



# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Interpersonal Practice with Families  
SW 623 Section 002  
Spring/Summer, 2017  
Tuesday, 8:10 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Professor Rich Tolman  
[rtolman@umich.edu](mailto:rtolman@umich.edu)  
734-764-5333

## **1. Course Description:**

This course will build on the content presented in course SW 521 (i.e. Interpersonal Practice with Individuals, Families and Small Groups). This course will present a theoretical analysis of family functioning and integrate this analysis with social work practice. Broad definitions of "family" will be used, including extended families, unmarried couples, single parent families, gay or lesbian couples, adult siblings, "fictive kin," and other inclusive definitions. Along with theories and knowledge of family structure and process, guidelines and tools for engaging, assessing, and intervening with families will be introduced. The most recent social science theories and evidence will be employed in guiding family assessment and intervention. This course will cover all stages of the helping process with families (i.e. engagement, assessment, planning, evaluation, intervention, and termination). During these stages, client-worker differences will be taken into account including a range of diversity 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. Various theoretical approaches will be presented in order to help students understand family structure, communication patterns, and behavioral and coping repertoires. The family will also be studied as part of larger social systems, as having its own life cycles, and as influencing multiple generations. An overview will be given of current models of practice.

## **2. Course Content:**

Content on the engagement phase will emphasize methods for overcoming barriers to help seeking that are both internal and external to the family. Students will learn how to identify client-worker differences and how to find common ground with clients. In particular, students will learn methods for engaging the most reluctant family members. Assessment content will draw from the major theories of family functioning and life-span development, as well as meta-theories that address oppressive social forces (e.g. sexism and racism). A sampling of reliable assessment measures will be introduced and applied. Goal setting and planning will flow from the assessment of the family, the goals of the family and its individual members, empirical evidence for different approaches, and ethical considerations. A variety of intervention and prevention models will be presented, along with the specific methods and procedures of each model. Work with nontraditional

families, couples counseling, and divorce and separation counseling will also be included. The role of social work in the primary prevention of family problems will be emphasized (e.g. family life education programs). Methods for the evaluation of intervention and prevention efforts will be covered, including the use of self-report and observational measures.

### **3. Course Objectives:**

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

1. Articulate at least two conceptual frameworks that take into account individual and family needs, problems and experiences within the family, and resources and opportunities of the social environment.
2. Describe challenges, risks, and tasks as they apply to women, the poor, families of color, and gay and lesbian families.
3. Identify the resources, strengths, and effective family processes across diverse populations including those based on a range of diversity dimensions such as ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and class.
4. Apply family assessment frameworks that are ecological and family-centered and take into account the influence of oppressive social forces. Such assessments will account for the presence and impact of family violence, the presence and impact of substance abuse, and the impact that the students' own value system has on their assessment formulations.
5. Describe ways to establish a professional relationship with family members in order to engage in assessment, goal setting, and planning. The capacity to establish relationships with families will include an appreciation of cultural diversity and the unique strengths of nontraditional families.
6. Identify at least two models of prevention and intervention and explain the applicability of each model to the challenges faced by families.
7. Apply appropriate outcome measures that are reliable and determined by agreed upon goals in order to evaluate the effects of family-centered interventions.

### **4. Course Design:**

The course design will include lectures, assigned theoretical and practice reading, and discussion; exposure to the actual experiences of families in general and to those of particular families, through such media as case materials, videotapes, and client personal descriptions; and role-playing as worker and as family member.

### **5. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:**

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed by considering the unique characteristics of families composed of various diversity dimensions (e.g., 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), and by tailoring engagement, assessment, goal setting, planning, and

intervention to these characteristics. Assessment procedures will focus on strengths rather than deficits in family functioning.

