Method Area: Interpersonal Practice

Course Description:

This course will introduce and address issues of concern to interpersonal practice clients that identify as Transgender, Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Queer or questioning, focusing on the basic knowledge, interpersonal practice and advocacy skills it takes to become increasingly competent in providing counseling and advocacy for people who are members of these marginalized, yet highly resilient, groups. From a strength-based perspective, grounded in Affirmative Practice Principles, this course will focus on basic social work knowledge and understanding of these groups, the social injustice and stigma they face; but ultimately, how to effectively engage, assess and intervene with current, associated issues through therapy and advocacy. This course will also address self-exploration and ethical dilemmas for social work students and providers with TBLGQ people, and include real practice experiences with people from our local community. Students will be encouraged to actively engage in the course. Class participation is critical to the success of the course.

Significance of the class and its relationship to social work goals:

This class is based on current social work knowledge emerging from social science research and the experiences of TBLGQ people within the United States. TBLGQ identities in our society are often stigmatized, misunderstood and exploited in the controversies of a divisive socio-political climate, and yet TBGLQ people
demonstrate incredible resourcefulness, resilience and strength as individuals, families and communities. This course teaches social workers to ground social work interactions in relational-cultural approaches to affirmative interventions with TBLGQ clients that consider the unique intersections of ethnicity and culture, race, religion, development, age, health, ability, etc., reflecting the respect and value of every person fundamental to the goals of social work. As the course provides real case examples and practice experiences that expand the critical interpersonal skills and ethical considerations necessary to engage effectively with TBLGQ clients, focus on advocacy within systems associated with social work, especially schools, and community organizations reflect important goals of social work as well. Nearly all social workers, no matter what their concentration, will work with TBLGQ people. The problems and resiliencies associated with being TBLGQ provide an overarching context to nearly every issue that social workers address and yet are often overlooked or misunderstood as we attempt intervention. Affirmative practice principles in engagement, assessment, intervention and advocacy draw on the resourcefulness of this community toward effective social work practice.

Course Objectives:

Students will:

- become conversant in Affirmative Practice Principles with TBLGQ people and communities.
- understand basic social work knowledge to engage with TBLGQ clients effectively, especially in checking our assumptions and growing the relational-cultural skills in questioning and commenting of joining, empathy, mutuality, and use of self.
- learn the history and progress of the TBLGQ civil rights movement.
- be able to identify and assess the stresses and the strengths of TBLGQ individuals, families and groups toward resolution of presenting issues and problems of concern to social work.
- gain basic knowledge to analyze the economic, social, and health issues associated with the current socio-political impacts and health policy on TBLGQ populations
- understand TBLGQ issues and practice engagement skills over the life-span
- be able to assess ethical and culturally sensitive responses to TBLGQ people with specific awareness of the unique intersections of identity.
- be able to use current information about TBLGQ people to effectively advocate for clients.
- learn some basics of empowering community organization models with TBLGQ people from examples provided in the class.

Requirement for Academic Credit:

You can choose from these two assignments:
Option 1: Students must turn in a completed paper within one week of the course. To complete the assignment, turn in your paper as a Word attachment to my email address: lsanders@umich.edu, not through Canvas - Thanks.

Write a five-page reflection on your learning from the course that integrates core course concepts, your most significant learning and how you intend to integrate this learning in to your work as a professional social worker. Integrate at least three readings from the required reading list for the course. Feel free to include and optional readings if you would like. Think about the questions you had and assumptions you were making about TBLGQ populations before you came into the course, and what has shifted for you resulting from the course. What content had the most impact on your learning and why? What, if anything, has surprised or inspired you? What would you like to know more about? Use specific quotes from the readings in your paper and provide a list of your sources at the end.

Option 2: See an opportunity to expand on what you have learned in class. Engage with the TBLGQ community. Attend an TBLGQ event, action, business, organizing effort, agency, or interview an activist, advocate, or therapist, who works with LGBTQ people. This should be a new experience for you that takes you out of your comfort zone in some way. Write a three-page reflection on this experience and integrate two readings from the course. Provide a list of your sources at the end.

Biographical Sketch of the Instructor:
This course is developed and instructed by Laura Sanders, LMSW:

With a master's degree in social work from the University of Michigan, Laura Sanders has been an instructor in U of M's graduate School of Social Work for 20 years, and has practiced for over 28 years as a family therapist in the area. She is a long-time community activist for human rights including those of children, women, TGLBQ people and immigrants, etc. In the mid-80’s she was the Co-director of the TGLBQ office at U of M which is now called the Spectrum Center. She specializes in interpersonal work with trauma and attachment difficulties as well as issues of gender and sexual identity. Her work with people is eclectic and creative including advocacy and community organizing. Most recently, she is a co-founder of the Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, a current and active grassroots organization responding to local ICE raids, detainments and deportations of our immigrant community members, and advocating for immigration reform, supporting TGLBQ undocumented immigrants in campaigns, as well. She also has begun partnering with animals in therapy at her farm office in animal assisted interventions. Awareness of intersections of identity is key to all of her social work.

