Deep meaning lies often in childish play.

~Johann Friedrich von Schiller

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Course Description:

This course will examine theories and techniques for observing and understanding the behavior and interactions of infants and young children and their caregivers. This course will emphasize evidence-based tools for observation that address diverse groups of infants and young children in their primary environments (e.g., family and alternative caregiving contexts). Special attention will be given to issues of diversity as it relates to understanding the nature of interactions. The course will be divided into classroom activities as well as involvement in an evidence-informed intervention project through the department of Psychiatry. Students will be part of a Child Team working/playing with an individual child on a weekly basis to assist the child with separation and reunions while their parent attends a parenting support and intervention group. The course will contribute to post-graduate readiness for endorsement in infant-family practice.

Course Content:

In addition to 9 to 10 weeks working with an assigned child, students will debrief with team members, and the treatment team clinical staff. We will address both the objective aspects of observing and interacting with young children and their caregivers, as well as the subjective experience of caring for young children, many of whom face significant environmental challenges, including poverty and maternal depression. Specific strategies for helping children
who are distressed or dysregulated will be addressed. Finally, students will have the opportunity to observe and reflect upon multiple domains of child development, including state regulation, attachment behaviors, and emotional, language, cognitive and motor development.

**Course Objectives:**

Students will:

- Develop core skills of MSW students in observation and assessment;
- Through use of videotapes, observation notes and individual feedback, specifically develop expertise to understand and respond to the unique communications of young children, who are much less able to utilize words to express their needs;
- Utilize a multidisciplinary approach including faculty influence from psychiatry, and psychology;
- Consider the behaviors and interactions observed through a multicultural lens, making accurate meaning of what is observed through understanding the child in the context of their caregiving environments, which are influenced by broader societal influences;
- Gain exposure to interacting with parents of young children in a supportive way
- Complete one aspect of training for post-graduate endorsement in infant-family practice.

**Course Design:**

This course will take place primarily in the community, via involvement with Mom Power, a Research project through University of Michigan, Department of Psychiatry and funded by Medicaid. It is a 10-week attachment-based, supportive, parenting intervention group for high-risk mother-child dyads (0-6 years). In addition to involvement with the project, students will receive guided support (via live interaction guidance as well as weekly observation notes) from the course instructor and research team members. Students will need to be available for approximately 3.5 hours, which includes set up, the group, clean up and debrief each week.

The class will meet twice in the SSW. Following the close of the 10-week session, a final course meeting will be held to debrief the overall experience. These additional experiences are part of the extra 1 credit course attached to this course.

**Links to CSWE Practice Behaviors:**

**Practice Behavior 3**

- Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
  - Distinguish, appraise and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom
- Demonstrate effective oral and written communication
- Analyze models of assessment, prevention, and intervention

**Practice Behavior 4**
- Engage diversity and difference in practice
  - Recognize and communicate understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences
  - Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups

**Practice Behavior 7**
- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment
  - Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention and evaluation
  - Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment

**Practice Behavior 10**
- Engage, assess, intervene and evaluate...
  - Use empathy and other interpersonal skills
  - Collect, organize and interpret client data
  - Select appropriate intervention strategies

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:**
- *Multicultural and Diversity* themes will be addressed by careful attention to the impact of social class, ethnicity, family structure, community support, and ability on infant and parent interactions. Different patterns of development which may result from different biological and/or social environments will be identified and differentiated from those patterns of development which may result from deprivation or impairment.
- *Social Justice and Social Change* will be addressed through discussion of the impact of economic and social oppression on infant and child family relationships.
- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* is particularly important in social work with infants and young children because of the potential lifelong impact of facilitating or harmful conditions at this stage of life. This course will emphasize factors that may contribute to resiliency and vulnerability and identify the kinds of environmental conditions, programs, and interventions that promote optimal development.
- *Behavioral and Social Science Research* will be emphasized throughout the course which will draw on empirically based knowledge regarding observation and assessment from a number of other disciplines, particularly developmental psychology and psychiatry.
Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

As child development throughout the life course is so profoundly impacted by the parent(s)/child relationship, this course will emphasize understanding the development and indices of attachment. We will also consider potential ethical dilemmas may arise for social workers working with vulnerable children and families. The impact of social conditions and social policy and the need for macro and micro intervention to improve the lives of children will also be addressed.

