1. **Course Description**

   In this seminar, students will apply multiple techniques for developing, performing and analyzing client simulations at the individual, family, group, and community level. Through these simulations, students will deepen their understanding of clients’ lives, explore research and clinical literature relevant to the problems and issues of the simulated client systems, apply evidence-based practice methods and analyze the social justice issues implicit in the simulations. This seminar will place these techniques in historical context, critically examining how simulation and role play developed in theater, psychotherapy and other fields. Student's deep engagement with the characters they create and enact in the simulations will provide a forum for self-reflection and professional growth.

2. **Course Content**

   Content of this course primarily centers on experiential learning via client simulation role-plays. First, the foundation for this kind of work in social group work, psychotherapy, and social theater is reviewed. Students are then introduced to techniques for developing client characters, mainly through experiential techniques. Students will also access other sources for development of client characters, including memoir, clinical literature, interviews, and experience with actual clients. Assessment concepts and skills for engagement of clients are then explored, via class simulations and written analysis of the assessment information gathered. In this phase of the work, techniques for analysis of internalized oppression and for promoting empowerment are then examined, primarily through readings by Boal on Theater of the Oppressed. The experiential techniques used to develop and deepen the client simulation performances are introduced in readings and will be reflected upon for both their effectiveness in promoting character development, empathy and awareness skills, and for their application in work with clients at various levels of intervention. Evidence-based practice models are covered, again primarily experientially as students will take part in simulations that apply evidence based practice models, as well as some that do not. This will allow critical reflection on the experience of clients when they encounter these various models, and the relative strengths and problems inherent in their application. Students will independently read literature relevant
to their clients social identities, the disorders and problems their client characters face, and the contexts they live within.

3. **Course Objectives**

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

1. Become familiar with the history of the use of simulation and theater techniques in social work intervention.

2. Conduct an assessment of coping resources and strengths; biophysical, emotional, behavioral and cognitive functioning; intra-personal and environmental systems.

3. Deepen their understanding of the strengths and limitations of diagnostic categories in guiding interpersonal practice interventions.

4. Deepen their ability to communicate empathically, and help enhance the motivation for change, cultivate hope, and address ambivalence and internal and external barriers to change.

5. Describe the impact of the key diversity 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 the dynamics of intervention.

6. Identify one’s own social and cultural identities and group memberships, and how these relate to working with diverse group members, colleagues, and other professionals.

7. Demonstrate their ability to critically analyze how power operates in interpersonal helping efforts.

8. Deepen their ability to reflect on how their own personal histories impact upon encounters with clients in interpersonal practice settings.

9. Develop role-playing and simulation skills that they can use in intervention situations with clients.

10. Critically apply evidenced based practice approaches.

11. Identify common problems that emerge in practice and strategies to resolve these problems.

12. Operationalize ethical codes (i.e. the NASW Code of Ethics and other ethical codes such as the ASGW) as they apply to value dilemmas that arise in direct social work practice.
Relationship of Course to Four Curricular Themes

• *Multiculturalism and Diversity*: The key diversity dimensions have an impact on direct practice at all levels. In the simulated sessions, these dimensions will be attended to carefully. Processing one’s performance, in the client role and the practitioner will provide numerous opportunities to experience how these dimensions shape practice interactions and in how these dimensions are attended to insure that clients needs are effectively met.

• *Social Justice and Social Change*: We will draw heavily from techniques developed to use theater and simulation for social justice work—primarily Boal’s *Theater of the Oppressed*. In addition, the simulations will provide opportunities to reflect on the how power differences impact the provision of service to clients and how the social worker can actively work towards client empowerment and autonomy.

• *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation*: Though methods courses tend to emphasize treatment models, and this course is not an exception, the social theater methods and techniques used as pedagogical tools are themselves quite applicable to settings across the continuum of promotion to rehabilitation.

• *Behavioral and Social Science Research*: The course assignments require students to access and evaluate material on evidence based practice relevant to the client and practitioner roles they play in the simulations. A goal of competency in evidence-based practices is emphasized.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

Ethical issues such as client confidentiality, forced participation, and involuntary treatment are considered as they impact the simulation roles that students play. Since the course asks students to inhabit client roles in a sustained and realistic ways, the simulations will provide unique opportunities for students to explore the ethical issues that arise in practice delivery and to develop increased competency in understanding the client’s standpoint in practice encounters. This will give richness and depth to discussions of ethical concerns in practice.
Class 1 (Sept. 7)
The Integration of Theater and Social Work

Activities

1. Building Trust Exercises
2. Introduce Simulation Work

Assignment for Class 2: Complete Character Analysis Sheet (You can find this in the Schedule Section of Ctools for Sept. 14)

Class 2 (Sept. 14)

Our Role As Practitioners: Critical Consciousness and Self-Reflection

Practice Skill

Awareness of our own judgments, social constructions. How do they impact our “practice?”

