Course title:

Human Differences, Social Relationships, Well-Being, & Change Through the Life Course (3 credits)

Semester: Fall 2013
Instructor: Viktor Burlaka, MA, MSW, Ed.S.
Course Number: SW500, section 004
Email: vburlaka@umich.edu
Regular meeting times: Tuesdays from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in SSWB Room 2816.
First class: Tuesday, 09/03/2013.
Last class: 12/10/2013.
No class: 10/15/2013 (Fall Study Break)

Note: This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and via CTools.

Materials
The following materials will support your learning in this course:

2. Other materials will be made available, as needed, via CTools. These may include additional readings and handouts from recent social science journals & pertinent social science. Reading these materials is just as important as the required readings from the assigned text.
3. There may be speakers invited to present information on the related discussion topic for that course session. Please be aware that speakers are voluntarily offering their time to share with us. Your respect and appreciation of this through active listening & appropriate questions will be most appreciated. Please note that any information shared with you by the speaker is also pertinent and should be listened to/read as such.
4. There will be supplemental, but pertinent, videos shown during class.

General Overview (for all SW 500 classes)
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.

**Course Content**

Content will include selected theories of human behavior, human development, and families and small groups, and individual and small system change. Students will consider the process 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.

**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.

**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.
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Weekly thought/questions and discussion leaders (20%)

There will be a group leader for each discussion session (students . . . that's you). Please prepare for all discussion sessions and develop three cross-cutting discussion questions that draw on the readings. If called upon, you will use these questions to lead off the conversation. Please submit your discussion questions on the evening before the day that the discussion will be held (by 10 pm on Monday). You will earn points based on the depth of your understanding of the readings and the quality of the questions generated. To avoid overlaps, make sure you read questions submitted by others before you submit your questions to the Ctools/Forums. You will earn up to 15% of your grade by regularly submitting thoughtful questions. Another 5% will be given for students who have lead class discussions using their questions.

2. Competencies/Practice Behaviors Exercises (out of class assignment, 15%)

To practice utilization of the concepts discussed in the class, students will select one of two following competencies/practice behaviors exercises.

1. Racial attitudes experiment. This is a group exercise, which involves naturalistic observation of potential variation in the quality of services rendered to customers of different ethnical origin. For this exercise, students will need to create teams and visit any local service provider. While some members of the group try to receive the service, other members observe this and measure time it takes for students to receive help. Then group members of other ethnicity should try to receive services while others are measuring time it takes them to receive the services. All students who received services should be interviewed by other group members. In the group report, you will need to describe the procedure you used and the rational for choosing that procedure. Also, you will need to describe individual contributions of every team member. Note: if you choose to videofilm this exercise, please avoid filming the brand name of the company (shop) from which you received the services. Also, you will have to blur faces (or avoid shooting recognizable faces/eyes) of the service providing personnel. Please do not share your materials publically. This exercise is only meant to learn the skills therefore you should upload materials to Ctools. Please remember, while we are interested in building a just and inclusive environment, we do not want to hurt anyone. If you feel that you should share these materials publically, I will help you connect with the appropriate legal expertise first so that you avoid harming yourselves or others.

2. Social history interview. Through this exercise, you will learn to identify aspects of human behavior that are important in shaping an individual’s life situation and issues. You will recognize complexity and necessity of assessment in the social work practice and will become more effective in interviewing techniques.

The interview procedure includes choosing any person and introducing him/her to the guidelines (to be found under Resources at Ctools). Let the interviewee know that you will not use her real name and that all information will be kept confidential. To receive credit, you will need to write a paper that will describe interviewing techniques you used (include a reference to a book about...
3. Research Brief (40%)

Students must write a research brief on a key issue related to individual or group human behavior, human development, families and small groups through the life course emphasizing similarities and differences and the effects of oppression and privilege. Write me a note with the theme and explain the rational for this theme. You can begin writing when you get my approval. To produce a successful paper, use APA format (http://guides.lib.umich.edu/content.php?pid=80367&sid=596113) and:

1. Research the topic, read and cite at least 15 peer reviewed articles on the topic (go to www.lib.umich.edu then search “google” then select “UM link to scholar.google.com” then log in with your umich information).
2. Write a research brief (following the guidelines provided) that should be between 1500-2000 words aimed at policy makers that contain the following:
   1. Scope of the Problem: Define the problem area. Include current prevalence figures, other epidemiological data that helps convey the significance of the issue.
   2. Who are those affected by this problem? Explain what is known about which children/families are at greatest risk.
   3. What does science have to say? Select several high quality studies (those quoted most) to highlight. Summarize their key findings, basic methods, and limitations.
   4. Implications for Social Work: What are the implications of this research for social workers who work with public policy, for practitioners, or for the public?
   5. Questions to answer: What additional research is needed to better inform social work practice to solve this issue?
   6. References (not counted in word count)

4. Presentation of Research Briefs (10%)

Each student will have the opportunity to give a 3-5 minute verbal presentation of their Research Brief using powerpoint and/or any other visual aids they choose. The presentation should convey the key elements of the Research Brief described above. Students will have 2 minutes to make their main points, 1 minute to summarize their recommendations, and 1-2 minutes for questions.

5. Quizzes (15%)

There will be four quizzes during this term. However, I will only use scores from your top three quizzes. Each included quiz will contribute up to 5% of your grade.

