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 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, videos, written assignments, lectures and experiential exercises related to course materials.

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/2010/) for a discussion of student responsibilities for academic conduct and integrity. In particular, please pay attention to issues related to plagiarism. 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 (5% of your course grade)**

Three parts constitute 20% of your course grade:

1. **Attendance.** Arriving on time and staying throughout the entire class time are required. If you have to miss a class, please notify your instructor at your earliest convenience. Missing more than one class session may result in points deducted from your final grade. In consideration of your classmates, please turn off cell phones and all other potentially distracting devices during class. If you are on call, please set your device to vibrate. Likewise, use of laptop computers should be kept to the minimum so that we can all focus on what's happening in the classroom. Please refrain from surfing the internet and checking emails except when it is part of class activities.

2. **Reflection essay after the event “Poverty in American: Then and Now” on September 11**

3. **Participation.** There are two categories of readings each week. The first is required which is usually a book chapter (some exception, see the weekly schedule). The required readings should give you an overview of relevant issues related to the topic of the week. Be sure to have read the required readings before coming to class. Another category of articles is for group presentation (see “Assignments” below). Having at least skimmed these articles before the presentation will facilitate your participation in class discussion. Given the amount of information contained in the
readings, I do not expect you to remember the details. Rather, I expect you to apply the knowledge gained from the readings, which should be reflected in your class discussion and written assignments.

(4) 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 assignments, (b) review and give comments before the work is submitted to the instructor, and (c) provide emotional support throughout the semester. 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 buddy experience.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
If you need accommodation for a disability or other special need, please let the instructor know as early as possible (by the third week of class) 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 (by the third week of class) if religious observances conflict with class or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

C. Assignments (All written assignments should be loaded onto your Drop Box in the course Ctools site by the due date. Please bring a hard copy to class. All assignments should be typed, double-spaced and proofread before submission. APA style is preferred but you can use other styles as long as it is consistent. This is a link to APA citation style—http://guides.lib.umich.edu/social-work [click “APA style” tab on top]).

(1) Group presentation of articles (20%). You have two opportunities to do article presentation. Each time, you and another student work as a team to share your understanding of a topic with the class, based on the assigned readings. Your job includes:

(a) stimulate interest in the topic;
(b) present a clear summary of the articles (note: most of your classmates have not read them carefully);
(c) most importantly, share your insights and learning points from the articles in relation to (i) what you see as core messages in the articles as a whole, (ii) is the information conveyed in the articles consistent with your prior knowledge—what is and what is not, (iii) what you see as the most interesting or intriguing information and how do you make sense of it, (iv) how social workers can use the information, i.e., what implications for social work; and (d) provide one question for class discussion.

Previous students have used a variety of audio-visual aids (e.g., power point slides, short videos, cartoons) and activities (e.g., role play, opinion survey) to assist their presentations. If you use power point slides, please get it ready to open before the class begins (e.g., save it in the desktop of the classroom computer). You have 20 minutes for the presentation. The instructor will integrate your question for class discussion in small group activities.

Grading criteria for article presentation: (a) clarity, accuracy and conciseness of the summary; (b) extent of effort to engage the audience; (c) demonstrated understanding of the assigned
readings, ability to extract core messages, and critical thinking; (d) demonstrated ability to integrate the readings to personal experience and social work practice.

