

SW 623: Interpersonal Practice with Families
Spring/Summer 2012 Mondays, 1-5pm

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Office Hours: I will be available before and after class, as well as by appointment.

1. Course Description

This course will build on the content presented in course SW 521 (i.e. Interpersonal Practice with Individuals, Families and Small Groups). This course will present a theoretical analysis of family functioning and integrate this analysis with social work practice. Broad definitions of "family" will be used, including extended families, unmarried couples, single parent families, gay or lesbian couples, adult siblings, "fictive kin," and other inclusive definitions. Along with theories and knowledge of family structure and process, guidelines and tools for engaging, assessing, and intervening with families will be introduced. The most recent social science theories and evidence will be employed in guiding family assessment and intervention. This course will cover all stages of the helping process with families (i.e. engagement, assessment, planning, evaluation, intervention, and termination). During these stages, client-worker differences will be taken into account including a range of diversity dimensions such as ability, age, class, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation. Various theoretical approaches will be presented in order to help students understand family structure, communication patterns, and behavioral and coping repertoires. The family will also be studied as part of larger social systems, as having its own life cycles, and as influencing multiple generations. An overview will be given of current models of practice.

2. Course Content

Content on the engagement phase will emphasize methods for overcoming barriers to help seeking that are both internal and external to the family. Students will learn how to identify client-worker differences and how to find common ground with clients. In particular, students will learn methods for engaging the most reluctant family members. Assessment content will draw from the major theories of family functioning and life-span development, as well as meta-theories that address oppressive social forces (e.g. sexism and racism). A sampling of reliable assessment measures will be introduced and applied. Goal setting and planning will flow from the assessment of the family, the goals of the family and its individual members, empirical evidence for different approaches, and ethical considerations. A variety of intervention and prevention models will be presented, along with the specific methods and procedures of each model. Work with nontraditional families, couples counseling, and divorce and separation counseling will also be included. The role of social work in the primary prevention of family

problems will be emphasized (e.g. family life education programs). Methods for the evaluation of intervention and prevention efforts will be covered, including the use of self-report and observational measures.

3. Course Objectives

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

1. Articulate at least two conceptual frameworks that take into account individual and family needs, problems and experiences within the family, and resources and opportunities of the social environment.
2. Describe challenges, risks, and tasks as they apply to diverse groups such as; women, the poor, families of color, and gay and lesbian families.
3. Identify the resources, strengths, and effective family processes across diverse populations including those based on a range of diversity dimensions such as ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and class.
4. Apply family assessment frameworks that are ecological and family-centered and take into account the influence of oppressive social forces. Such assessments will account for the presence and impact of family violence, the presence and impact of substance abuse, and the impact that the students' own value system has on their assessment formulations.
5. Describe ways to establish a professional relationship with family members in order to engage in assessment, goal setting, and planning. The capacity to establish relationships with families will include an appreciation of cultural diversity and the unique strengths of nontraditional families.
6. Identify at least two models of prevention and intervention and explain the applicability of each model to the challenges faced by families.
7. Apply appropriate outcome measures that are reliable and determined by agreed upon goals in order to evaluate the effects of family-centered interventions.

4. Course Design

The course is designed to include lectures, assigned theoretical and practice reading, and discussion; exposure to the actual experiences of families in general and to those of particular families, through such media as case materials, videotapes, and client personal descriptions; and role-playing as social worker, observer, and family member.

5. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

Multiculturalism & Diversity will be addressed by considering the unique characteristics of families composed of various diversity dimensions (e.g., ability, age, class, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation), and by tailoring engagement, assessment, goal setting, planning, and intervention to these characteristics. Assessment procedures will focus on strengths rather than deficits in family functioning.

Social Justice will be addressed through a multi-systems perspective in which students will view the family as a system within, and affected by, a larger social structure. Family assessment will consider the impact of poverty and discrimination based on various diversity dimensions and other factors in causing or maintaining family problems. Traditional solutions to family problems will be analyzed for their potential to maintain oppression and disempowerment. Empowerment models of practice will be stressed, including the involvement of natural helping networks and teaching advocacy skills to families.

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation will be addressed by identifying the family functions and processes that are useful for the successful development of its members. Prevention programs will be described that are designed to help the general population and at-risk families to avert problems before they develop (e.g. marital enhancement, parent education, premarital counseling, parent-school linkages, etc.).

