SW 715: Adventure/Experiential-Based Social Work Practice
Spring Summer 2016

Instructor: Antonio G Alvarez
Tuesday 6:00-10:00 PM; SSWB Room B798
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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 emphasis 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)
      Order through instructor for $25

2. **Strongly Recommended Texts:**

3. **Additional Texts:**

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 defined as being present for the entire class period. Point will be subtracted for each session (or significant time segment) 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- Spring-Summer 2016

Note: Uploaded into Assignments folder in Canvas

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 across the US. And members of that international association (AEE) are overwhelmingly social workers and other mental health providers.

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 5.10

You will be given 5-7 minutes of class time to introduce yourself using pictures, cutouts, artifacts, drawings, poems, etc. Through this poster or on a PPT slide, 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 5.21

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.

**Adventure Group Facilitation**

Multiple due dates

For this course, I am reserving several hours for opportunities for each of you to practice facilitating a session with your peers. You will join a small group in the class. Each class session, starting session 5, I will provide your group an hour to circle up and engage in a complete adventure flow. Each member will choose a session to facilitate. Here are the tasks for each group facilitator:

1. Choose one of the 60-minute blocks (Sessions 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10) for you to facilitate.
2. Plan out a 60-minute group experience. As the class matures and develops, your assessment of the class and its abilities and capabilities will need to be addressed. In other words, if you are choosing to run an earlier session, you will need to consider “beginning group tasks” and create activities that will get you what you need. However, if you are doing a later session, you will need to consider all that has happened in class and make sure your session activities correspond with where the class is.
3. As you plan your facilitation, pick 2-3 activities from the adventure manual (to use as a focuser
and a primary challenge activity) and re-write them to include:

   a. Your objective for using the activity
   b. A brief that you intend to use
   c. Some (5-8) debriefing questions that you might ask to lead the reflection portion

Upload this work prior to your facilitation. (2 points)

4. I will provide each group access to my adventure bag and to additional tools; I will also make myself available to meet with you if so desired. Your stick(s) are mandatory tools during this facilitation. Do keep in mind that this is your opportunity to create actions for your group. In the past, many groups have spent a major chunk of their time sitting and talking. This practice will be discouraged and if it occurs will be noted in your evaluation.

5. Engage in facilitation. You will have 60 minutes from check in to check out so be mindful of the time.

6. At the end of the experience, collect written feedback from your colleagues (I have a sample form you can use). After reading them, attach these to your written reflection (8 points) submitted to me 7 days after your facilitation. Include in your 3-page reflection paper your considerations of these questions: (Consider your thoughts on questions a & b but write mostly about your thoughts on question c)

   a. What happened during session? Your proposed agenda (support this with any readings, discussion points made in class). Your observations on how it went, on what happened (“the substance of the class interaction and what happened to the individuals”- Knapp) 1 page
   b. What do you make of what happened? Any generalizations made about the class’ experience (“pertains to the difference the experience made to the individuals, the consequences, and the meaning for them”- Knapp)
   c. What will you take away from the experience? Applicability of lessons learned (“The process of taking lessons from the experience and reapplying them to other situations”- Rhoades)? Your thoughts on co-facilitation, areas of strength, areas for improvement.

An A/E Intervention Project Multiple due dates 45 points

What do you want to do with the skills you have learned in this course? Is there a population you are hoping to do this work with? How might you make that happen? 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! It is about offering you an opportunity put into practice the learning you have made while in this class.

So, for this assignment, the following 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 5.17**  
5 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 mostly peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and some 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 4-5 page paper is due on 5.24.**  
10 points

Do a 4-corners assessment on a member of your preferred client population:
Consider a specific client from the population you selected. Complete an assessment using the 4-corners tool.

**This paper is due on 6.14.**  
10 points

Do an intervention with member(s) of your preferred population.
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.

**Submit a 3-page paper succinctly describing the following:**
1. Logistics- who you did this with; where; how many people; length of experience
2. Their/Your Point B; Tools you selected;
3. Your take on how the experience went

**This 3-page paper is due on 6.28**  
10 points

Reflect on the following:
What did you learn from engaging in this process? 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.

**This 4-page paper is due 7.5.**  
10 points

**The Stick Project:**  
**Multiple due dates**  
15 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) is acceptable. One of the journal entries can be the poem/story that you have created. **Journal entries are to be uploaded at the end of each month**

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 (7.19). Upload your final journal (7.19)**

The points you receive will come from the intention you put into this endeavor (having it in class, meeting the expectations of the assignment), the content of your journals, the clarity in your final presentation about the transformation process that you observed.

**Final Slide**

**Due 7.19**

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 that 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
Depending on the format of our last class, we may be able to hear from each of you then.