TRIGGER WARNING:
Because this course examines injustice, some of the material is painful in nature, and encourages students to explore and share issues of identity, focusing on imbalances of power, privilege, oppression, and discrimination. It is likely to bring up painful
material for some students and very new information for others. Please know that all feelings are acceptable and invited, but students are expected to be respectful to others and able to manage their emotions. As well, personal stories are invited but students should not feel pressured to share painful personal material unless they feel prepared and compelled to do so. There will not be sufficient follow-up for processing painful memories or severe anxiety that might get triggered. In general, it is important that students who expect to struggle seek support and/or therapeutic assistance to work through their own feelings, and/or recovery during their graduate education in order to be present and effective in working with struggling clients. Wounded healers who have worked toward recovery, resilience and empowerment make some of the best therapists and organizers. See resources for this below.

Health and Wellness:
Health and wellness situations or circumstances may impede student success within the program. Students should feel free to contact the School’s Health and Wellness Advocates, Lauren Davis or Nyshourn Price, at ssw.wellness@umich.edu. Students may also visit/call the University’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). CAPS offers a variety of clinical services, referrals, and workshops. CAPS, Hours: 8am-5pm, 530 S State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48109 caps.umich.edu

Accommodations:
In the era of iPhones, iPads, laptops and wireless networks, some students may wish to spend class time reading email, texting, surfing the web, or doing work for other classes. Please don’t do this. If you need a computer as a resource for note-taking please let me know, but I would prefer that they not be open at all and phones be put away. I find that they interfere with discussion and active listening to me and other students. Thank you very much.

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. Also all preferred name and gender pronoun uses will be honored.

Safety and 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-ADAcompliance@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/.

**Mini-Course Readings:**

We only have two days for this course so there are a limited number of required readings. Supplementary readings are included on the Canvas site under “files” and then in “optional readings”. I realize that this is a lot of reading to cram into weekend, so if you need more time, do read those that include an* before class to be adequately prepared for interacting with community members in class.

**Required Readings before first day of class:**


*Nichols, Margaret, The Great Escape: Welcome to the World of Gender Fluidity*, Psychotherapy Networker, March-April 2016 (7 pgs.)


**The Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People, 7th version**, from [www.wpath.org](http://www.wpath.org). (Read these this for
readiness and eligibility standards for hormones and surgeries. See the children and adolescent section) skim this document for basic knowledge of what is in it.

**Suggested Optional Readings for first day of class:**


Krueger, Megan, **Kids Born with Disorders of Sex Development**, Special Needs Resources, Sept. 29, 2014


**Required Readings for the second day of class:**


*Ryan, Caitlin, et.al., **Family Acceptance in Adolescence and the Health of LGBT Young Adults**, JCAPN Volume 23, Number 4, November 2010

*Sandmaier, Marian, **It Takes a Tribe: What It’s Like to Raise (or Be) a Transgender Child**, Psychotherapy Networker, March/April, 2016


**Optional Readings for the second day of class:**


Munson, “*Partners Interfacing with Healthcare Professionals*, FORGE (For Ourselves Reworking Gender Expression, Milwaukee, WI.


King, M, *Your Mother Liked It Bareback*, The Body, June, 2013
Organization of the Course Content (Subject to changes)

**Day 1**

Day one starts with interactive experiences that introduce current issues, identity definitions, knowledge and myths and facts associated with members of the TBLGQ community. Concentration on a detailed list of Affirmative Practice Principles that reflect what social workers need to know about working with TGBLQ people will be addressed. Learning to notice and check our own assumptions, and relational-cultural skills for effective engagement will be directly practiced in class. A brief discussion of understanding models of identity awareness, the history of the TBLGQ civil rights movement and understanding intersections of identity will be explored through guest presentation and student interaction. Discussion of advocacy and community organization with TBLGQ people are themes woven throughout both days of the course.

**Day 2**

Day two is strongly focused on acting upon the knowledge gained in the first day through practice exercises with actual TBLGQ people from the local community. We will also explore ethical dilemmas that are common in working with the TBLGQ population. Life-span, and life-course issues through engagement with TBLGQ youth, their family members, TBLGQ parents and an aging person from the community is a primary focus for this day. Exploration and learning to address the unique intersections of identity of each person and family will be highlighted. Student participation through voluntarily joining practice experiences from a Relational-Cultural and Affirmative Practice perspectives, which will include students’ sharing of themselves, is encouraged and expected.