Behavioral and Social Science Research will be addressed by discussing the relationship of theoretical and empirical knowledge to family practice, by describing the theoretical frameworks within which practice methods may be carried out, and by identifying and critiquing the techniques and outcomes of evaluation which have been used with each practice method.

6. Relationship to SW Ethics and Values

Ethical dilemmas unique to family work will be presented, such as balancing individual and family goals, contracts regarding confidentiality and record-keeping, and addressing oppressive family structures. Presentation of value conflicts that exist toward families in society will be used to raise the students' awareness of personal and professional values.

7. Students in Need of Accommodations

If you have a documented disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000. Also, if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments, please notify me so we can discuss appropriate arrangements.

8. A Note on the Learning Environment

While all of us come to this course with various experiences, skill sets and values, it is important that we respect diverse opinions and perspectives. The class is designed as a co-learning environment and one where class members are encouraged to try new skills and take risks. Your contribution as a “teacher and a learner” in the class will enhance the learning for all class members.

9. Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

All academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and misrepresentation will be treated seriously and reported to the Assistant Dean’s Office. You will find a discussion of plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity in your *Student’s Guide to the Master’s in Social Work Degree Program* (online).

10. Writing Assistance

I am happy to proofread any drafts of papers submitted to me up to 5 days before the due date. For further assistance with writing, you may go to the Writing Workshop, 1139 Angell Hall 764-0429; in addition, librarians are able to assist with questions related to research. The University of Michigan Library system has an on-line resource that can assist you in preparing proper citations for assignments using APA format. Go to: <http://www.lib.mich.edu/ug/research/citationguide/AP5thed/pdf>

11. Technology in the Classroom

Laptops are allowed for note taking purposes only. If you must use your cell phone during class time, please make sure the ringer is silenced, and that **ALL phone activity (texting included) takes place outside the classroom.**

12. Incompletes and Extensions

Incompletes and extensions are given only when it can be demonstrated that it would be unfair to hold the student to the stated time limits of the course and/or assignment. The student must formally request an incomplete from the instructor prior to the final week of classes, and an extension as soon as the need arises.

Course Assignments, Requirements, and Grading

Assignment 1 (roleplay) – 30%

Assignment 2 (paper) – 30%

Assignment 3 (presentation) – 20%

Class participation – 20%

Class participation includes attendance, promptness, active participation in large and small-group discussion, respectfulness, and the ability to listen.

If more than one session is missed—whatever the reason—the **final grade will be lowered five points** for each session over one unless the session is made up. To make up a session find out from other students what was covered in the missed sessions and develop a make-up plan to be submitted via email for my approval. The plan should focus on the topic of the missed session, and should involve four or more hours of effort.

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the “due date,” will be marked down 5% for every day late, and must meet all academic standards for ethical documentation. If you are unhappy with your grade, you can turn in a rewrite of Assignments 1& 2 no later than one week after they are returned to you. Your rewrite should be turned in with all changes highlighted AND with a copy of the old paper. The two grades will then be averaged for a final grade.

The following criteria will be taken into account when papers are graded:

- Systematic and logical presentation of arguments;
- Appropriate use of evidence;
- Familiarity with and appropriate use of relevant literature and concepts;
- Clarity and coherence of presentation;
- Originality and creativity;
- Conformity with the requirements of the assignment

Grading Scale:

A+ = 100 points; A = 94-99 points; A- = 90-93 points; B+ = 87-89 points; B= 84-86; B- = 80-83 points; C+=77-79; C = 74-76 points; C- = 70-73 points; D = 64-69; D- = 60-63; F = 59 and below.

Course Readings

All readings are available on the CTools site for this class, under the “Resources” section. A few will need to be accessed through Mirlyn, as noted. A complete reading list will be handed out May 14, 2012.

