



Course title:

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

Semester: Fall 2014

Instructor: Viktor Burlaka, MA, MSW, Ed.S.

Course Number: SW500, section 003

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Meeting times: Tuesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. in SSWB Room 2752 (09/02/14-12/9/14)

Materials

The following materials will support your learning in this course:

1. You will need a laptop for each class. Please bring your personal computer or borrow a portable computer from the School of Social Work.
2. The required textbook for this class is: *José B. Ashford & Craig W. LeCroy (2013), Brooks/Cole Empowerment Series: Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 5th Edition ISBN-10: 084002911X, ISBN-13: 9780840029119.*
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Visual materials, including educational videos and simulations will be used in the 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.

Theme Relation to 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. help people and small social systems to change.

Theme Relation to Social Justice

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.

Theme Relation to 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.

Theme Relation to 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.

Relationship to SW Ethics and Values

As human development throughout the lifecourse 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 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.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Forums: post your thought/questions weekly (20% of term grade)

Please prepare for all class 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 to Ctools/SW500-F14/Forums by 10 pm on Mondays. 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.

2. Social History 1: Interview (25% of term grade)

To practice use of the concepts discussed in the class, students will conduct a 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 in the attachment under Ctools/SW500-F14/Assignments/Social History 1: Interview). Please adhere to ethical standards when conducting the interview. Provide answers to all topics/points/issues in the attached template. Your grade will depend on the ability to use professional language. Avoid slang: instead of using “guys” use “young men” or “boys,” instead of “mom”—“mother,” instead of “fizzled out”—“did not succeed” etc. Avoid generalizations: “always,” “average,” “perfect,” and “all.” Avoid sexist language: use “Ms.” instead of “Mrs.,” “women” instead of “lady,” “homemaker” or “woman who does not work outside of the home” instead of “housewife.” Do not call adult women “girls.” If you use acronyms, spell the term out first time and put the acronym in parentheses after it. Thereafter, you can use just the acronym. Be concise. Distinguish between facts from your impressions. Phrase your impressions as “My impression is...,” “It appears that...,” or “It seems that...”. Write “Anna, 108,…” instead of “Anna was a women who was 108 years old.” Spell correctly. Avoid labeling people with terms like “Mongoloid,” “sleazy” or “abnormal.” Stress confidentiality—don’t use real names in this practice interview and change some minor facts such as the specific community the person comes from. If you make records during interview, ask the person’s permission first. Before you begin, explain the purpose and what you plan to do.

3. Social History 2: Paper (25% of term grade)

Students are expected to write a brief research paper on a key issue related to individual behavior, development, or family circumstance identified during Social History 1: Interview assignment. 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 paper (following the guidelines provided) that should be between 2800-3000 words and 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/individuals 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. Social History 3: Presentation of Paper (5% of term grade)

Each student will have the opportunity to give a 3-5 minute verbal presentation of their brief research paper using powerpoint and/or any other visual aids they choose. The presentation should convey the key elements of the brief research paper 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 (25% of term grade)

We will have short quizzes each week based on readings assigned.

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- Session 1. 9/2 – Introduction to class organization and requirements. A Multidimensional Framework for Assessing Social Functioning (Read Ashford_Ch. 1 ***before*** the first class)
- Session 2. 9/9 – Biophysical Dimension (Ashford_Ch. 2+Article #1)
- Session 3. 9/16 – Psychological Dimension (Ashford_Ch. 3+Article #2)
- Session 4. 9/23 – Social Dimension (Ashford_Ch. 4). **Submit Social history interview**
- Session 5. 9/30 – Pregnancy, birth and newborn (Ashford_Ch. 5+Article #3)
- Session 6. 10/7 – Infancy (Ashford_Ch. 6)
- No session on 10/14 – (Fall study break)*
- Session 7. 10/21 – Early childhood (Ashford_Ch. 7+Article #4)
- Session 8. 10/28 – Middle childhood (Ashford_Ch. 8+Article #5)
- Session 9. 11/4 – Adolescence (Ashford_Ch. 9). **Submit research paper**
- Session 10. 11/11 – Young adulthood (Ashford_Ch. 10). **Submit paper presentation**
- Session 11. 11/18 – Middle adulthood (Ashford_Ch. 11+Article #6)
- Session 12. 11/25 – Late adulthood (Ashford_Ch. 12+Article #7)
- Session 13. 12/2 – Student paper presentations (Article #8)
- Session 14. 12/9 – Last class, Student paper presentations. No readings.

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” at 8:10 p.m. It is important that you attend each class session, arrive on time and remain in the class throughout its entirety. The class sessions involve skill development experiences that go beyond course readings. Therefore, if you are not able to attend a particular session, please notify and receive permission from the instructor prior to the class session and make arrangements with other students to address the material that you missed. *Missing or coming later for class more than twice* will lower your term grade.

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 5 p.m., I will do my best to respond by Wednesday, 5 p.m. Likewise, emails sent on Friday before 5 p.m. 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

Services for Students with Disabilities: G664 Haven Hall, 734-763-3000, <http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 3100 Michigan Union, 734-764-8312, <http://www.umich.edu/~caps/>; www.mitalk.org

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>

Psychological Clinic: 2463 East Hall, 734-764-347, <http://www.umich.edu/~psychcln/>

U-M have too many acronyms for you? <http://uuis.umich.edu/cic/acronyms/index.cfm>

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.

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