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Session 1. 9/3 – Introduction to class organization and requirements, getting to know each other.
Session 2. 9/10 – Introduction to Human Behavior and the Social Environment (Zastrow, pp. 1-51)
Session 3. 9/17 – Biological Development in Infancy and Childhood (Zastrow, pp. 55-99)
Session 4. 9/24 – Psychological Development in Infancy and Childhood (Zastrow, pp. 104-160)
Session 5. 10/1 – Social Development in Infancy and Childhood (Zastrow, pp. 165-232)
Session 6. 10/8 – Ethnocentrism and Racism + Biological Development in Adolescence (Zastrow, pp. 237-309). ---NO CLASS---Out of class assignment
No session on 10/15 – (Fall study break)

Session 7. 10/22 – Psychological + Social Development in Adolescence (Zastrow, pp. 312-395),  
**Assignment #1 DUE: Racial attitudes experiment/ Social history interview.**

Session 8. 10/29 – Gender, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexism + Biological  
Aspects of Young and Middle Adulthood (Zastrow, pp. 397-465)

Session 9. 11/5 – Psychological Aspects of Young and Middle Adulthood (Zastrow, pp. 467-513)

Session 10. 11/12 – Sociological Aspects of Young and Middle Adulthood (Zastrow, pp. 516 - 576)

Session 11. 11/19 – Sexual Orientation + Biological Aspects of Later Adulthood (Zastrow, pp. 578-640)

Session 12. 11/26 – Psychological Aspects of Later Adulthood (Zastrow, pp. 642-669),  
**Assignment #2 DUE: Research Brief**


Session 14. 12/10 – Last class, summary. No readings.

Note: We will have four tests on random dates. I prefer them to be administered unannounced.

**OTHER POLICIES**

**Reading.** You are expected to read all materials assigned for the week during which the class meets before the class meets.

**Note on attendance and participation.** We will begin the class promptly at “Michigan time”: 2:10 p.m. It is important that you attend each class session. The class sessions involve skill development experiences that go beyond course readings. Missing class will lower your grade since your participation as a co-learner is essential to meet the learning goals for this class. If you are not able to attend a particular session, please notify the instructor prior to the class session and make arrangements with other students to address the material that you missed.

**Classroom behavior.** It will also be important to follow a few general guidelines to ensure that our discussion sections run smoothly and are enjoyable for everyone. 1) Please always bring appropriate course materials to section. This means the readings to be discussed for that week as well as something to take notes. 2) Put away and silence all unnecessary electronic devices. If you would like to use a laptop to take notes, that is fine as long as it does not disrupt from your participation or that of other students in section. If your use of the laptop is disruptive to the discussion, then I will ask you to leave the classroom and you will receive an unexcused absence, which will affect attendance points. Similarly, you may bring cell phones to class but they should be turned off or silenced. If you need to take an emergency phone call, please step outside of the classroom to do so. If your cell phone is disruptive to the discussion, then I will ask you to leave the classroom and you will receive an unexcused absence, which will affect attendance points.

When engaging in discussions please be respectful and relevant. Being respectful includes addressing ideas offered by classmates in a constructive manner as opposed to the people who offer them. Being relevant requires that comments made in class relate to the material in a way that enriches (not distracts) from our learning. Just as in the case of disruptive electronic devices, I reserve the right to ask students engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g. sleeping in class, being
physically or verbally confrontational, sighing loudly to convey disinterest in the material) to leave section and this will affect their grade.

**Office Hours.** Please contact me to request a scheduled appointment at least two days in advance.

**E-mail Policy.** Email is the best way to reach me. Always include the course and section number, followed by a brief description of the topic of the e-mail in the subject line (e.g. SW 500: Question about paper). I will do my best to answer your e-mails about course-related issues by the end of the following business day. Business days are defined as 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. As such, if you e-mail me on Tuesday before 5pm, I will do my best to respond by Wednesday at 5pm. Likewise, emails sent on Friday before 5pm will receive a response by Monday at 5pm.

**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 section attendance or due dates for assignments, please notify me so we can discuss appropriate arrangements.

**Academic Integrity.** The University does not tolerate academic dishonesty. You must submit your own original work and cite sources whenever necessary. If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing, you will be reported to the Office of the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education and Executive Director of the Newnan LSA Academic Advising Center, which handles cases of academic dishonesty. Many of these issues can be complicated so if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask!

**Helpful Campus Resources.** Undergraduate Psychology Office: 1343 East Hall, 734-764-2580, psych.undergrad@umich.edu, http://www.lsa.umich.edu/psych/undergrad/

Newnan LSA Academic Advising Center: 1255 Angell Hall, 734-764-0332, www.lsa.umich.edu/advising

Sweetland Writing Center: 1310 North Quad, 734-764-0429, www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland


The Spectrum Center (organization for the LGBT community): 3200 Michigan Union, 734-763-4186, http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu

English Language Institute (resources for non-native English speakers): http://sitemaker.umich.edu/eli.resources/home

Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program: http://www.lsa.umich.edu/urop

Ground Rules for Discussion. In order to have productive, educational discussion, it is necessary to establish some rules and guidelines:

1) Allow others to ask questions, express opinions, and support their statements with evidence.
2) Ask “stupid questions” and respect “stupid questions.” Students often have questions about points that seem basic, obvious, or otherwise unnecessary to ask. It is common for students to think that the reason they have the question is because they are not intelligent enough to know the answer already. Remember, “stupid questions” are the gateway to “smart questions.” I encourage you to ask them.

3) Do not disrupt your classmates while they are speaking. This includes interrupting others to make a statement about the topic of discussion, engaging in side conversations, or any other behavior that hinders your classmates’ ability to contribute ideas to the discussion.

4) Respect others’ rights to disagree with you. This includes the right to come to a different conclusions based on the available evidence, offer alternative hypotheses or explanations, and to challenge your own opinions by asking for evidence supporting them.

5) Engage the argument, not the person. When disagreements arise, it is important to keep the discussion focused on the material under discussion. Disagreements should not turn into personal attacks.

6) No slurs. There will be zero tolerance for slurs based on gender, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or any other group membership. Students who use slurs will be dismissed from the class and will lose all participation points.