



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

**SW 715: Adventure/Experiential-Based Social Work Practice
Fall 2015**

Instructor: Antonio G Alvarez

Wednesday 5:00- 8:00 PM; SSWB Room B798

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Office hours- By appointment (Wednesday afternoons preferred)

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Course Description

This course will focus on experiential and adventure practice (theories, models, tools and techniques) that social workers may use in their work with individuals, groups, families, organizations and communities. Some particular focus will be given to their use in social work with groups. Students will be introduced to adventure through readings, discussions, guest speakers and experiences. This course is designed to provide the student with a theoretical, philosophical and experiential understanding of adventure and experiential learning and its application to Social Work Practice. Theoretical models of practice arising out of the adventure and experiential fields will be offered and discussed in tandem with current social work theories and models of practice. Evidence-based literature will be reviewed to promote experiential interventions that build on strengths and resources of individuals and their families, and that integrate components of evidence based practice into the experiential methodologies.

Course Content

Course content will include:

- Theoretical and philosophical foundations of adventure based practice
- Discourse on the safe and appropriate use of adventure activities with different client groups
- Integration of evidence-based practice techniques in the application of adventure based practice
- Use of adventure activities in assessment and intervention
- The creation and maintenance of physical and emotional environment conducive to change and growth

- Impact of assessment data and environmental conditions on client outcomes
- The art of matching intervention tools with individual and environmental assessment
- Demonstration of a variety of facilitation skills using adventure activities
- Exploration of effective methods of processing experience and enhancing the learning from interventions
- Appropriate use of program evaluation to maintain personal and program efficiency

In this course the emphasis of intervention is as much on the context as on the individual. Intervention strategies focus on ways to bring about change at levels such as the classroom or school, the peer group, and the community or population, as well as at the individual level. Mezzo and macro practice skills covered in this course are aimed at promoting interpersonal competence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, achievement, and moral development by making the contexts within which they develop more responsive to their expressed needs.

Direct practice methods covered in this course provide students with the skills necessary to select and provide effective short-term interventions, evaluate direct practice, develop service delivery systems and work effectively with individuals, families and groups in society. Skills for engagement, assessment, intervention, prevention, and evaluation relevant to contexts such as families, neighborhood and community, schools, group care facilities, residential care, hospitals, correctional programs and institutions, courts, governmental and nongovernmental agencies will be covered.

Intervention strategies will be derived from the experiential and adventure approaches and theoretical perspectives. Students will learn to use the knowledge and skills to engage and communicate effectively with all consumers. The student will learn how to design individual programs of intervention that are based on clearly articulated goals and priorities, reflect an examination of the evidence base and are consistent with social work ethics and values. Throughout the course, cultural competence and sensitivity to differences among families and the impact of worker/client differences in values, experiences, and power will be analyzed. In addition, the student will learn to understand the significance of “multiple identities” (the interaction of factors such as the diverse dimensions: 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 shaping the uniqueness of families and individuals and in shaping power and privilege differences.

Course Objectives

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

- Describe the theoretical underpinnings of Experiential and Adventure Practice
- Apply relevant Social Work practice principles into Adventure Practice
- Demonstrate a model for adventure/experiential facilitation.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the tools and techniques of adventure practice
- Perform adventure-based assessments, formulate adventure-based plans and develop evaluation procedures.
- Understand the significance of environmental/ecological factors in individual assessment and interventions, as well as broader contexts of family, group, neighborhood, and society.
- Safely facilitate client systems through some of the common tools in adventure practice, including those that are found in Challenge Courses
- Demonstrate ways to help the participant(s) transfer the learning from the facilitated experience to other aspects of their life.
- Adapt adventure tools for use indoors, particularly for the counseling or therapeutic setting.
- Demonstrate appropriate use of adventure-based activities with diverse client groups and in different settings.
- Discuss typical ethical concerns related to adventure-based Social Work practice.