- *Social Justice and Social Change* will be addressed through a multi-systems perspective in which students will view the family as a system within, and affected by, a larger social structure. Family assessment will consider the impact of poverty and discrimination based on various diversity dimensions and other factors in causing or maintaining family problems. Traditional solutions to family problems will be analyzed for their potential to maintain oppression and disempowerment. Empowerment models of practice will be stressed, including the involvement of natural helping networks and teaching advocacy skills to families.
- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* will be addressed by identifying the family functions and processes which are useful for the successful development of its members. Prevention programs will be described that are designed to help the general population and at-risk families to avert problems before they develop (e.g. marital enhancement, parent education, premarital counseling, parent-school linkages, etc.).
- *Behavioral and Social Science Research* will be addressed by discussing the relationship of theoretical and empirical knowledge to family practice, by describing the theoretical frameworks within which practice methods may be carried out, and by identifying and critiquing the techniques and outcomes of evaluation which have been used with each practice method.

## **6. Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:**

Ethical dilemmas unique to family work will be presented, such as balancing individual and family goals, contracts regarding confidentiality and record-keeping, and addressing oppressive family structures. Presentation of value conflicts that exist toward families in society will be used to raise the students' awareness of personal and professional values.

## **7. Course Philosophy and Format:**

Intervention with families has followed a progression from modernism to post modernism in the past decades. In the past, the family was seen as a group of people with relational or functional problems. The social worker was the “expert” conceptualized a view of the family and prescribed interventions to promote change. In the post-modern view, the family members, themselves, are the experts in their relations and functioning ability, and the social worker is a facilitator of opportunities for learning, growth, and change, at the discretion of each family member. This is a substantial paradigm shift from early family interventive philosophy; however the knowledge, values and skills that the early family specialists gave us form the foundation for this new and developing context. For this reason, it is important that all social workers who intervene with families have an in- depth understanding of the evolution of theories for family intervention.

In addition, family functioning represents the powerful influences of cultural, economic, social, and political systems, so as social workers, we must apply ecological and generalist thinking when envisioning interventions with families. A goal of class is that you will become the expert in your own functioning when working with families, including the cultural, economic, social, and political forces that influence your family assessment and intervention abilities.

A core pedagogy of the class will be to conduct simulated family sessions. You will work in teams with other students to conduct two family sessions with the same simulated family. In another team, you will create a simulated family that will work participate in two simulated sessions. Both roles, practitioner, and family member, will provide the opportunity to apply theoretical perspectives to gain understanding of how families function and how to assess them in practice. As a practitioner, you will have the opportunity to try intervention techniques and assess their impact on the family. As a family member, you will learn about the impact of intervention efforts on client and what is effective in engagement of family members.

### **Accommodations**

I want to do what I can to make the class a good learning environment for every student. If you believe that you may need an accommodation for any sort of disability or learning issue, please feel free to make an appointment to see me to discuss that. the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office can help to determine appropriate academic accommodations.

For more information, contact:  
Services for Students with Disabilities  
G-664 Haven Hall | 505 South State St.  
(734) 763-3000 | [ssdoffice@umich.edu](mailto:ssdoffice@umich.edu)

### **Self-Care**

Professional social work education is demanding and may stress coping resources and abilities. Focusing on family social work can be particularly stressful as it often requires focus on one's own family experiences. I hope that we can create a class environment that is supportive in exploring your own family experiences in regards to your professional practice. I encourage you to use resources available if you find the need for more support for any reason. I am willing to talk about things that come up for you during the semester and assist in accessing resources as needed.

The Office of Student Services's Health and Wellness Program provides supportive services to MSW students which promote wellness, self-care, and maintenance of a healthy academic and mental health balance, as well as to increase disability awareness. Students may experience situations or circumstances that impede educational success and/or quality of life. Students may contact the Health and Wellness Advocates regarding any health, mental health or wellness issue(s). This could include need for advocacy and/or referral to School, university, or community resources, financial resources, or counseling centers. All meetings with students are strictly confidential and can take place in the School, over coffee, or locations where the student feels comfortable and non threatened. Contact the Health and Wellness Program via [ssw.wellness@umich.edu](mailto:ssw.wellness@umich.edu).

Please consult the SSW website for additional resources: <https://ssw.umich.edu/student-life/health-safety>.

### **Required Text:**

Gehart, D. R. (2014). *Mastering Competencies in Family Therapy: A Practical Approach to Theory and Clinical Case Documentation*, 2nd Edition. Cengage Learning.

