SW 715: Adventure/Experiential-Based Social Work Practice
Spring-Summer 2011

Instructor: Antonio G Alvarez
Tuesday 1:00- 5:00 PM (May 10, 17, 24, 31, June 7, 14, 21, 28)
Wednesday 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM May 18
Saturday 9:00 AM- 1:00 PM June 25
SSWB Room 3816
Office: Rm. 2784
Office hours- Tuesday 10-12; by appointment preferred
aalvarez@umich.edu

Course Description
This course will focus on experiential and adventure practice (theories, models, tools and techniques) that social workers may use in their work with individuals, groups, families, organizations and communities. Some particular focus will be given to their use in social work with groups. Students will be introduced to adventure through readings, discussions, guest speakers and experiences. This course is designed to provide the student with a theoretical, philosophical and experiential understanding of adventure and experiential learning and its application to Social Work Practice. Theoretical models of practice arising out of the adventure and experiential fields will be offered and discussed in tandem with current social work theories and models of practice. Evidence-based literature will be reviewed to promote experiential interventions that build on strengths and resources of individuals and their families, and that integrate components of evidence based practice into the experiential methodologies.

Course Content
Course content will include:

- Theoretical and philosophical foundations of adventure based practice
- Discourse on the safe and appropriate use of adventure activities with different client groups
• Integration of evidence-based practice techniques in the application of adventure to clinical practice
• Use of adventure activities in assessment and intervention
• The creation and maintenance of a physical and emotional environment conducive to change and growth
• Impact of assessment data and environmental conditions on client outcomes
• The art of matching intervention tools with individual and environmental assessment
• Demonstration of a variety of facilitation skills using adventure activities
• Exploration of effective methods of processing experience and enhancing the learning from interventions
• Appropriate use of program evaluation to maintain personal and program efficiency

In this course the emphasis of intervention is as much on the context as on the individual(s). Intervention strategies focus on ways to bring about change at levels such as the classroom or school, the peer group, and the community or population, as well as at the individual level. Mezzo and macro practice skills covered in this course are aimed at promoting interpersonal competence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, achievement, and moral development by making the contexts within which they develop more responsive to their expressed needs.

Direct practice methods covered in this course provide students with the skills necessary to select and provide effective short-term interventions, evaluate direct practice, develop service delivery systems and work effectively with individuals, families and groups in society. Skills for engagement, assessment, intervention, prevention, and evaluation relevant to contexts such as families, neighborhood and community, schools, group care facilities, residential care, hospitals, correctional programs and institutions, courts, governmental and nongovernmental agencies will be covered.

Intervention strategies will be derived from the experiential and adventure approaches and theoretical perspectives. Students will learn to use the knowledge and skills to engage and communicate effectively with all consumers. The student will learn how to design individual programs of intervention that are based on clearly articulated goals and priorities, reflect an examination of the evidence base and are consistent with social work ethics and values. Throughout the course, cultural competence and sensitivity to differences among families and the impact of worker/client differences in values, experiences, and power will be analyzed. In addition, the student will learn to understand the significance of “multiple identities” (the interaction of factors such as the diverse dimensions: 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 shaping the uniqueness of families and individuals and in shaping power and privilege differences.

**Course Objectives**

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

- Describe the theoretical underpinnings of Experiential and Adventure Education
- Apply relevant Adventure Practice principles into Social Work Practice
- Demonstrate a model for experiential/adventure facilitation.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the tools and techniques of adventure practice
- Perform adventure-based assessments, formulate adventure-based intervention plans and develop evaluation procedures.
- Understand the significance of environmental/ecological factors in individual assessment and interventions, as well as broader contexts of family, group, neighborhood, and society.
- Safely facilitate client systems through some of the common tools in adventure practice, including those that are found in Challenge Courses
- Demonstrate ways to help the client(s) transfer the learning from the facilitated experience to other aspects of their life.
- Adapt adventure tools for use indoors, particularly for the counseling or therapeutic setting.
- Demonstrate appropriate use of adventure-based activities with diverse client groups and in different settings.
- Discuss typical ethical concerns related to adventure-based Social Work practice.

**Course Design:**

Generalized readings have been selected and will be required for all students. Articles specific to diverse problem areas and populations are offered as additional readings to meet student interests. Various classroom teaching strategies will be used, including lecture, multimedia presentations, small and large group discussion, presentations by students and guest lecturers, and experiential exercises. Students’ experiences in the field will be utilized as much as possible in assignments and case presentations and discussions.

