddy for review. At the end of the semester, I will ask each of you about your experience with your buddy.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you need accommodation for a disability or other special need, please let me know so that we can work out the necessary arrangements. Also note that Office of Student Services at the SSW offers support to students with disabilities, as well as students with other issues such as emotional, health, family, and financial problems.
Religious Observances
Please notify me if religious observances conflict with class or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.


(1) Multidimensional Assessment (40%)—write a paper in which you apply a multidimensional framework to evaluate the social functioning of a current or former client. A proposal for your assessment is due on October 26/27. The final paper is due on December 7/8. (Detailed instructions in a separate handout.)

(2) Critique Two Required Articles (20%, @10%)—choose two articles from the required reading and write a critique of each. The critique should be posted on CTools 48 hours prior to the corresponding class session. (Detailed instructions in a separate handout.)

(3) Presentations of the Critique (10%, @5%)—you should present your critique to the class, in collaboration with other students who also work on the same article.

(4) Final Exam (20%)—you will be given exam questions via CTools on December 9. Your answers have to be submitted, also via CTools, by December 15. The questions will require you to apply course content to written case material or scenario. You will find instructions related to the technical and ethical aspects of taking the exam when receiving the questions.

D. Grading
Letter grades from "A" through "E" are given for class performance. "A" grades are given for exceptional individual performance and mastery of the material. The use of "A+", "A", and "A-" distinguish the degree of superiority. "B" grades are given to students who demonstrate mastery of the material. "B+" is used for students who perform just above the mastery level but not in an exceptional manner. "B-" is used for students just below the mastery level. "C" grades are given when mastery of the material is minimal. A "C-" is the lowest grade which carries credit. "D" grades indicate deficiency and carry no credit. "E" grades indicate failure and carry no credit.

8. REQUIRED TEXT AND ARTICLES

(Note: The 4th edition (2010) of the textbook is now available. If you prefer to use this new edition, please match the chapters by yourself with the ones I assigned for required reading.)

Required articles are available on our course website in CTools.

Other readings, in addition to those listed in this syllabus, may be assigned. They will be announced and posted on CTools prior to the corresponding class session.
9. COURSE CALENDAR AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

This schedule is preliminary; any changes will be announced in class and on CTools.

September 8: Introduction and Overview
No assigned readings.

September 14/15: Multidimensional Approach to Assessment in Social Work


September 21/22: Biophysical Development and Functioning


September 28/29: Psychological Development and Functioning


October 5/6: Social Systems and Human Development


**October 12/13: Preconception, Pregnancy, Birth, and the Newborn (Guest lecture: genetic counseling and prenatal development)**


**Life’s Greatest Miracle (PBS online program)**

**October 19-20 FALL STUDY BREAK**

**October 26/27: Infancy**


**November 2/3: Early Childhood**


November 9/10: Middle Childhood


Monks C. P. et al. (2009). Bullying in different contexts: Commonalities, differences and the role of theory. *Aggression and violent behavior, 14*, 146-156.


November 16/17: Adolescence


*Inside the teenage brain (PBS online program)*
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/view/

November 23/24: Young Adulthood


November 30 / December 1: Middle Adulthood


**December 7/8: Late Adulthood**