Course Design:

THIS CLASS IS ABOUT LEARNING EXPERIENTIAL/ADVENTURE TOOLS. IT WILL BE EXPERIENTIALLY TAUGHT! EXPECT TO ENGAGE REGULARLY IN PHYSICAL AND INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES. Other classroom teaching strategies may also be used, including lecture, multimedia presentations, small and large group discussion, presentations by students and guest lecturers. Students' experiences in the field will be utilized as much as possible in assignments and case presentations and discussions.

Relationship of Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed through careful analysis of how these models can be applied and modified to fit the special needs of various groups. Resistance and motivation of participants to interventions will be covered to demonstrate how effective intervention models must be adapted to fit the needs of various ethnic and racial groups. This course will emphasize that mono-cultural models must be adapted to fit the definitions of "problem" and "treatment" that exist in diverse groups in order for social workers to practice with assorted client systems from diverse backgrounds.

- Students will learn to recognize the existence of group differences in a number of areas (such as nonverbal communication, individual and family values, family and community structures, preferred and accepted responses to crisis, response to exclusion or oppression) and how these may impact intervention relationships with individuals and their families.
- Social change and social justice issues will be addressed by recognizing that historically poor and oppressed clients have been excluded from adventure and experiential programs. This course will also examine how socioeconomic exclusion arises in screening criteria that exclude clients because of intelligence, verbal ability, insight, and motivation. Advocacy for individuals, especially children and youth whose families and communities are particularly impacted by social inequality and social injustice, will be emphasized at individual, family, organizational, community, and policy levels.
- Promotion and prevention will be addressed through a focus on intervention models and procedures that can be used to prevent and treat psychosocial problems of all individuals including children, youth and adults. These areas are addressed in the micro practice areas through family life education, family preservation activities, early identification of children/youth at risk, and family. At the mezzo and macro practice levels, program development and evaluation, and staff and professional training (teambuilding, communication workshops, etc), addresses the relationship between program decisions and risks to individuals and families.
- Social science knowledge is presented as the necessary basis for conducting empirically grounded assessment, intervention and evaluation practice at all levels of intervention. Course materials draw upon research knowledge from a variety of social sciences, as well as other professions and disciplines (i.e., social work, education, psychology, sociology, etc.), and emphasize the need for multidisciplinary collaboration and communication around issues related to individuals, especially children and youth, and their ecosystems. Social science research concepts and methods are described in relationship to both social work practice and program and policy evaluation processes.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

When working with adults, social workers must encourage self-determination while empowering them to choose and pursue their own goals. Ethical issues around management of boundaries, addressing physical space, touching, as well as encouraging clients to make choices and live by their consequences will be discussed as they impact individual clients. Practice with children and youth require considerable attention to issues of ethics and values, due to the special challenges these populations offer the social work practitioner. For example, issues of self-determination and autonomy often arise when an adolescent discloses important information that has not been shared with a parent or other responsible adult. Social work values and social science knowledge may also conflict with the child-rearing beliefs and practices of some cultural or religious groups. Social work values and ethics, as outlined in the professional Code of Ethics, are

presented as the necessary and appropriate guidelines for practice when ethical dilemmas arise in social work practice.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Let me know if you need an accommodation for a disability. All aspects of the course can be modified to facilitate your learning process. There are resources available to help us to meet your needs. Know that when you disclose a disability to me, I will treat that information as private and confidential.