**Relationship of Course to Four Curricular Themes:**

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed through careful analysis of how practice models can be applied and modified to fit the special needs of various groups. Resistance and motivation of clients to interventions will be covered to demonstrate how effective intervention models must be adapted to fit the needs of various ethnic and racial groups. This course will emphasis that mono-cultural clinical models must be adapted to fit the definitions of “problem” and “treatment”
that exist in diverse groups in order for social workers to practice with assorted client systems from diverse backgrounds.

- Students will learn to recognize the existence of group differences in a number of areas (such as nonverbal communication, individual and family values, family and community structures, preferred and accepted responses to crisis, response to exclusion or oppression) and how these may impact intervention relationships with individuals and their families.

- Social change and social justice issues will be addressed by recognizing that historically poor and oppressed clients have been excluded from adventure and experiential services. This course will also examine how socioeconomic exclusion arises in screening criteria that exclude clients because of intelligence, verbal ability, insight, and motivation. Advocacy for individuals, especially children and youth whose families and communities are particularly impacted by social inequality and social injustice, will be emphasized at individual, family, organizational, community, and policy levels.

- Promotion and prevention will be addressed through a focus on intervention models and procedures that can be used to prevent and treat psychosocial problems of all individuals including children, youth and adults. These areas are addressed in the micro practice areas through family life education, family preservation activities, early identification of children/youth at risk, and family. At the mezzo and macro practice levels, program development and evaluation, and staff and professional training (teambuilding, communication workshops, etc), addresses the relationship between program decisions and risks to individuals and families.

- Social science knowledge is presented as the necessary basis for conducting empirically grounded assessment, intervention and evaluation practice at all levels of intervention. Course materials draw upon research knowledge from a variety of social sciences, as well as other professions and disciplines (i.e., social work, education, psychology, sociology, etc.), and emphasize the need for multidisciplinary collaboration and communication around issues related to individuals, especially children and youth, and their ecosystems. Social science research concepts and methods are described in relationship to both social work practice and program and policy evaluation processes.

**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values**

When working with adults, social workers must encourage self-determination while empowering them to choose and pursue their own goals. Ethical issues around management of boundaries, addressing physical space, touching, as well as encouraging clients to make choices and live by their consequences will be discussed as they impact individual clients. Practice with children and youth require considerable attention to issues of ethics and values, due to the special challenges these populations offer the social work practitioner. For example, issues of self-determination and autonomy often arise when an adolescent discloses important information that has not been shared with a parent or other responsible adult. Social work values and social science knowledge may also conflict with the child-rearing beliefs and practices of some cultural or religious
groups. Social work values and ethics, as outlined in the professional Code of Ethics, are presented as the necessary and appropriate guidelines for practice when ethical dilemmas arise in social work practice.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**
Let me know if you have a disability that warrants an accommodation. All aspects of the course can be modified to facilitate your learning process. There are resources available to help us to meet your needs. Know that when you disclose a disability to me, I will treat that information as private and confidential.

**Course Resources**

**CTools**
CTools will provide access to many/most of our readings during the course. A few texts and journals are available at the library and in the instructor's personal library and can be borrowed for short periods of time. Finally, several websites will contain useful resources for our use; these will be handed out in class.

**Required Texts**

**Available in the UM or Alvarez Library**
Course Expectations

- Professional Accountability (see clarifications below)
- Out of class reading and preparation
- Completion on an individual project at the student’s field placement setting (or an alternative if the placement is unable to offer the experience)
- Completion of other assignments (more during class session)

Professional accountability will be based on the following criteria. The professional accountability points are assigned based on the collection of all of these factors NOT just attendance.

- **Engagement**: The appropriate, respectful, and relevant participation in one’s own learning as well as contributions to the learning of others. Inappropriate engagement can negatively affect your grade (disrespectful comments, side conversations, and inappropriate comments, text messaging, etc.).
- **Integration**: The demonstration of appropriate efforts to make connections, both conceptual and practical, between the course curriculum and your experience. Inappropriate efforts (clear lack of having done reading, raising questions that are not related to the conversation or discussion) can negatively impact this portion of your grade.
- **Attendance**: Attendance is required and is considered as being present for the entire class period. Point will be subtracted for each session missed. Participation in class discussions is contingent upon attendance and can be used to affect your grade. Although some absences are justifiable, that does not suggest that points will not be lost.
- **Timely**: Completion of assignments on date due, including coming to class prepared to discuss and apply assigned readings.
Course Outline and Reading Assignments