Activities

1. Trust, Focus, Character Building Exercises
2. Character Development Exercises

Readings


Locate and read 5-10 scholarly articles relevant to the disorder/problem your client character will portray (If you are actually reading a memoir, you only need to read 2-3 articles)

Given your chosen “character,” Read a memoir and/or watch a film about someone with a disorder that your client character might have.

Assignment for Class 3: See Assignment Instructions on Ctools in the Schedule Section for Class 3

Class 3 (Sept. 21)

Character Development and Building Empathy I
**Practice Skill**

Attentiveness and Attunement to the client

**Readings**

Boal in Brazil, France, the U.S.A., An interview with Augusto Boal, 1989.

**Activities**

1. Introductory Exercises with 521 – including telephone intakes
2. Theater Games focused on the practice skills – presence, focus, attunement
3. Develop and perform “typical day” and “important event” improvisations

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**Class 4 (Sept. 28)**

**Character Development and Building Empathy II**

**Practice Skill**

Assessment and engagement skills

**Activities**

“Snapshot” presentations of client characters.

**Readings**


Castillo: Chpt 4 “Cultural Assessment”

Please note: You can find the assessment guidelines on Ctools in the Resource and the Schedule sections

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**Class 5 (Oct. 5)**
Exploring Client Issues and Character Development

**Practice Skill**

Assessment and engagement through playing the role of “client”

**Activities**

Tag-team Initial Interview with 521 practitioners - a practice assessment session before meeting with your long-term practitioner

**Class 6 (Oct. 12)**

Exploring Mental Health Issues and Character Strengths Through the Lens of Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice I

**Practice Skill**

Assessment and engagement through playing the role of “client”

Raise awareness of the oppressive forces/social constructions alive in ourselves and our characters

**Readings**

Boal, A. Theater of the Oppressed, Chapter 4, “Poetics of the Oppressed”
Rainbow of Desire

**Activities**

Initial sessions with 521 practitioners

Applying “Theater of the Oppressed” techniques to character development – we will begin the ‘Cops in the Head’ Improvisations

**Class 7 (Oct. 19)**

Exploring Mental Health Issues and Character Strengths Through the Lens of Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice II
Practice Skill

Raise awareness of the oppressive forces/social constructions alive in ourselves and our characters

Activities

Roleplaying positive and challenging clinical moments
Continue Applying “Theater of the Oppressed” techniques to character development

Due: Preliminary Client Assessment

Class 8 (Oct. 26)
Exploring Client and Practitioner Experiences in the Role of Client: Joining, Empathy, Goal-setting

Practice Skill

Joining, empathy and goal-setting – experienced as “client,” processed as “client” and “practitioner”

Activities

Second sessions with 521 practitioners
Continue Applying “Theater of the Oppressed” techniques to character development

Class 9 (Nov. 2)
Exploring Client and Practitioner Experiences in the Role of Client: Joining, Empathy, Goal-setting (Processing the experience)
Practice Skill

Continuing an exploration of joining, empathy and goal-setting

Activities

Processing 2nd interviews
Beginning Family Work

Class 10 (Nov. 9)
Exploring Client and Practitioner Experiences in the Role of Client: CBT

Activities

Third sessions with 521 practitioners

Begin Group work

Practice Skill

CBT - experienced as “client,” processed as “client” and “practitioner”

Group Therapy techniques

Readings

Theory of Cognitive Therapy, Ch. 6
Techniques of Cognitive Therapy, Ch. 7
Applications of Individual CBT to specific disorders, Ch. 8
Group Counseling, Ch. 5

Due: Reflection 2: Character Performances
Class 11 (Nov. 16)
Exploring Character through the Lens of Group Work and Developing Clinical Group Work Skills

Activities
Group Therapy Roleplays

Begin Family work

Practice Skill
Group and Family Therapy techniques

Class 12 (Nov. 30)
Exploring Character through the Lens of Family and Developing Clinical Family Skills

Practice Skill
Family therapy techniques

Activities
Family Therapy Roleplays

Class 13 (Dec. 7)
Wrap-up/Processing

Due: Reflection 3: Client Evaluation

Assignments

I. Reflection 1: Character Development (15%), Oct. 5
In this initial reflection, consider what you have learned during the actual process of developing your character.

1. Please detail and discuss the sources that you used to develop your client/character - memoirs, movies, clinical articles, etc.

2. Consider what you have learned about your client/character's diagnosis or problem. As noted under the “Class 2” in the syllabus, please incorporate what you discovered from reading the 5-10 scholarly articles about your character’s possible diagnosis or problem. You might ask yourself if there is any one diagnosis that is truly accurate for your client/character? Would a clinical diagnosis limit how a clinician might view your client/character? Would a clinical diagnosis help your client/character better understand her or his life experiences? What other frames or ways of looking at your client would be helpful?

3. Incorporate a discussion of what personal and professional experiences you called upon to develop your client/character, both respecting client confidentiality and only sharing personal material that you feel comfortable sharing. We certainly welcome the kind of personal reflection that helps you to integrate how this character exploration impacts you in your personal and professional lives.