Intensive Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS):

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectional and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self knowledge and self awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

Accommodations:

If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, please let me know soon. The earlier that you make me aware of your needs the more effectively we will be able to use the resources available to us, such as the services for Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site and the like. If you do decide to disclose your disability, I will treat that information as private and confidential. Also, please notify me if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Course requirements:

- Completion of weekly readings (found in the schedule tab each week)
- Completion of weekly Observation notes (80% of final grade)
  - Students will write a note each week following the guideline available in Ctools
  - Each note will have two components
    - A description of child throughout the day –
In addition to the actual observation note, you will add a reflection/processing section - to be uploaded to Ctools by Thursdays at 11:00 pm. That section should include your thoughts and feelings, interpretations, etc. about the day, the child or particular parent-child interactions. It should also contain a section of how you applied that week’s reading to what you saw/experienced. If another week’s reading leaps out as relevant, you can include that as well or in place of that week’s reading if it is too much of a stretch to link the reading to the week.

- Please use only first names in the notes.
- If you email a note to another MP facilitator or supervisor, as an attachment, you must include the following statement in the email. Do the same for any email that has any client information - even if only a first name. The phone number offered is mine -

The information contained in this message may be privileged and confidential and is intended only for the use of the named recipients. This communication is protected by federal law, both the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and 18 United States Code Section 2511. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that you have received this in error and that any review, dissemination, distribution, or copying of this message is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify us immediately by phone at 734-936-4949 (collect, if long distance) and destroy the message as you would confidential information.

- Completion of a final presentation (10% of final grade)
- Attend all sessions (10% of final grade); absences will lower your grade since:
  - This research project relies on the development of a strong caregiver/child relationship to help young children manage and thrive during separation from the parent.
  - The children will come to rely on you...predictability, reliability and consistency are core to any strong relationship..."being there" is incredibly important to the children
  - From the time you enter the building, there will be no texting or emailing. This means while waiting for families, while interacting with the children and families or in the debrief sessions.
  - Your active participation includes listening well to others and contributing in all activities related to the group, such as pitching in while setting up, cleaning up, and getting organized for debrief.

**GRADING of notes and final presentation will be based on:**
Thoroughness and relevance (i.e., about the child or interactions) of observation descriptions
Ability to suspend judgment in description of observations
Ability and accuracy re: relating observation with developmental domains, understanding the potential meanings of behaviors

Reflective Capacity

Tentative Agenda

1/13 Meet in SSWB Rm. B798
Topics
Course Introduction
Course Requirements
MP Overview
Managing Child Behavior

Reading:
Muzik et al. - MP Overview/Primer
Murphy - When a child is inconsolable
Lillas - Stress Response Regulation
Sample Process Note
MP Handouts
Sample MP Process Note

1/20 MP Group One

Reading:
Massie Campbell Scale of Mother-Infant ADS
The Poverty Clinic - Can a stressful childhood make you a sick adult

1/27 MP Week Two “Getting to Know You”
Meet at site – Rachel Upjohn Building, UMATs area
Arrive and set up 12:50 – 1:00 p.m.
Group - 1:15 to 3:45
Clean up - 4 - 4:15
Debrief - 4:15 - 5:00

Reading:
Lillas - Stress Response Regulation
Lieberman and Van Horn - Giving voice to the unsayable: Repairing the effects of trauma in infancy and early childhood (Read for ideas of how to “contain” themes and feelings of children, as well as to understand how fear can be masked by aggression).

Observation Notes:
In addition to the MP Guide, note your observations of child’s stress response, using the Lillas guide to inform your observations.

2/3  MP Week Three “Getting to Know You Better”

Reading:
- Guedeney and Guedeney - Infant rhythms vs. parental time- Promoting parent-infant synchrony.pdf
- Greenspan - Social Emotional Growth Chart Questionnaire
- SSP Scoring guide

2/10  MP Week Four

Reading:
- Fraiberg - The clinical significance of baby games
- Kopp - Emotional Dev. 0 to 24 months
- Slade – Parental Reflective Functioning

2/17  MP Week Five

Reading:
- Vallotton - Do infants influence their quality of care: Infants’ communicative gestures predict caregivers’ responsiveness
- Hart and Risley - Language Development and Poverty

2/14  MP Week Six

Reading:
- Developmental Milestones Chart
  Find correct ASQ age and prep to observe your child through its use

3/10  MP Week Seven

Reading:
- Fraiberg - Ghosts in the Nursery
- Lyons-Ruth - Attachment and Aggression
- Lillas - Stress Regulation (revisiting to see how your child is doing)
- Optional - Kleeman - The Peek-a-Boo Game

3/17  MP Week Eight

Reading:
- Development of Grasp
Building Resilience

3/24  MP Week Nine “Visitor Week”
Reading:
Miron, Lewis & Zeanah - Clinical Use of Observational Procedures in Early Childhood Relationship Assessment
Norton- Poverty and Parental Interaction

3/31  MP Week Ten Good-bye Week
Reading:
Jones-Harden - You cannot do this work alone
Keller - Repairing Links - Building attachments in preschool classrooms

4/7  Group Processing – B798
Reading:
Tutors - Relevance of observation to clinical training and practice

4/14  Group Processing – B798