Sessions 1-2: Theories and Models
Experiential education theorists believe that in order for learning or behavior change to occur the client must be exposed to “direct experience”. As such, experiential education can be loosely defined as, “learning by doing with reflection” (King, 1988). The experiential education process is an active one which relies heavily on unique learning environments that place the learner as close to natural consequences as possible. The presence of these natural consequences requires that practitioners utilize a variety of strategies to ensure the physical and emotional safety of clients. The physical nature of many adventure activities and the clients’ exposure to real-life consequences has allowed practitioners from many different theoretical backgrounds to successfully use these activities with a variety of populations. In these sessions we will discuss relevant theories in education, psychology and social work that when put together provides us with the necessary theoretical underpinnings for adventure practice

Topics Covered:
- Experiential Theory/Adventure Practice
- Social Work Practice theories
- Facilitation Models

Readings:
See CTools folder Theories & Models

Session 3-4: Tools of the trade
We will spend the day at the Monroe County Intermediate School District’s Adventure Camp, where adventure tools will be demonstrated. Some of these tools include:
- Large group focusers and energizers
- Problem solving activities
- Initiatives
- Ropes course activities
- Nature activities

Readings:
See CTools folder Holiday Camp. Make sure to complete task described there.
Sessions 5-9: Tools and Techniques; Application to Practice

In these sessions, we will describe and demonstrate the use of several adventure/experiential tools that will help us implement our adventure practice. This will include the GRABBS tool, the 4-Corners tool, the Adventure Beliefs, the Adventure Contract and Goal Sheets, Parent Questionnaires, as well as cooperative games, initiatives and low ropes course activities. We will also explore the use of adventure/experiential practice in our work with populations (children and youth, the elderly, the disabled, girls, etc), settings (in residential centers, in hospitals, in schools, in community centers, in senior citizen centers, etc) and with diverse conditions (with substance using/abusing populations, in therapy, with juvenile delinquents, with heart transplant survivors, with sexualized victims, etc).

Topics Covered

- Process Tools
- Adventure and Experiential Activities
- Techniques

Readings:
See CTools folder Tools and Techniques and Applications

Sessions 10: Outcomes

I am hoping to find an outdoor space that will accommodate us for this session to accommodate the two things I hope to cover: Reflections and Endings, and Presenting My Stick

Readings
See CTools folder Endings

Sessions 11: Endings

Let us take this time to finish up any “dangling waves.” Let us also revisit your hopes and wishes, the course objectives, and learn for future endeavors
Course Assignments- SpSu 2011

Note: I prefer that all assignments be uploaded into CTools
Note 2: Check dates and negotiate preferred dates if your schedule makes it necessary

Who Showed Up: Due Session 2
This is a 1-2 page paper introducing yourself to me and letting me know of your hopes and expectations for this course.

Who are you: What is important for me to know about you? Often, this includes a little about where you are from, what you did before UMSSW, things you are good at, areas you need improvement in, why you are in the S of SW, why this class, your passions- personal and professional.

Hopes and Wishes: Tell me- how you hope this class will go, what you hope it isn’t, what kinds of things you are hoping to experience, what you want to leave this class with

A Literature Review: Due Session 6 8-10 pages
E/A Practice are used with all populations and for many outcomes. This is an opportunity for you to explore and relate experiential and adventure-based practice to an area that will be useful to your professional growth and practice.

1. Select a population you wish to learn more about (Youth with eating disorders, Men who are veterans, Seniors with dementia, Communities with crime problems, Organizations with poor leaders, Children with mental health problems)
2. Find 10 resources relevant to your selection. Although E/A practice articles are preferred, feel free to also use articles about the population and/or concern that will inform you/me further. Feel free to use a mixture of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, web-based stories and articles, newspaper articles, etc.
3. Summarize each resource (1-1.5 paragraphs each)
4. Finally, reflect on what you learned, what you had hoped to learn but didn’t, and suggest areas where additional resources would have been useful. If your investigation uncovered limited use of E/A practice, describe how you might use the information you gathered (from sources other than E/A literature) to create an E/A program. For example, let’s say you didn’t find much written about the use of E/A methods with the LGBTQ population. You might write about some needs for this population and an E/A venue that might work to address meeting those needs. More in class
5. Provide a reference list AND download copies into CTools (if able; otherwise provide hard copies of your selections with your paper)

