SW 500 Human Differences, Social Relationships, Well-Being, and Change through the Life Course

Fall, 2011

When and Where: Mondays, 9:00-12:00 Rm. B684 SSWB

Instructor          Phone          E-mail
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Office               2772 SSWB

Office Hours: Mondays after class, 12:15-1:15 in my office (2772 SSWB). Let me know during class or by email if you want to meet so I can be sure to have ample time.

Required Text and Readings:


Required readings are available on our course website in CTools.

The School of Social Work is making an earnest attempt to “go digital”. If possible please bring a laptop or other computing device to each class.

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.

9. Discover the Practice Behaviors associated with these objectives and the Social Work competencies underlying the objectives (see #5 below).

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 CSWE COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

SW500 is a foundation course, which means that it is to provide knowledge on which more advanced coursework later in your MSW career can build. Our goal is for you to learn concepts and behaviors that stick with you in your professional life, long after your brief stay with the UM-SSW is over.

We are in the process of modifying the foundation courses so that they are more clearly relevant to social work practice. Starting this term there will be an emphasis in this course on social work competencies and practice behaviors associated with these competencies. At the end of the syllabus you will find a document developed by CSWE that lists the competencies that students in all MSW programs are expected to attain by the time they receive their degrees. Each competency is followed by a sampling of practice behaviors associated with each competency.

Fortunately, our text, also emphasizes SW competencies and practice behaviors throughout. It is important to note that each chapter ends with an Overview, a summary, and most importantly, a section called “Review Your Competencies”. Please pay particular attention to sections of the text pertaining to competencies and practice behaviors. It is important to be mindful of these competencies and practice behaviors throughout your required readings.

These are the competencies that I believe are most pertinent to SW 500:

**Competency Related to 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.
**Competency Related to Social Justice:**

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.

**Competency Related to 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.

**Competency Related to 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.

**Competency Related to Applying Social Work Ethical Principles to Guide Professional Practice:**

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 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.

*A major goal of this course is to help you discover the practice behaviors associated with these competencies.*

6. **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

A. **Academic Conduct and Integrity**

Please see the Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct in the current Student Guide to the Master's in Social Work Degree Program 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 and Participation**

Class participation, as evidenced by your regular attendance and active participation in class discussions, exercises, and other activities, will count for 5% of your grade. Attendance at all classes is required. Please let me know in advance if there is an urgent situation and you must miss a class or part of a class. More than two absences from a class or part of a class may result in a lower grade. You are responsible for obtaining lecture notes and handouts from your classmates if a class is
missed. If you miss an exam due to an excused absence, a make-up session will be held during exam week at the end of the term. You are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class each week and to be prepared to discuss them in class. In consideration of your classmates, please arrive on time and remember to turn off your cell phone. Please do not text-message, read your e-mail, surf the Internet, etc. during class. Computing devices are to be used in class solely to access our SW 500 CTools site.

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. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities at G664 Haven Hall (734-763-3000).

Religious Observances

Please notify me if religious observances conflict with class or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements. Resources:

C. Class Structure, Assignments, and Grading

Class Structure and Assignments. Typically each week we’ll have some combination of lecture based on a chapter from Ashford and LeCroy(2010), small group discussion(each group will focus on one of the readings) and full-class discussion of case studies. Each week you will be assigned a chapter from Ashford and LeCroy(2010) and from 2-5 core readings. Discussion is meant to help highlight the core constructs and their implications (i.e., competencies and practice behaviors) and these constructs will link and build from one week to the next. The goal is to create an active learning context in which each week’s content is actively linked to prior content so that by the end of the term, students will have a linked memory structure, facilitating later recall and use of the material in class and in the field.

Each class will have three segments, each roughly one-hour in duration:

**Segment 1.** Instructor lecture based on a chapter from Ashford and LeCroy(2010) (60 minutes)

**Segment 2.** Small groups will discuss one reading each within the group for 30 minutes. For the next 30 minutes, the groups will summarize the main points of the reading for the class; the readings will be open to class discussion. (60 minutes)

**Segment 3.** You will be given a case study to read each week, along with a series of focus questions. The class will discuss these cases in relation to the focus questions. Each student will be given these questions on a form to be completed and sent to the instructor before the next class to help them prepare for the case study discussion. (60 minutes)

Grading. Brief Multiple Choice Exams. Three brief multiple choice exams will be held on October 10, November 7, and December 5. Each brief exam will consist of questions based on text content from the preceding weeks. Each exam will count for 10% of the course grade. (total, 30%)
Weekly Case Study focus question forms. Each student will be given these questions on a form to be completed and sent to the instructor before the next class to help them prepare for the case study discussion. The case study and questions will be posted on CTools. These completed forms will count for 25% of your grade.

