



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Spring/Summer, 2018

Interpersonal Practice with Families

SW 623 Section 002 (Offers an experiential approach to practice)

Tuesdays- 8 a.m.-12 p.m.

Office Hours: by appointment (aalvarez@umich.edu)

734-635-6508

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.

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.

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.

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.

This section will also focus on ***an experiential approach*** to working with families. As such, I will provide the class with opportunities to engage in activities, indoor and outdoor, that experiential therapists and practitioners use.

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.

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.

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” who 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 that 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

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

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, 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/>.

Required Text:

Lung, DM, Stauffer, G, Alvarez, T & Conway, J. (2015) Power of Family: An Experiential Approach to Family Treatment. WoodNBarnes Publishing Co., Bethany OK (can be purchased from instructor for \$26)

Strongly Recommended Texts:

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

McGoldrick, M & Hardy, K (2008) Re-Visioning Family Therapy: Race, Culture and Gender in Clinical Practice, 2nd Edition, Guilford Press

Nichols, M & Schwartz, R (2006) Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods, 7th Edition, Allyn & Bacon Press

Canvas will also contain many articles that we will reference during this course.

Group Assignment 1: Presentation of an approach (15 points)
(6 groups of 3 or 4)

Logistics:

1. Two days: May 29 (Systemic, Strategic, Structural), June 5 (CBT, Solutions Focused/Narrative Therapy, Psychoanalytic)
2. Time slots: 8:45-9:15; 9:30-10:00; 10:45-11:15

Tasks:

1. In your small group, you will choose a FT approach that you would like to learn in great detail about and that you will educate the class on.
2. Once you have a selection, determine member roles for developing the final product- an uploaded document and the 30-minute presentation.
3. Engage in your tasks
4. Upload your document to Canvas
5. Present on it during your time period
 - a) Use whatever resources you decide on
 - b) Provide an umbrella understanding of it (people, concepts, strategies, critical literature points)
 - c) Strengths and problem areas of approach
 - d) Attention to social justice markers
6. Provide a Resource List for participants

Choices:

- a) Systemic
- b) Strategic
- c) Structural
- d) Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- e) Solutions focused/Narrative
- f) Psychoanalytic FT

Individual Assignment 1 (5 points)
Due (in Canvas) by June 15

Write a 3-page paper reflecting on your personal learning during this group assignment. Cover your insights on the process, the development of your group and your engagement in the process. Share some lessons that you learned from engaging in this process.

Assignment 2: Family Simulations (30 points)
(3 groups (A, B & C) of 6 or more members)

Logistics:

1. Three days: June 12, June 26, July 10
2. Time slots: 8:45-10:00; 10:30-11:45
3. Day 1: A1 facilitates B family; A2 facilitates C family; B1 facilitates C, B2 facilitates A
4. Day 2: C1 facilitates A, C2 facilitates B; A1 facilitates B, A2 facilitates C
5. Day 3: B1 facilitates C, B2 facilitates A; C1 facilitates A, C2 facilitates B

Tasks

1. Create a group of 6 or 7; this group will become a family in need as well as 2 sets of family therapists

For family

1. Identify roles you will each play
2. Create a persona that you will become while in this role
3. Agree as a family about dynamics, and family functioning
4. Determine an area for intervention
5. Write all this up to share with me and others

For therapists

1. Break your group of six or seven into 2 groups of three or four (A & B groups)
2. Determine how your small group will work together (roles include co-therapists/facilitators, camera person, behind the scenes person)
3. Consider all that you know about the family
4. Agree on an approach you will use with the family you will work with
5. Engage the family in an hour long videotaped session
6. Reflect on the work your group did
7. Prepare for a second session; repeat steps 2-6

Individual Assignment 2 (5 points)

Due (in Canvas) by July 17

Write a 3-page paper reflecting on your personal learning during this group assignment. Cover your insights on the process, the development of your group and your engagement in the process. Share some lessons that you learned from engaging in this process.

Assignment 3: Your family genogram (15points)
Due by: Complete by June 30

1. Draw a genogram on your own family or the family of a client with whom you are working.
2. The genogram should focus on at least three generations (including yours, your parents and their parents, your children, if applicable and even more if you have the information).
3. Use McGoldrick's chapter (in the Course pack) on Genograms as your guide for the mechanics of drawing the genogram. You will most likely need to contact family members of your own family or your client's to obtain the necessary data. Include significant dates, illnesses, professions or occupations, striking character traits (i.e. gentle, moody, and intelligent) and other significant patterns (i.e. occupations, religions, prevalence of divorces, religious affiliations, illnesses, and substance abuse problems) on the genogram. You may want to use different colored pencils to illustrate alliances, coalitions, cut-offs, and triangles.
4. The genogram must be on an 8 ½ by 11 sheet and carefully drawn and turned in at 8AM in hard copy form.
5. Write a 6-8 page paper and submit it on Canvas by *June 30*.
6. This paper should identify and articulate major three-generational themes and patterns. Triangles, coalitions, alliances, and cut-offs should be explicated and analyzed. Gender, ethnic, class influences should be addressed.
7. You should also incorporate a theoretical discussion of these cultural themes based on knowledge gained from your readings. When discussing theory, please reference accordingly. The McGoldrick text is a particularly good source to utilize in developing a theoretical perspective on the cultural themes you are exploring in your papers.
8. You may want to speculate about your role (or your client's) role in the family system and please discuss sibling order, if applicable. Bowenian theory should be incorporated into your analysis and give three examples of how you imagine Murray Bowen might have intervened with this family.

NOTES ON GRADING

The points that can be earned for all assignments are **70**. Fully participating in all eleven-class sessions, including arriving on time will provide another **33** points (approximately 3 points per class session). I am including another **7** points to reserve for exceptional performance. I will occasionally award a bonus point for assignments that are exceptionally well done and for exceptional class participation and contributions. This totals **110** points available for you to earn.

Points for assignments:

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.

You will lose 1 point for the 1st 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 2nd unacceptable assignment and 3 points for the 3rd 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 may be earned for the assignment.

Points for attendance and participation:

The experiential nature of the class and your value being present is very important to me and to your optimal learning. To reinforce this, I give high points for students who come on time, ready to fully engage in class experiences (having read the readings, coming with questions if there are clarifications necessary, willing to engage in what is offered, arriving on time, returning from break on time, staying fully present in the class and away from unnecessary use of electronics and phones). If this is you, then you can count on earning at least 33 points (plus potential bonus points!).

- Missing a class means you lose 3 points. Missing your 3rd class session will result in a 5-point deduction moving forward.
- Whether a class is excused or not, points will be lost. An excused class allows you to make it up if you choose to do so. Making up those points require a conversation with me.
- Points can be lost when “full participation” is lacking. For example, if I notice phone or computer use and consider it inappropriate at the time, and distracting- at least to me, I will let you know over email about my observation. Or if you arrive late to class or return late from break, I will make a note in the attendance sheet so you also know.

I will do my best 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!*** And, if I help you deepen your understanding of something, that is helpful for me to know as well.

Grading Scale:

A+ 106-110

A 101-105

A- 96-100

B+ 91- 95

B- 86-90

C+ 81-85

C 76-80

Below 76; not passing