(2) Resource Guide (length depends on your judgment of appropriateness; 25%)—Due November 13. This is a common assignment given to all sections of SW500 so as to evaluate students’ levels of competency. The core competencies reflected in this assignment are using social science theory and knowledge critically as a basis for evidence-based practice, considering the continuum from prevention to rehabilitation; and taking on a professional identity as a social worker to communicate clearly. This group assignment (4-5 members) asks you to translate core ideas into pointers to improve health and social functioning of a target group. In the past, students groups have focused their Resource Guide on needs of students, needs of social workers or needs of particular client populations (applying PODS). Your goal is to show that you understand and can apply the readings from the class to novel situations that may arise in your professional career. The format of the Resource Guide can be in the form of pointers, frequently asked questions, an outline for planning, or whatever appeals to you. A successful Resource Guide contains three elements: (1) vivid and brief sketches of questions, concerns or situations relevant (likely to come up, or important to consider) for your target group, (2) a summary of the relevant points from the readings you chose, and (3) application of the readings—interpretation of implications in light of these readings for your target audience. References inside the Guide can be positioned as foot or end notes so that they are easy to access. While references other than those from our class can be used, remember that your goal is to show that you have read and can apply class readings. Grading criteria for resource guide: (a) Extent to which the assignment is fully and consistently completed (i.e., follows the guidelines described above). (b) Content (relevance, appropriateness, originality, and comprehensiveness) (c) Style and format (creativity, friendliness and attractiveness). (d) Clarity, organization, conciseness and quality of writing. (e) Demonstrated understanding and application of class readings. (f) Technical detail (e.g., spelling, grammar, syntax, reference format).

(3) Term paper—choose one of the three options below (about 2000 words; 35%. Detailed instruction in a separate handout.)—Progress report due Oct. 30. Final paper due December 11.

a. Write a paper in which you apply a multidimensional framework to evaluate the social functioning of a current or former client.

b. Investigate a topic/an issue relevant to adulthood through literature review and primary data collection.

   a. Use a cross-cultural perspective to address a salient issue in older adulthood.

Grading criteria for term paper: (a) Extent to which the assignment is fully and consistently completed (i.e., follows the instruction provided). (b) Demonstrated understanding of class readings and content. (c) Originality, accuracy, and comprehensiveness of content. (d) Clarity, analysis, organization, conciseness, and quality of writing. (e) Technical detail (e.g., spelling, grammar, syntax, reference format).
D. Grading

Points you earn from each assignment are summed to form the basis of final grade which ranges from "A" to "E." "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. This table presents the minimum percentage required for each grade.

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8. REQUIRED TEXT AND ARTICLES


Required articles are available on our CTools course website. 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 4: Introduction and Overview; A Multidimensional Framework


September 11: Attend a Campus-Wide Event “The Other America: Then and Now”

Place: Rackham Graduate School, Rackham Auditorium (915 E. Washington St.)
Time: 4 - 5:30 p.m.
Assignment: write a brief reflection essay after your attendance (what you’ve learned and what comments you have, about 300-400 words)
**The event above is open to the public. There are two other events scheduled from 2-3:30pm that require advanced registration. Please go to this website to learn more about the events:
http://fordschool.umich.edu/events/calendar/npc/1376/

September 18: The Biophysical Dimension


- Epigenetics. NOVA (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/body/epigenetics.html)

September 25: Psychological Development and Functioning


**October 2: Social Systems and Human Development**


**October 9: Preconception, Pregnancy, Birth, and the Newborn**


• The mystery of Black-White difference in infant mortality. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7c1a6u8yP4&list=UUUt1DF8qfClmBpOfMoFFfA&index=6&feature=plcp


**October 16 FALL STUDY BREAK**

**October 23: Infancy & Early Childhood**


October 30: Middle Childhood (Due: progress report of term paper)


• Burns, S., Cross, D., & Brown, G. (2012). The power of peers: Why some students bully others to conform. Qualitative Health Research, 18(12), 1704-16.
• Rachel C. Vreeman, MD; Aaron E. Carroll (2007). A systematic review of school-based interventions to prevent bullying. Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 161,78-88

November 6: Adolescence


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


• Toomey, R., Ryan, C., Diaz, R. et al. (2010). Gender-Nonconforming Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth: School Victimization and Young Adult Psychosocial Adjustment. Developmental Psychology, 46 (6), 1580–1589.

November 13: Young Adulthood (Due: Resource Guide)


**November 20: Middle Adulthood**


**November 27: Older Adulthood I**


**December 4: Older Adulthood II**


**December 11: End-of-Life Issues (Due: Term paper)**


- NY Times: Why do Americans balk at euthanasia laws?