Research Paper or Multidimensional Assessment. For this class you will be asked to write a 10-12 page paper (the page requirement does not include the references). The paper should focus on a concept or issue relevant to the course that you would like to investigate in greater depth. Alternatively, you can write a paper in which you apply a multidimensional framework to evaluate the social functioning of a composite client (details will be provided). Detailed instructions for each alternative will be provided in a separate handout and posted on CTools. A brief proposal for your research paper or multidimensional assessment will be due on October 24 (5% of grade). The proposal will allow me to determine the relevance of your topic to the course content and to review the appropriateness of your preliminary bibliography. The final paper will be due on the last day of class, December 12 (35% of course grade). The paper must be typewritten and double-spaced using a 12-point font and one inch margins. APA style should be used (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association Sixth Edition (2010), Washington, D.C.: Author). Detailed instructions for the proposal, brief presentation, and final paper will be provided in separate handouts and posted on CTools.

Summary of Grading. Attendance and participation 5%; Brief multiple choice exams 30%, Weekly Case Study focus question forms, 25%; brief proposal for your research paper or multidimensional assessment 5%; final paper, 35% of course grade)

D. Letter 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.

7. COURSE CALENDAR AND READING ASSIGNMENTS
This schedule is preliminary; any changes in the topics or reading assignments will be announced in class and on CTools.

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 5</td>
<td>Labor Day (no class)</td>
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<td>September 12</td>
<td>Introduction; Multidimensional Approach to Assessment in Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<th>September 19</th>
<th>Biophysical Development and Functioning</th>
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<td>Complete Case Study 1 and focus questions (see Ctools)</td>
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<tr>
<th>September 26 (Instructor out-of-town at NIH Study Section)</th>
<th>Psychological Development and Functioning</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Siefert, K., Finlayson, T.L., Williams, D.R., Delva, J. &amp; Ismail, A.I.</td>
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<th>October 3</th>
<th><strong>Social Systems and Human Development</strong></th>
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<th>October 10</th>
<th><strong>Preconception, Pregnancy, Birth, and the Newborn</strong></th>
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<td>October 17</td>
<td>Fall Break (no class)</td>
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| December 5 | **Death and Dying**  


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| December 12 | **Social Work, Human Development, and Social Justice**  
Integrative session |
| December 22 | **Grades Due to Registrar** |
Brooks/Cole Empowerment Series and the Council on Social Work Education’s Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards

The Council on Social Work Education’s Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards requires all social work students to develop ten competencies and recommends teaching and assessing 41 related practice behaviors, listed as Educational Policy (EP) 2.1.1 – 2.1.10m below. "Helping Hands" icons throughout this text, "Competency Notes" sections at the end of each chapter, and the supplemental Practice Behaviors Workbook connect class work to these important standards.

Competencies and Practice Behaviors

EP 2.1.1 Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly:
   a. Advocate for client access to the services of social work
   b. Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development
   c. Attend to professional roles and boundaries
   d. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication
   e. Engage in career-long learning
   f. Use supervision and consultation

EP 2.1.2 Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice:
   a. Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice
   b. Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and, as applicable, of the International Federation of Social Workers/International Association of Schools of Social Work Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles
   c. Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts
   d. Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions

EP 2.1.3 Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments:
   a. Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom
   b. Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation
   c. Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues

EP 2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice:
   a. Recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power
   b. Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups
   c. Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences
   d. View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants
EP 2.1.5 Advance human rights and social and economic justice:
   a. Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination
   b. Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice
   c. Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice

EP 2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research:
   a. Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry
   b. Use research evidence to inform practice

EP 2.1.7 Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment:
   a. Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation
   b. Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment

EP 2.1.8 Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services:
   a. Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being
   b. Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action

EP 2.1.9 Respond to contexts that shape practice:
   a. Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services
   b. Provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services

EP 2.1.10 Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities:
   a. Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
   b. Use empathy and other interpersonal skills
   c. Develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes
   d. Collect, organize, and interpret client data
   e. Assess client strengths and limitations
   f. Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives
   g. Select appropriate intervention strategies
   h. Initiate actions to achieve organizational goals
   i. Implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities
   j. Help clients resolve problems
   k. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients
   l. Facilitate transitions and endings
   m. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions

For more information about the standards themselves, and for a complete policy statement, visit the Council on Social Work Education website at www.cswe.org.

Adapted with permission from the Council on Social Work Education