



## **Human Differences, Social Relationships Well-Being and Change Through the Life Course**

**S.W. 500, Section 001, Fall, 2014**  
**Mondays, 9:00-12:00 Room SSWB 2816**

Instructor:

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**Office Hours: Mondays after class, 12:15-2:15 in SSWB 3753 or by appointment.**

### **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.
- (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.

### **5. COURSE COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS**

This course addresses the following competencies and practice behaviors:

**COMPETENCY 2**—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.

Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and relevant law. Social workers

2.4 apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions

**COMPETENCY 3**—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

Social workers are knowledgeable about the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information. Social workers

3.1 distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom

**COMPETENCY 4**—Engage diversity and difference in practice.

Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers

4.1 recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power

4.3 recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences

**COMPETENCY 5**—Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

Each person, regardless of position in society, has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights. Social work incorporates social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice. Social workers

5.1 understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination;

**COMPETENCY 6**—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers

6.2 use research evidence to inform practice.

**COMPETENCY 7**—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development. Social workers

7.1 utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation; and

7.2 critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

## **6. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. 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. 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). 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.

### **B. Religious Observances**

Please notify the instructor (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. Attendance and Participation**

Attendance at all classes is required. Please let the instructor 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. 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.

### **D. Course policy on late assignments and missing exams**

Students anticipating, or unexpectedly, not submitting an assignment on time or missing a quiz must contact the instructor within 24 hours before it is due/scheduled to make other arrangements. Failure to do so will result in the student earning an automatic zero for that assignment. Additionally, even if permission is granted to submit the assignment late or take the quiz at another time, for any reason, that student will receive an automatic reduction of 5% points per day that the assignment is late or when the quiz is taken.

### **E. 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.

### **F. Class Structure, Assignment, Grading and readings**

*Class Structure.* Typically each week we'll have some combination of lecture based on a chapter from Ashford and LeCroy (2013), student presentation based on the assigned articles and student-led case study discussion. Typically you will be assigned a chapter from Ashford and LeCroy (2013) as the required reading and 2-3 articles for skim reading.

#### *Assignment.*

#### **Brief Multiple Choice Exams (20%).**

Two brief multiple choice exam will be held on *October 20<sup>th</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup>*. Each brief exam will consist of questions based on the lectures and content of the textbook from the preceding weeks. Each exam will count for 10% of the course grade.

#### **Participation (50%)**

1. Weekly class attendance and participation (10%)

In addition to attendance, you are expected to actively participate in class discussions facilitated by instructors, article presenters and case study facilitators. To prepare yourself for class participation, you should read the book chapter(s) giving you an overview of relevant issues related to the topic of the week. You also need to read (or at least skim) the articles before the class to help yourself participate in discussion of assigned articles and case study.

2. Weekly posting case study answers at C-tool (20%)

The instructor will post a case study along with a series of focus questions at C-tool each week. The students should read the case and post the answer to the questions at C-tool forum by each Friday 5:00 pm.

3. Student-team leading discussion of case study (10%)

Two-three students will work together in preparation for the full-class discussion based on the case study. Each week, you will be given a case study to read, along with a series of focus questions. The class will discuss the case in relation to the focus questions. The student team is responsible for reading and synthesizing their colleagues' answers and discussion questions and leading the in-class discussion on the case. Detailed instruction of the weekly post and discussion of case study will be provided in a separate handout.

4. Article presentation (10%)

Each student will have a chance to present his/her understanding and thoughts of an assigned article. The presentation includes: (a) a clear summary of the articles (b) the presenter's insights and learning points from the articles, such as (i) core messages in the article as a whole, (ii) the information conveyed in the articles consistent and/or not consistent with your prior knowledge, (iii) most interesting or intriguing information to you and (iv) implications for social work; (c) providing 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 15 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 articles.*

**Brief research paper (20%)**

To write the term paper, each student need to choose one of the three options below (about 2000 words excluding references, tables and figures; detailed instruction will be provided in a separate handout.)—***Outline (5%) due October 31<sup>st</sup>. Paper (15%) due December 12<sup>th</sup>.***

- 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 childhood or adulthood through literature review and primary data collection.
- c. 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, use of APA reference format).*

### **Research presentation (10%)**

Each student will have the opportunity to give a 10 minute verbal presentation of their brief research paper using PowerPoint and/or any other visual aids they choose on **December 1<sup>st</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>**. The presentation should convey the key elements of the brief research paper described above. Students will have 8 minutes to present the content of the paper and 2 minutes for questions.

