



Social Work 790-010: Working with Individuals with Dementia and Their Families
Spring/Summer 2016

Credit Hours: 1

Instructors: Beth Spencer, LMSW and Cassie Starback, LMSW

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Course Description:

This course introduces students to the world of dementia care for older adults and family caregivers. Demographic data regarding increased incidence of dementia in all ethnic/racial and socioeconomic groups will frame examination of intervention research with individuals with dementia and family caregivers.

Course Content:

This course will include an overview of the most common causes of dementia in older adults, with a particular focus on the progression of Alzheimer's disease. Research-based interventions will be examined for early, middle, and late stage dementia, both for the individual and family caregivers. The instructor will introduce observational and assessment tools for both populations and discuss their use in practice.

Course Objectives:

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

1. Discuss the major causes of dementia in older adults and the progression of Alzheimer's disease.
2. Demonstrate at least one effective way of assessing and intervening with individuals with dementia and caregivers at different stages of illness.
3. Offer an example of the impact that dementia has on: communication, family relationships, self-esteem.
4. Discuss at least one policy implication of the growing dementia population.
5. Address at least one ethical dilemma that occurs in dementia practice.
6. Understand the impact of diversity and socio-economic status on the dementia journey.

Relationship to the Four Curricular Themes:

Multiculturalism and Diversity will be addressed through the readings, case studies, and course discussion, particularly in terms of different definitions and values regarding dementia, and different patterns of decision with regard to long term care.

Social Justice and Social Change will be examined with regard to the long term care payment structure and how it impacts lower income families, decreased choices, barriers to health care and services.

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation will be addressed during lectures through discussion of dementia prevention research and current treatment, as well as the concept of "excess disability": treatment and rehabilitation that addresses functional limitations caused by factors other than organic dementia.

Behavioral and Social Science Research will be incorporated throughout the course in discussions of addressing interventions with caregivers and the individual with dementia.

Relationship of the course to Social Work Ethics and Values. Case studies will be used throughout the class which will reflect ethical dilemmas faced by social workers in this area of practice. Discussion will focus on issues such as who is the client (caregiver versus individual with dementia), safety concerns when someone lives alone (how and when to intervene and the limits of intervention), autonomy and competence in definition and practice.

Readings:

Readings are available through the Canvas site.

Grading: This course will be graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis. Letter grades will not be assigned. Class attendance is required and factored into the grading. A pass grade indicates successful completion of all assignments and attendance for both entire days. If there is an emergency, please contact us as soon as possible to schedule make-up work.

Assignments:

- Participation in all course activities, including assigned readings, small group discussions, and paper
- Ethics case study
- Short paper

AGENDA

Friday, June 24 9:00-5:00

Morning

Introduction to the course

Grace: One person's journey through Alzheimer's: Intervention at different points

Lunch 12:00 -1:00

Afternoon

Overview of types of dementia and the diagnostic process

Guest speaker: A neurologist TBA

Alzheimer's Association, community resources, policy & advocacy

Guest speaker: Jennifer Howard, MSW, ED, Great Lakes Chapter, Alzheimer's Association

Friday, July 1

Morning

Assessment of individuals and families

Guest speaker: TBA

Evidence-based interventions with caregivers

Introduction to behavior challenges in dementia care

Afternoon

Case studies & video vignettes: Putting intervention into practice