Approx. 4-5 pages

II. Reflection on Client Assessment Issues (20%). Due: Oct. 19

Using the assessment format on C-tools, or another one of your choosing, reflect on your experience in the practitioner role during the assessment exercise during class. Also reflect on your first experience in the client role - being interviewed by both your 521 practitioner and fellow student from 703.

First, please write a professional assessment, from the perspective of a social work practitioner, of the 703 client you have interviewed in class. This assessment may be abbreviated if there was not time to complete the interview.

Second, consider your experience as “practitioner.” Please reflect on the following:

- What did you learn about yourself as a practitioner? What strengths did you note? What areas did you identify for improvement?
- What did you learn about the “practitioner” role from your experience in the “client” role.
- What would you need to learn more about to be more effective in this assessment role?
- What learning goals might you now set for yourself, given your experience of the assessment?
- Other thoughts or feedback about this experience.

Approx. 6-8 pages.
III. Reflection 2: Character Performances, Due. Nov. 9

As you reflect upon all of your performances to date, please, address the following questions:

1. What have you discovered about your client/character since the initial character development work? What happened in the roleplays or in classroom exercises to inspire these discoveries?

2. What strengths have you discovered about your client/character?

2. What have you discovered about your character's disorder or problems since the initial character development work? Have you discovered anything new about your character's background that has made her/him more vulnerable to the disorder/problem?

3. What have you discovered about the practitioner role from your experiences as client?

Length: 4-5 pages

IV. Reflection 3: Client Evaluation (20%) Due Nov. 30

One approach to this assignment is to imagine that you are the supervisor at the agency where your client character was being seen. The practitioner assigned to your client character has left the agency. You will be making a referral to another resource, either within or outside the agency. To do this, you have the following resources at hand:

a. The initial assessment done for the client character
b. Practitioner notes on the sessions that have occurred (includes interviews with other student practitioners in other classes and our own.
c. An “interview” with the client character to discuss the transition and to add additional assessment information to guide the referral.

Write an assessment and plan that will guide the practitioner who will work subsequently with this client. This can include updating assessment information (see outline used for the assessment), a description of the progress of the work that has gone on so far, and a discussion of issues/concerns that the new practitioner should be aware of. This may include an evaluation of the fit between the client and the previous practitioner and suggestions for addressing this in the transition. This may also include an evaluation of the model/theory/implementation of the intervention used and how future intervention might build or improve upon this previous work.

You can imagine the agency setting to be whatever best fits for your paper.

You can also use your mid-term reflection to help in developing this final reflection. The Midterm Reflection asked you to look at your most up-to-date roleplays in the client role and what you have discovered about your character, diagnosis and the role of the practitioner. You can now reflect on all your roleplays throughout the semester and integrate your discoveries.
V. FINAL REFLECTION/PRACTITIONER REFLECTION  (Due: Dec. 13)

Please reflect on what you have learned in the class and what you learned about the Practitioner Role. Your previous reflections and other papers will be good sources for your final reflection. You are welcome to integrate/combine the two parts of the assignment, but I have separated the prompts into two parts. Among the key areas to discuss:

The overall classroom experience: A reflection on your participation over the semester.

1. How did you contribute to the class learning environment? What might have improved your participation this semester?
2. What you learned from the client role that you will apply in the future to your own practice.
3. How well did you meet your learning goals this semester? What main objectives did you accomplish? What learning experiences most contributed to your learning? What barriers did you encounter? What would have improved the learning experience for you?
4. What recommendations would you make overall for future seminars using the simulation techniques we applied this term?

The Practitioner Experience

1. In the 703/703 assessments, and in the in-class improvisations, what qualities did you bring to the role of practitioner that you and your client found most helpful?
2. What parts of the client-interviews and the in-class improvisations were the most revealing or challenging for you? What was revealed? Why did you find them challenging? What did you learn about yourself and about the practitioner role from these revelations and challenges?
3. During the course of the semester, if you:
   a) were using a particular intervention modality; or
   b) experiencing a particular intervention strategy in the client role, (CBT, Motivational Interviewing, IPT, etc.),
      What did you learn about this set of techniques? What did you learn about your own personal "fit" with this set of techniques?
4. Given your experiences over the course of the semester, and after taking a look at a video of the interview from earlier in the semester, imagine that you are being asked to give the practitioner both feedback and advice. What would you tell the practitioner (yourself)

Notes on Grading
All assignments earn points, which total to 100. The final grading scale is: A+ = 98-100, A = 94-97, A- = 90-93, B+ = 87-89, B = 82-86, B- = 78-81, C+ = 75-77, C = 70-74, not passing = <70

We strive to give substantive feedback on each assignment, and to use our comments as a way to continue to have a dialogue about what you are learning in the class. We may not give specific feedback about why an assignment didn’t get a perfect scores, say a 28 (~an A) instead of 30 (an A+). A paper needn’t have any major flaws to earn an A-. But if you ever have any questions or concerns about the grading, please contact us to talk more about it.

If you believe that you may need an accommodation for any sort of disability or other learning issue, please make an appointment to see one of us to discuss that. We want to do what we can to make the class a good learning environment for all of our students.