In class Facilitation Experience- Due a week after you facilitate 4-5 pages
For this course, several hours will be reserved for opportunities for each of you to practice facilitating a session with your peers. An hour each during sessions 5-9 will be provided for this experience.
To make this happen, the following needs to occur:

1. You will help co-create a group numbering 5 members. Opportunities will be provided for your group to meet together to work our norms, solve problems, etc. Your group might also choose to meet outside of class for additional sessions
2. Each person in your group will choose a session when they will facilitate an E/A experience for the other group members
3. You will facilitate the group through an adventure group process. To do this, you will be expected to plan out a 60-minute group experience. As the group matures and develops, your assessment of the group and its abilities and capabilities will need to be addressed. In other words, if you are choosing to run the first session for your group, you will need to consider “beginning group tasks” and create activities that will get you what you need. However, if you are doing session 4, you will need to consider all that has happened in group and make sure your session activities correspond with where the group is
4. I will provide each group access to my adventure bag and to additional tools; I will also make myself available to meet with you if so desired.
5. At the end of the experience, collect written feedback from your colleagues (I have a sample form you can use). After reading them, attach these to your written reflection submitted to me a week after your facilitation. Include in that paper the following:
   a. Your pre-session assessment of the group’s Point A and your sense of the environment (presence/absence of 7 beliefs)
   b. Your proposed agenda (support this with any readings, discussion points made in class)
   c. Your observations on how it went, on what happened (“the substance of the group interaction and what happened to the individuals”- Knapp) Include yourself in this.
   d. Any generalizations made about the group’s experience (“pertains to the difference the experience made to the individuals, the consequences, and the meaning for them”- Knapp)
   e. Applicability of lessons learned (“The process of taking lessons from the experience and reapplying them to other situations”- Rhoades)
   f. Your thoughts on your facilitation, areas of strength, areas for improvement

Out-of-class Facilitation Experience- Due Session 9  5-6 pages
It is very important to practice this work to become good at it! Here is an opportunity to write and get feedback on your process.

Write a paper that reflects on an E/A experience that you facilitate or co-facilitate (at your field site, at someone else’s field site, at a volunteer place, at a work site). Several options including:

A. Volunteer facilitate at the following places- Fraser High School on May 20; Holiday Camp with Gary Stauffer, Kim Abed at the summer camp she is developing; other places
B. Find someone in your small group who is able to organize an event and co-facilitate it with her/him
C. Run an experience at your field placement site
D. Develop a plan for a future endeavor

Your paper should include:
1. A description of the agency or organization sponsoring the experience/event
2. A brief but complete description of the client/consumer (age, strengths, areas for improvement, time period for the intervention, developmental issues, relevant community variables, etc.),
3. A section that details the plan, including an outline showing appropriate sequencing of activities for the session. Make sure you have appropriate references to support and substantiate your ideas. You are expected to have developed this presentation based on knowledge of the population and how adventure-based practice has been used with this population.
4. A brief report on the implementation of the experience.
5. Finally, an evaluation of the actions you undertook and any lessons learned for future facilitations.

The Stick Project: Presentation on 06/25 (Make up on 06/28)
Our work is transformative. We guide our clients/consumers through the change process and observe as they transform into who they want to become. We, as guides, also transform as we do this work. This project offers you an opportunity to partake in the transformation of your stick. For this assignment, you will:
1. Choose a stick from the collection I provide
2. During the course of the term, intentionally help the stick transform
3. Maintain a journal of this process with the stick (an entry a week). Write about things like- what made you choose this particular stick? Any stick characteristic strike you? Did you give the stick a name? Why? Why not? Talk about how you decided to transform the stick, or how you changed your mind midway, or what you needed to do when the stick wasn’t cooperative; take photos of the process of the transformation. Journal can be in writing, through audio/photo/video form, and can be submitted as a photo album, a PPT, a video, a paper or any combination.
4. During the term, and not taking into account the time you spend working on the stick, spend purposeful time weekly with it (E.g. go for a walk with your stick; introduce your stick to others; make a game using the stick as a central prop; invite others to comment on your stick; take it home or to placement,)
5. Write a short story/poem using the stick as the main character
6. Present the stick to the class on the selected days; submit the journal by 06-28.