### 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.

### Required Text and Readings.

Ashford, José B. and LeCroy, Craig Winston. (2013). Human Behavior in the Social Environment: A Multidimensional Perspective (5th Edition). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning  
For e-book, check out <http://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/ISBN/9780840029119?cid=APL1>

Other readings are available on our course website in CTools.

## **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.

### **September 8: Multidimensional Approach to Assessment in Social Work**

Chapter 1 (Ashford, et al., 2013): A Multidimensional Framework for Assessing Social Functioning

**Complete the sign-up sheets for article presentation and leading discussion of case study by the end of class**

**Post Case Study 1 and focus questions by Friday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm**

### **September 15: Biophysical Development and Functioning**

Chapter 2: The Biophysical Dimension for Assessing Social Functioning

Articles:

Gunnar, M., & Quevedo, K. (2007). The neurobiology of stress and development. Annual Review of Psychology, 58, 145-173.

Keating, D. (2010). Society and Early Child Development: Developmental Health Disparities in the Nature-and –Nurture Paradigm . In D. Keating (Ed) Nature and Nurture in Early Child Development. (pp 245-293). New York, NY. Cambridge University Press.

Meaney, M.J. (2010). Epigenetics and the biological definition of Gene x Environmental Interactions. *Child Development*, 81, 41-79.

**Post Case Study 2 and focus questions by Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm**

## **September 22: Psychological Development and Functioning**

Chapter 3: The Psychological Dimension for Assessing Social Functioning

Articles:

Frith, C.D. & Frith, U. (2007). "Social Cognition in Humans." *Current Biology* 17: R724-R732

Taylor, S. & Stanton A. (2007). Coping resources, coping processes, and mental health. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 3, 377-401.

Vaillant, G.E. (2000). "Adaptive Mental Mechanisms: Their Role in a Positive Psychology." *American Psychologist* 55(1): 89-98.

**Post Case Study 3 and focus questions by Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm**

## **September 29: Social Systems and Human Development Required**

Chapter 4: The Social Dimension for Assessing Social Functioning

Articles:

Herek, G.M. & Garnets, L.D. (2007). "Sexual Orientation and Mental Health." *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 3: 353-375.

Pumariega, A.J. , Rothe, E. & Pumariega, J.B. (2005). "Mental Health of Immigrants and Refugees." *Community Mental Health Journal* 41(4): 581-597.

Yip T., Gee, G.C. and Takeuchi, D.T. (2008). "Racial Discrimination and Psychological Distress: The Impact of Ethnic Identity and Age Among Immigrant and United States-Born Asian Adults." *Developmental Psychology* 44(3): 787-800.

**Post Case Study 4 and focus questions by Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5:00 pm**

## **October 6: Preconception, Pregnancy, Birth, and the Newborn**

Chapter 5: Pregnancy, Birth, and the Newborn

Articles:

Campos, B., Schetter, C. D., & Abdou, C. M. (2008). "Familialism, Social Support, and Stress: Positive Implications for Pregnant Latinas." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 14(2): 155-162.

Dominguez, T. P. (2008). Race, Racism, and Racial Disparities in Adverse Birth Outcomes." *Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology* 51(2): 360-370.

Ross, L. E. (2005). "Perinatal Mental Health in Lesbian Mothers: A Review of Potential Risk and Protective Factors." *Women & Health*, 41(3): 113-127.

**Post Case Study 5 and focus questions by Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm**

**October 13:** Fall Break (no class)

## **October 20: Quiz I and infancy and Early Childhood**

Chapter 6 & 7: Infancy & Early Childhood

Articles:

Brabveman, P. & Barclay, C. (2009). Health Disparities Beginning in Childhood: A Life-Course Perspective. *Pediatrics*, 124, S163-S175.