### Points Available

<table>
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<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Who showed up</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is A/E SW Practice</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adventure group Facilitation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>An Intervention Design</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Stick Project</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Final Slide</td>
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<th>Engagement Points</th>
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<td>Ten points per full class attended</td>
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### Grading:

- A+ 200
- A 185-199
- A- 170-184
- B+ 155-169
- B 140-154
- B- 125-139
- C+ 110-124
- C below 110
Class Flow & Expectations

Session 1~ 5.10: Who’s in the room? What else is in the room?
To cover:
- Defining the scope of our class; A/E-b SWP
- Clarifying assignments and expectations;
- Poster: Introducing ourselves to each other
- Stick: Introducing our sticks to each other; Shelter Making:

Important:
1. Have your stick
2. Have your poster

Session 2~ 5.17: Goal Setting, Intentionality
When is a game not a game? Notions of intentionality and purpose; Point B’s
To cover:
- Experiential/Adventure Facilitation

Important:
1. Have your stick
2. Intervention Project Introduction phase paper is due

Session 3/4 ~ 5.21 Experience our tools
All day outdoors, we will experience as many of the tools as we can manage during or time together
To cover:
- Flow and pace
- Managing level of challenge
- Clarifying outcomes/Point B’s

Important:
1. Have your stick
2. Bring food and drinks for lunch
3. Dress appropriately for a day outside
4. AE-bSWP paper is due

Session 5~ 5.24: Ethical Considerations: Resistance
As a social work approach, learning where ethical issues might surface is important. Considering this and other factors that might invite resistance into the room
To cover:
Class Flow & Expectations

Consider NASW code in light of adventure practice; where might ethical considerations surface?

Some areas to consider~
  a. Boundaries/touching
  b. Facilitator as participant
  c. Physicality of it all
  d. Re-introducing trauma due to unknown Pt. A

The gift of resistance

Important:
  1. Have your stick
  2. Adventure Group 1 leaders: ______________, ______________
  3. Stick Journal 1 is due May 31
  4. Intervention project data gathering phase paper is due

Session 6~ 6.7- Assessing Point A and the environment

To do effective guiding, we need to know all we can know about the people we are guiding and the context from which we are doing this work.

Topics to cover:
  - Assessing who is in the room and what came with them
  - Learning ways to manage the desired environment
  - Knowing what to do when resistance is in the room

Important:
  1. Have stick
  2. Readings that would help: 4-corners, Changes, Assessing Point A)
  3. Adventure Group 2 leaders: ______________, ______________

Session 7~ 6.14- Context/Environment/Setting

Knowing what is in the room is a good first step; determining if that is what is important to be in the room is the next step; finally, learning ways to enhance the opportunity for the desired context to be present is critical

Topics to cover:
  - Adventure Beliefs and Contract
  - Focusing activities
  - Squiggles
  - Figuring out the challenge level; Enhancing buy in; keeping the participant focused

Important:
  1. Have stick
  2. Adventure Group 3 leaders: ______________, ______________
Class Flow & Expectations

3. 4-corners Assessment Paper due

Session 8~ 6.21 – Matching action with assessments
What factors determine what we do with our clients in session?
Topics to cover:
- The factors: Point A, Context; Point B
- Choosing activity, flow, facilitation style, facilitator role
- Using our creativity
- Mindfulness and Meditation practice within the E/A approach

Important:
1. Have stick
2. Adventure Group 4 leaders: _____________, ________________

Session 9: 6.28- Guiding the Learning
What do we do with everything that occurs? How do we guide the client towards learning?
Which lessons do we highlight? Tonight we will learn about which observations and noticings will help us
Topics to cover:
- Choosing proper tools (debrieving versus ...)
- Making meaning of our observations
- Offering an observation without judgment
- The experiential learning cycle
- What, so what, and now what?
- Bridge building

Important:
1. Have stick
2. Adventure Group 5 leaders: _____________, ________________
3. Stick Journal 2 is due June 30
4. Intervention facilitation paper is due

Session 10: 7.5: What did we learn; End small groups
Opportunity to share what you have learned from class and from your research
Topics to cover
- Opportunity for each of you to teach us about your project

Important:
1. Have stick
2. Adventure Group 6 leaders: _____________, ________________
3. Your Intervention project reflection is due
Class Flow & Expectations

Session 11: 7.19: Endings/Evaluations/Sticks
Opportunity to evaluate the class, to share about your stick’s journey and to have a meal together

Topics to cover:
- Stick Presentation
- Class Evaluation
- Kukuis

Important:
1. Sharing of efforts
2. Have stick
3. Final stick journal is due
4. Final slide is due