#### **Week 1: MAY 9**

- Introduction to Social Work with Families
- Research and Ethical Foundations of Family Social Work
- Philosophical Foundations of Family Therapy
- Differentiating Family Social Work and Family Therapy

#### **Readings:**

- Gehart (2014) Chapters 1-3

#### **Week 2: May 16**

- Systemic and Strategic Theories
- Structural Family Therapy

#### **Readings:**

- Gehart (2014) Chapter 4-5, p. 61-164
- Recommended: Minuchin, Patricia. (2007). *Working with Families of the Poor*, Second Edition, 2nd Edition. New York: Guilford Press, Chapters 3, 4

#### **Week 3: May 23**

- **Satir Human Growth Model**
- **Internal Family Systems**

#### **Readings:**

- Gehart (2014) Chapter 6: 165-228,

#### **Week 4: May 30**

- **Intergenerational Family Therapy**

#### **Readings:**

- Gehart (2014) Chapter 7, p.229-274
- Recommended: McGoldrick, M., Gerson, R. (2008). *Genograms: assessment and intervention*. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Chapter 2,4.

#### **Week 5: June 6**

- **Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapy**

#### **Readings:**

Note: This is a preliminary draft. Some revisions may be made and additional recommended readings and resources added.

- Gehart (2014) Chapter p. 275-330.
- Recommended: Dattilio, F. M. (2009). Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with Couples and Families. Chapter 6, Cognitive Behavioral Techniques.

**Week 6: June 13**

- **Solution Focused**

Reading:

- Gehart (2014) chapter 9, 331-378

**Week 7: June 20**

- **Narrative Approaches**

Reading:

- Gehart (2014) Chapter 10, 370-446

**FAMILY SIMULATION 1 in class**

**Week 8: June 27**

- **Emotionally-Focused Therapy**
- **Case Conceptualization**

**Reading:**

- Gehart (2014) Chapter 11, 12 447-514,
- Gehart (2014) Chapter 13, 515-550

**Week 9: July 10**

- **Clinical Assessment**
- **Intervention Planning**

**Reading:**

- Gehart (2014) Chapter 14, 551-580; Chapter 15, p. 581-594

**FAMILY SIMULATION 2 in class**

**Week 10: July 17**

- **Evaluating Intervention Progress**
- **Documentation and Progress Notes**
- **Gehart, Chapter 16-17, 595-612**

**Week 11: July 24**

- **Final case presentations, wrap-up**

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**ASSIGNMENTS: Note that due dates and more details for all assignments are listed on CANVAS.**

**Group Assignment 1: Case conceptualization for your simulated family.-15 pts.**

Create a family. Complete the Gehart case conceptualization for that family using each model. Designate which group members have primary responsibility for each part of the conceptualization. This should progress on an ongoing basis during the semester but completed by the start of simulations.

**Group Assignment 2: Case conceptualization, intervention plan and presentation for your intervention family-20 pts.**

Complete a draft of the Gehart case conceptualization form and intervention plan after your first family assessment session. Revise the assessment and intervention plan after the second session. Designate which group members have primary responsibility for each section conceptualization but the project will be a shared group assignment. Each group will give a case presentation at the last class.

**Individual Assignment 1: Annotated simulated Session 1-20 pts.**

Using the rubric that will be distributed later in the semester, annotate your simulated group session. Each team member will be particularly responsible for annotations for their activity during the session. Submit a 1-2 page reflection to discuss issues not included on the annotation.

**Individual Assignment 2: Annotated simulated session 2- 20 pts.**

Using the rubric that will be distributed later in the semester, annotate your simulated group session. Each team member will be particularly responsible for annotations for their activity during the session. Submit a 1-2 page reflection to discuss issues not included on the annotation.

**Attendance and in class participation-10 pts.**

***Class attendance is required.*** If you are unable to come to class on a specific day, please contact me (via email or c-tool message to create a written record) with the reason for the absence. If you miss more than one class session, we will need to meet to discuss a plan for making up missed class material to adequately complete the course.