Course Resources

1. Required Texts: (Instructor can get these books at a cheaper rate)
 - a. Alvarez, A. G. & Stauffer, G. (2015) Adventure Activities Manual, Ypsilanti, MI: AIT Inc. **Order through instructor for \$23**
 - b. Stanchfield, J (2007) Tips and Tools: The Art of Experiential Group Facilitation; Wood N Barnes Publishing Co, OK. **Can be ordered through instructor for \$25**

2. Strongly Recommended Texts:
 - a. Lung, D.M., Stauffer, G.S. & Alvarez, A.G. (2008) Power of One: Using adventure and experiential exercises in one-on-one counseling sessions; Wood N Barnes Publishing Co, OK. **Can be ordered through instructor for \$24**
 - b. Lung, DM, Stauffer, GS, Alvarez AG & Conway, J (2015) Power of Family: An Experiential Approach to Family Treatment, Wood N Barnes Pub Co. Bethany, OK. **Can be ordered through instructor for \$28**

3. Additional Texts:
 - a. Norton, C (2011) Innovative Interventions in Child and Adolescent Mental Health; Routledge Press, NY
 - b. P2P Activities Manual (2014) A guide to adventure-based work with students on the Autism Spectrum.

4. CTools Site: Will provide access to many/most of our additional readings during the course. Several websites which contain useful resources for our use will be provided.

5. UM and Alvarez Libraries: A few texts and journals are available at the library and in the instructor's personal library and can be borrowed for short periods of time.

Course Expectations

- Professional Accountability (see clarifications below)
- Out of class reading and preparation

- Completion on an individual project at the student's field placement setting (or an alternative if the placement is unable to offer the experience)
- Completion of other assignments (more during class session)

Professional accountability will be based on the following criteria. The professional accountability points are assigned based on the collection of all of these factors NOT just attendance.

- Engagement: The appropriate, respectful, and relevant participation in one's own learning as well as contributions to the learning of others. Inappropriate engagement can negatively affect your grade (disrespectful comments, side conversations and inappropriate comments, inappropriate use of computer and phone, etc.).
- Integration: The demonstration of appropriate efforts to make connections, both conceptual and practical, between the course curriculum and your experience. Inappropriate efforts (clear lack of having done reading, raising questions that are not related to the conversation or discussion) can negatively impact this portion of your grade.
- Attendance: Attendance is required and is considered as being present for the entire class period. Point will be subtracted for each session missed. Participation in class discussions is contingent upon attendance and can be used to affect your grade. Although some absences are justifiable, that does not suggest that points will not be lost.
- Timeliness: Completion of assignments on date due, including coming to class prepared to discuss and apply assigned readings.

Course Assignments- Fall 2015

Note: Uploaded into Assignments folder in CTools

The purpose of this class is to introduce you to a relatively young adventure/experiential approach to social work practice. There are very few social workers practicing in this manner. As recently as 1996, when a meeting for all social workers was called at an international adventure conference, there were barely 15 who showed up and six of those included me and five UM MSW students.

In the last twenty years, there has been a push to create concepts and models for the intentional use of these tools and techniques in our practice. This year, we have close to ten social work faculty members who practice and currently teach in this manner.

Dewey coined the phrase “learning by doing” to describe his ideas about experiential education. Other leaders continue to challenge the field to consider adventure-based ways to get things done that often is done through talk.

To enhance your learning, the following assignments are required; a late assignment will lose points, whether unintentional or with extra time requested

Who showed up: **Due Sep 23**

5 participation points

You will be given 5-7 minutes of class time to introduce yourself using pictures, cutouts, artifacts, drawings, poems, etc. Through this poster, share with us the following:

Who are you: What is important for us to know about you? (*Often, this includes a little about where you are from, what you did before UMSSW, things you are good at, areas you need improvement in, why you are in the S of SW, why this class, your passions- personal and professional.*)

Hopes and Wishes: Tell us- how you hope this class will go, what you hope it isn't, what kinds of things you are hoping to experience, what you want to leave this class with.

What is A/E SW Practice? **Due Sep 30**

10 points

Write a paper (3-4 pages) sharing your ideas about what you believe this practice to be. What makes it social work? What factors constitute adventure practice? What differentiates experiential from adventure work? Use references.

Assessment Facilitation- **Due Oct 21**

10 points

Complete a 4-corners assessment with an individual. See 4-corners handout for specifics.