Graded Work

Assignment 1 - Roleplays

Each class member will be responsible for either playing the role of “Family Member” or the role of “Therapist” in one of 5 role-plays (of family therapy sessions) throughout the semester. Each class member will also be responsible for a paper that will incorporate both exercises done in preparation for the role-play and a “reflection” on the experience after it is over. Each role play will be done in the Clinical Suite (in the School of Social Work) and will consist of a 45 minute session during which 1 therapist will meet with the family utilizing a specific model of Family Therapy. The Therapist will get feedback from the class mid-way through the session, and then continue with the session making use of the input from the class. Here is a tentative role-play schedule:

June 4 – Structural Family Therapy
June 11 – Strategic Family Therapy
June 18 – Narrative Therapy
June 25 – Solution-Focused Therapy
July 2 – Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

In preparation for the weekly role plays, roles will be chosen in the second class session, consisting of 1-2 therapists and a small group of 3-4 participants. Each small group of 3 should form itself into a role play family. Each Therapist will be utilizing a specific Family therapy model.

For the groups of 3-4: Be creative in forming the family. There are a number of possible family forms. **Diversity in family forms is strongly encouraged.** Each role-play family should develop a scenario that will be acted out in the family role-play situation. In developing role-play scenarios, please pay attention to the statements in this syllabus regarding Course Content and Objectives, and the Relationship of the Course to the curricular themes having to do with multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice.

In preparation for these role-plays, “family members” and “therapists” are responsible for some preparatory work that will then serve as the first part of Assignment 1. The preparatory work is as follows:

I. Family Members will be responsible for the following:

- a. A genogram (worked on by the family group) detailing 3 generations of family history – with attention to culture and ethnicity. A chapter on genograms is in the readings for next week.
- b. Two structural family maps which: 1) detail a time when your family is stressed; and 2) a time when your family is not stressed. I will speak about “family maps” next week.
- c. A 1 page summary of the “presenting problem” from your perspective. Include your understanding of the history of the problem and of the part each family member plays in the problem. If you are a “child” in the family, pretend you have explained your perspective to a loving adult, who translates it for you into this 1-page summary.

II. Therapists will be responsible for the following:

- a. A 1 page summary detailing the key points of the particular model of Family Therapy that you will be utilizing. Please bring a very preliminary outline of this summary to the class on **May 14** when we will

have in-class time to prepare for the role-plays. This summary will NOT be turned in for a grade and can be hand-written.

b. A 1 page final version of this same summary to be turned in with the actual assignment. You may reference class readings when preparing this summary and reflection.

c. A 1 page reflection on how this model of Family Therapy either incorporates culture, class, ethnicity, and gender; or does not. If not, please reflect on what YOU could do to bring these issues alive in the session.

III. Therapist and Family Members (after the actual role-play) should create a 2 page reflection paper detailing your PERSONAL responses to the process of either being a family member or therapist in the context of a family therapy session. Please be specific (short description) about actual experiences in the process of either developing or enacting the session and then reflect on these experiences in light of the themes of this class. For example:

Experience: as the mother in the family, you felt uncomfortable and angry when confronted by the therapist about the way you were parenting.

Reflection: you might reflect on the theme of "role of the therapist," on the idea of "working collaboratively" in light of this experience of discomfort.

Grading for Assignment 1 (due 1 week after role-play is over) :

Preparatory Work – 50% of grade (the genogram, structural family map, summary of key points of the Model, reflection on culture, etc.)

Reflection Paper – 50% of grade (the paper which follows the actual enactment)

Family Members (Grading for Preparatory Work)

30% - does genogram include clear cultural material?

30% - do family maps make clear the ties between the family structure and the presenting problem?

40% - does presenting problem summary incorporate all of the family members' perspectives and the history of the presenting problem?

Therapists (Grading for Preparatory Work)

50% - does summary adequately lay out key points of the model?

50% - does the "cultural reflection" reflect both an understanding of the model's relationship to culture and does it generate creative ideas about how to incorporate cultural sensitivity?

Family Members and Therapists (Grading for Final Reflection Paper)

30% - are there specific "process" experiences incorporated into the paper?

60% - are these experiences specifically related to course concepts?

10% - grammatically correct, clear and organized?

Assignment 2 - Family of Origin Paper

Due: July 9

Draw a genogram of your own family (or the family of a client with whom you are working). The genogram should focus on at least three generations (including yours, your parents and their parents, your children, if applicable, and even more if you have the information). Use McGoldrick's chapter (CTools) on Genograms as your guide for the mechanics of drawing the genogram. You will most likely

need to contact family members of your own family (or your client's) to obtain the necessary data. Include significant dates, illnesses, occupations, striking character traits (i.e. gentle, moody, intelligent) and other significant patterns (i.e. occupations, religions, prevalence of divorces, religious affiliations, illnesses, substance abuse problems) on the genogram. You may want to use different colored pencils to illustrate alliances, coalitions, cut-offs, and triangles. The genogram must be on an 8 ½ by 11 sheet and carefully drawn. You may also utilize a software program, supplemented with details added by hand.