**Active participation** in class is expected. Active participation can be demonstrated in several ways, some examples are: participation in discussion, volunteering for in-class exercises, bringing experiences or problems with families to class discussion, sharing techniques with class members, thoughtfully processing classroom experiences, taking risks in sustaining dialogue on difficult issues that arise in class, giving thoughtful feedback to your colleagues on their videos and learning contributions. ***Note on use of technology in the classroom: Laptops are to be used only for taking notes, or for specific other uses as directed in class. Personal use of laptops, phones and other technology is not allowed during class except in cases of emergency. If you need to use them for that purpose, please let me know about it that day in class. Significant reductions in active engagement grades will be made from unwarranted use of***

### ***technology in class.***

#### **Online Lecture Annotation and Supplemental Reading -10 pts.**

- Deep reader-for at least one class session
- Early responder-for at least one class session
- Integrator for at least one class session
- “Voices from the Field” contributor to at least one class session
- Read and add your comments to online lectures-prior to class

#### **NOTES ON GRADING:**

In the spirit of a professional development experience that encourages you to stretch and grow, grading will be mainly on a credit/no credit basis for each assignment. If you make a strong and timely effort on each assignment, you will do well in this class in terms of grading. I will give feedback on each assignment that focuses on improving your knowledge and skills. If you complete the assignment at an acceptable graduate level, you will get the points allotted for that assignment. Students can lose points by not doing acceptable work and not participating at an acceptable level. I will give you specific feedback about what needs to be improved to make an assignment acceptable.

- Points for all assignments total to 95. Remaining 5 points reserved for exceptional performance. I will occasionally award a bonus point for assignments that are exceptionally well-done and for exceptional class participation and contributions.
- You will lose 1 point for the 1<sup>st</sup> assignment that I judge as unacceptable. You may then resubmit the assignment in acceptable form for credit. If not resubmitted with revisions, you will get no credit for the assignment. You will lose 2 points for the 2<sup>nd</sup> unacceptable assignment and 3 points for the 3<sup>rd</sup> unacceptable assignment and so on.
- You will lose 1 point for a late assignment. An additional point reduction will be made when an assignment is more than one week late. Longer than that, no credit will be earned for the assignment.
- Lose 1 point for a missed class. Upon the 3<sup>rd</sup> absence, there will be 5-point deduction for each absence. You can be excused from a class if you contact me in advance and get authorization, or if you are physically unable to attend due to illness. But in no case can you miss more than two class sessions without point deductions. You will need to do make-up work for the missed class regardless of the reason.
- Unauthorized use of phones or laptops deduction of 1 point per occurrence.
- Being late to class or back from a break, lose 1 point for each two occurrences.

I try to provide clear, thoughtful feedback that helps you to deepen your awareness of professional social work practice as well as your writing and communication skills. ***If I write or say something that confuses or upsets you, please make an appointment so we can discuss it!*** If I help you deepen your understanding of something, that is helpful for me to know too.



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**Grading Scale:**

**98-100 =A+; 93-97 = A; 92= A-  
91 =B+, 88-90 =B, 86-87 =B-  
86= C+; 83-85= C;80-82= C-  
Below 80; not passing**

**Safety & Emergency Preparedness**

In the event of an emergency, dial 9-1-1 from any cell phone or campus phone.

All University of Michigan students, faculty and staff are required to familiarize themselves with emergency procedures and protocols for both inside and outside of the classroom. In the event of possible building closure (i.e. severe weather conditions, public health notices, etc.) you may contact (734)764-SSWB (7793) for up-to-date School closure information.

Be Prepared. Familiarize yourself with the emergency card posted next to the phone in every classroom/meeting room. Review the information on the emergency evacuation sign (located nearest the door) and locate at least (2) emergency exits nearest the classroom.

If you are concerned about your ability to exit the building in the case of an emergency, contact the Office of Student Services and/or email [ssw-ADAcpliance@umich.edu](mailto:ssw-ADAcpliance@umich.edu).  
Office of Student Services  
School of Social Work | Room 1748  
734-936-0961

For more information, view the annual Campus Safety Statement at <http://www.dpss.umich.edu/>.

Register for UM Emergency Alerts at <http://www.dpss.umich.edu/emergency-management/alert/>.