Intervention Facilitation- **Due Nov 4**

10 points

It is very important to practice this work to become good at it! Here is an opportunity to write and get feedback on your process. Write a 3-page paper that reflects on an E/A experience that you facilitate or co-facilitate (at your field site, at someone else's field site, at a volunteer place, at a work site). Several options including-

- A. Find someone in class who is able to organize an event in their field placement and co-facilitate it.
- B. Run an experience at your field placement site

- C. Facilitate a session in a class you are in (many faculty members have agreed for this to happen in the past)

Submit a 3-page paper succinctly describing the following:

1. Logistics- who you did this with; where; how many people; length of experience
2. Tools selected
3. Your Point B
4. Your take on how the experience went

An A/E curriculum design Due Nov 18 30 points

Infusing one's practice with action through adventure/experiential activities is one way to apply the lessons from this class. Adding a check in activity or offering a ritual when working with a grief group are common ways that others have taken their new-found knowledge into their practice.

Another is to do more than a one-shot event, like a challenge day or a day on the ropes course, or a lunch activity in the gym. This involves designing a program and creating the curriculum for the number of sessions your design requires. This is what this assignment is about!

As learned through our many adventures, we start with participants with strengths and areas for improvement who have sought our guidance in meeting some of their expressed needs. Should we accept the challenge of guiding their journey, we must then consider what outcomes we will focus our energy on. Once that Point B is clear (to them and to us), we then offer "a road map" that accounts for where we need to get to and what resources we need to get there. Here then is "a treatment plan", "an agenda", and "a call-to-action".

So, for this assignment, you will develop a curriculum (6-8 sessions) for a specific client system. The specific tasks to get done include-

- ✚ Considering a population to work with (Working with young kids with special needs? Couples who are homeless? Older people dealing with dementia? The ongoing oppression experienced by people of color? The disempowerment of young people? Young women with eating disorders? Board of Directors Leadership Academy? A Community Redevelopment? Etc.)
- ✚ Describing your intentions with this population- what setting (hospital, school after-school program, child welfare agency, community center) might this occur in? What concern (empowerment, organizing, anxiety, eating disorder, skill development, externalizing behaviors like anger management, battering) might you focus on? If not sure, share with me your thoughts so I can perhaps help move you towards a decision. **This introductory 1-page paper should be uploaded by the end of September. 2 points**
- ✚ Finding 5-8 articles that will help you (and me) understand what this population will need from social workers. For example, veterans with PTSD according to the research do best with trauma reduction, with management of anxiety, with exploration of the trauma, with a support group, etc. Feel free to use a mixture of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, web-based stories and articles, newspaper articles, etc. Summarize each resource (no more than 1.5 paragraphs for each article); then summarize what you learned from reviewing these resources. What do we do, as a field, about addressing this social problem? What are current practices? What is often addressed when intervening with this population or concern? This is an opportunity for your voice to show in this paper. Make sure it does! **Make sure you provide a reference list. This data gathering 4-page paper is to be uploaded by October 15. 9 points**
- ✚ Based on what you have learned, develop an intervention plan for your client population.

Basically, you will now consider a specific client from the population you selected. You will determine what action you might take with this client (family therapy? Support Group? Training? Skill development? Etc.) Ideally, consider a 6-8-session plan, sketch it out, and imagine working for 2 months with this client. Share two things in this phase of the paper:

- a. A framework that offers a general structure of your plan
 - i. Expected outcomes, goals, objectives
 - ii. 6-8 specific areas to work on
 - iii. A sequencing of your work
- b. Detailed descriptions of two experiential/adventure-based sessions (choose sessions from the beginning, middle or end of the helping flow). These two sessions must offer a detailed agenda that you would follow with this client.
- c. **This 6-page paper is to be uploaded by November 18. 9 points**

✚ Reflect on the following:

- a. What did you learn from engaging in this process?
- b. If your investigation uncovered limited use of E/A practice with your population or concern of choice, describe how you might use the information you gathered (from sources other than E/A literature) to create an E/A program. For example, let's say you didn't find much written about the use of E/A methods with clients from the LGBTQ population. In your non-adventure readings you learned that members of this population are often bullied such that they sometimes consider killing themselves. Perhaps you might develop an adventure-based bullying prevention adventure camp offered only to members of the LGBTQ population.
- c. **This paper can be no more than 4 pages long and should be uploaded by Dec 2. 10 points**

The Stick Project: **Present on Dec 2**

18 participation points

Our work is transformative. We guide our clients/consumers through the change process and observe as they transform into who they want to become. In the process, we, the guides, also transform as we do this work. This project offers you an opportunity to partake in the transformation of a stick. Here's the intention behind this assignment- you have chosen to join this class that explores the use of an experiential/adventure approach to SW practice. It is a very different approach. If you end up infusing your practice with these tools and techniques, you will be a unique practitioner, one that will be asked often why you carry a bag of ropes and tennis balls, why you use the outdoors intentionally, and why you invite nature and ritual into your practice. To have the opportunity to engage in a parallel learning process, you will:

1. Choose a stick
Be intentional. Look for the stick from a place of importance- a park you exercise in or walk the dog at. It has to be **at least** 2.5 feet (30 inches) long. Consider how safe it will be when you carry it around- the more brittle, the more likely it could accidentally break. If you are a walker or a biker, consider how you'd carry it around.
2. Observe it and observe others as they interact with it
3. Journal about it all semester. Journal entries can focus on what the stick's life has been, what role it is playing in your life, how your friends and family are accepting it into your life and. An

entry every two weeks should suffice. Additionally, write about things like- what made you choose this particular stick? Any stick characteristic that strikes you? Did you give the stick a name? Why? Why not? Talk about how you decided to transform the stick, or how you changed your mind midway, or what you needed to do when the stick wasn't cooperative. Feel free to take photos of the process of the transformation. Journal must be in writing, although supporting documentation (audio/photo/video forms) are acceptable. Journal entries are to be uploaded at the end of each month (One of the journal entries can be the poem/story that you have created)

4. Spend time with it.

During the term, and not taking into account the time you spend working on the stick, spend purposeful time weekly with it (E.g. go for a walk with your stick; introduce your stick to others; make a game using the stick as a central prop; invite others to comment on your stick; take it home or to placement,)

5. Use it

The stick will be a prop when you solo/co facilitate in class and out of class

6. Write about it

Write a short story/poem using the stick as the main character

7. Physically transform it and present it to the class

By the semester's end, your stick will have physically transformed into something that you intended.

8. Present it to the class (12/2). Upload your final journal (12/9)

Final Slide **Due Dec 9**

5 points

Choose 5 Take Aways from across the semester. These can draw from readings, class discussions, small group discussions, class project activities, and/or class assignments. Please use references as appropriate.

Take all this content and create a 1-slide PowerPoint which you will upload onto CTools. Or create a poster and take a photo of it. Or upload a very short movie or video covering the content For part of our last class, you will have no more than 5 minutes to speak to your slide. For each item, please include the following:

- Title of Take-Aways
- Description: What is this?
- Why is this important to you? Why does this matter to SWP?
- How will you use this in the future of your SWP? How will this matter for the future?

Points Available

100 points

Assignments

60

What is A/E SW Practice	10
A Curriculum Design	30
Assessment Paper	10

Intervention Paper	10	
Participation Points		28
Who showed up	5	
Stick Journal and Presentation	18	
Final Slide	5	
Engagement Points		12
One point per full class attended	12	

Grading:

(50% of grade will come from assignments; 50% from participation and engagement points)

A+	100	B	84 -87
A	96-99	B-	80 -83
A-	92-95	C+	76-79
B+	88-91	C	below 76