Write a 7-9 page paper. This paper should identify and articulate major three-generational themes and patterns. Triangles, coalitions, alliances, and cut-offs should be explicated and analyzed. Gender, ethnic, class influences should be addressed. You should also incorporate a theoretical discussion of these cultural themes based on knowledge gained from your readings. When discussing theory, please reference accordingly. The McGoldrick text is a particularly good source to utilize in developing a theoretical perspective on the cultural themes you are exploring in your papers.

You may want to speculate about your role (or your client's) role in the family system.

Please discuss sibling order, if applicable.

Bowenian theory should be incorporated into your analysis, and you should give three examples of how you imagine Murray Bowen might have intervened with this family.

Grading

20% - is genogram readable, and does it describe 3 generations of family history clearly?

30% - does paper demonstrate an understanding of Bowenian theory?

30% - does paper incorporate a discussion of culture that is grounded in the Readings?

10% - grammatically correct, well-organized?

Assignment 3 – Class Presentation

Create a brief (10-15 minute) long presentation about a family therapy case you have worked on at your field placement, or another clinical setting. If you do not see families, you may construct a case using a family from popular culture (tv show, book, movie, etc), or use your own family as a model. The presentations will be given over the last three weeks of class; a sign-up sheet will be circulated.

The outline of subjects to be covered in the class presentation is as follows:

Identifying Information and Case Description

Presenting Problems

Present Genogram

Brief Summary of Family Dynamics and History

Case Formulation

Description and Summary of Current Treatment Issues

Course Outline

1. May 7, 2012

Introduction to Course

Clinical focus: Overview of Field of Family Practice

Special Topic: Joining with families/Building rapport

Readings:

Chapter 1 - McGoldrick, M. & Hardy, K.V. (eds). (2008). *Re-visioning family therapy: Race, culture, and gender in clinical practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Chapter 2- Walsh, F. (ed). (2003). *Normal family processes: Growing diversity and complexity*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

2. May 14, 2012

Clinical focus: Family Assessment

Special topic: Stages of family life cycles, changing patterns

Readings:

Chapter 4 – Guidelines for Conducting Assessment. In Patterson, J., Williams, L., Edwards, T.M., Chamow, L., & Grauf-Grounds, C. (2009). *Essential skills in family therapy*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Chapter 2 - McGoldrick, M. (2008). *Genograms: Assessment and intervention*.

Appendix: Cultural Assessment - McGoldrick, M. (2005). *Ethnicity & family therapy*.

3. May 21, 2012

Clinical focus: Transgenerational/Bowenian Models of Family Therapy

Special topic:

Readings:

Wetchler, J.L. & Piercy, F.P., *Transgenerational family therapies*.

* May 28, 2012 – Memorial Day, no class

4. June 4, 2012

Clinical focus: Structural Family Therapy

Special topic: Race and Ethnicity

Class

Role Play

5. June 11, 2012

Clinical focus: Strategic Family Therapy

Special topic: Children and Adolescents

Role Play

6. June 18, 2012

Clinical focus: Narrative Therapy

Special topic: GLBTQ issues

Role Play

7. June 25, 2012

Clinical focus: Solution-Focused Therapy

Special topic: Spirituality

Role Play

8. July 2, 2012

Clinical focus: Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

Special topic: Domestic violence

Substance Abuse

Health issues, mental and physical

Role Play

9. July 9, 2012 - Paper 2 due

Clinical focus: Experiential Family Therapy/Satir/Psychodrama

Special topic: Stepfamilies/blended families

Single-parent families

Extended family involvement/Kinship networks

Class presentations

10. July 16, 2012

Clinical focus: Couples Therapy

Special topic: Divorce, effects of, co-parenting

Class presentations

11. July 23, 2012

Clinical focus: Collaborative practice

Multisystems practice

Mindfulness and Acceptance family therapy

Special topic: Therapist Self-Care

Class presentations

Class partay!