Campbell, S. B., Shaw, D. S., & Gilliom, M. (2000). Early externalizing behavior problems: Toddlers and preschoolers at risk for later maladjustment. *Development and Psychopathology*, 12(3), 467-488.

**Post Case Study 6 and focus questions by Friday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm**

## **October 27: Middle Childhood**

Chapter 8: Middle Childhood

Articles:



Ahrons, C.R. (2007). "Family Ties after Divorce: Long-Term Implications for Children. *Family Process* 46(1), 53-65.

Salmivalli, C. (2010). Bullying and the peer group: A review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 15, 112-120.

Wissow, L. S. (2001). Ethnicity, Income, and Parenting Contexts of Physical Punishment in a National Sample of Families with Young Children. *Child Maltreatment*, 6(2), 118–129.

**Post Case Study 7 and focus questions by Friday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 5:00 pm**  
**Outline of term paper due by Friday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 5:00pm**

### **November 3: Adolescence**

Chapter 9: Adolescence

Articles:

Goldston, D.B., Molock, S.D., Whitbeck, L.B., Murakami, J.L., Zayas, L.H. & Hall, G.C. N. (2008). "Cultural Considerations in Adolescent Suicide Prevention and Psychosocial Treatment." *American Psychologist*, 63(1), 14-31.

Grossman, A.H. & D'Augelli, A.R. (2006). "Transgender Youth: Invisible and Vulnerable." *Journal of Homosexuality*, 51(1), 111-128.

Li, S.T., Nussbaum, K.M. & Richards, M.H. (2007). "Risk and Protective Factors for Urban African-American Youth." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 39, 21-35.

**Post Case Study 8 and focus questions by Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm**

### **November 10: Young Adulthood**

Chapter 10: Young Adulthood

Articles:

Settersten, R. & Ray, B. (2010). What's going on with young people today? The long and twisting path to adulthood. *Future of Children*, 20(1), 19-41.

Osgood, D.W., Foster, E.M., & Courtney, M.E. (2008). Vulnerable populations and the transition to adulthood. *Future of Children*, 20(1), 209-229.

Logan, T.K., Cole, J. & Shannon, L. (2007). "A Mixed-Methods Examination of Sexual Coercion and Degradation Among Women in Violent Relationships Who Do and Do Not Report Forced Sex." *Violence and Victims* 22(1), 71-80.

**Post Case Study 9 and focus questions by Friday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm**

### **November 17: Middle Adulthood**

Chapter 11: Middle Adulthood

Articles:

Case, A., Fertig, A., & Paxson, C. (2005). The Lasting Impact of Childhood Health and Circumstance. *Journal of Health Economics*, 24, 365-389.

Bevans, M. & Sternberg, E. (2012). Caregiving burden, stress, and health effects among family caregivers of adult cancer patients. *JAMA*, 307(4), 398-40.

King, S. D. & Orel, N. (2012) Midlife and Older Gay Men Living with HIV/AIDS: The Influence of Resiliency and Psychosocial Stress Factors on Health Needs. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 24(4), 346-370, DOI: 10.1080/10538720.2012.721669

**Post Case Study 10 and focus questions by Friday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 5:00 pm**

### **November 24: Late Adulthood**

Chapter 12: Late Adulthood

Articles:

Ferraro, K. F., & Shippee, T. P. (2009). Aging and Cumulative Inequality: How Does Inequality Get Under the Skin? *Gerontologist*, 49, 333-343.

Martens, A., Goldenberg J., & Greenberg J. (2005). A terror management perspective on ageism. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61(2), 223-239.

Werth, J.L., Gordon, J.R., & Johnson, R.R. (2002). Psychosocial issues near the end of life. *Aging and Mental Health*, 6(4), 402-12.

**December 1: Quiz II & student presentations**

**December 8: student presentations**

**Term paper due by December 12<sup>th</sup> 5:00 pm**