SW 715: Adventure/Experiential-Based Social Work Practice  
Spring Summer 2018

Instructor: Antonio G Alvarez  
Tuesday 6:00- 10:00 PM; SSWB Room B798  
Office: Rm. 2760  
Office hours: By appointment (Tuesday afternoons from 1-5 preferred)  
734-635-6508  
aalvarez@umich.edu

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 A/E P 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 intervention 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.

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-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/.

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

**Required Texts:** (Instructor can get these books at a cheaper rate)


**Strongly Recommended Texts:**


**Additional Texts:**


**CANVAS 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.

**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 of 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
Attendance: Attendance is required and is defined as being present for the entire class period. Points 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.

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Attendance & Participation** (10 points per class session, 110 points available)

  The following factors will be considered for these points:
  - Being present for the whole class period
  - Being prepared through readings etc. for the session
  - Engaging in the activities and discussions fully (Including Stick expectations)
  - Being "fully in the room" (this includes not being on the phone or computer attending to things that are not a part of being in class)
  - Helping to maintain and manage our desired environment

- **Facilitating your small group**

  Multiple due dates 10 points

  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. More later

- **Poster & Slide Submission**

  These are three tasks for you to engage in. Each one will gain a complete/incomplete rating. Once all three have received Completed rating, then you will earn up to 15 points for it. Points will be lost for late submissions, as well as for submissions requiring many revise/resubmit opportunities!

  **Who showed up:**

  **Due 5.9**

  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 5.30

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 at least 3 references.

Final Slide Due 7.18

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.

➢ The Stick Project

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 3 feet (36 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 (7.11). **Upload your final journal (7.18)**

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.

➤ **Intervention Assignments**

Engaging in an intervention/action is good practice; the more you practice, and receive feedback, the better you will become. In place of a 40 point final paper, I am offering each of you the choices listed below. How many you decide to do is up to you; however know that your final grade will require up to 40 points from this section of the assignments. If you expect to do three of these, submit one each in May, June and July. If you are doing two, then get them uploaded in June and July. If you are doing just one, then submit that in July.

1. Attending the Best Practices in Adventure Therapy Conference- 45 points

2. Interviewing a Wilderness Adventure Practitioner- 10 points

3. Read a book- write a paper - 10 points
4. Visit a program- 10 points
5. Facilitate an experience- 15 points
6. Do a 4-corners with a client- 15 points
7. Read peer-reviewed articles in adventure or wilderness practice- 15 points
8. Others listed on Canvas

Expectations and Grading:
- Attendance and full participation of a full class session = 10 (110 total points)
- Engagement in the stick project = 20
- Small group Facilitation= 10
- A series of short papers= 30
- Poster and Final Slide= 10
- Additional Assignments= 30

To receive up to a B+, you need only to complete the first five expectations on this list. To work towards an A or better, it will require you to complete the final expectation on the list (Additional Assignments)

Grading:
- A+ 210 points
- A 199-209
- A- 188-198
- B+ 177-187
- B 166-176
- B- 155-165
- C+ 144-154

Activities/Resources:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxcLQSH-BS4 (silent ball for ADHD)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjSlwttQ9KQ (pass the action)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kKy5PPtn5k (rock paper scissors)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flALM4eqIXc team building fish & fisherman
http://www.iatfcommunity.com/forum/topic/237 Back Writing- similar to dueling drawing
Session Outline

The (hoped for) flow for the class

(Be ready to adapt when the need requires it!) Note: Readings for each class session will be found in our Canvas site, under Session Resources.

Session 1-May 8
Engagement/Knowledge Development/A model for a desired environment
- Intro: Our Point B
  Defining the scope of our class; A/E-b SWP; Clarifying assignments and expectations; what is Experience? Intentionality; Outcomes/Point B; Consider NASW code in light of adventure practice; Where might ethical considerations surface? Some areas to consider: Boundaries/touching; Facilitator as participant; Physicality of it all; Re-introducing trauma due to unknown Pt. A
- CTE
  Development of norms, choice of setting, determining Point B
- Stick Shelter
  Introducing our sticks to each other; creating a shelter
- To read: A model for helping; 4 action steps;

Session 2- May 15
Assessment
- The Environment: 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
- Point A: Assessing who is in the room and what came with them; Determining what each one’s needs/expectations/wishes are; Beginning to make sense of what the journey of the class will be, knowing more about the participants and their expectations; Being aware of any resistance in the room and making sense of it.
- Poster Sharing

Sessions 3 & 4 –Sunday, May 20 Adventure Day in the Park
Tools and Techniques
- Creating your space; clarifying expectations; developing a sequence; managing the working environment, engaging in learning opportunities
Session 5- May 22

Matching
- What factors determine what we do with our participants?
  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
- To read:
- Group Facilitation # 1

Session 6- May 29

More on matching
- What if I am working with kids in a school setting?
- Helping women who have experienced trauma
- Presenter: Norton? Fred?
- To read:
- Group facilitation # 2
  - Short paper #1 due May 31
  - Stick Journal 1 due May 31
  - Additional Assignment Option 3 Explore the literature paper #1 due in May

Session 7- June 5

Guiding the learning
What do we do with everything that occurs? How do we guide the client towards learning? Which
lessons do we highlight?
- Observations and noticings
- Choosing proper tools (debriefing versus thumbs up/down); Making meaning of our
  observations; Offering observations without judgment;
- The experiential learning cycle;
- The 7-question model of debriefing; The What, so what, now what model
- To read:
- Group Facilitation # 3
  - Additional Assignment Option 1, 2, 3: something due in June sometime

Session 8- June 12

Back to Point A: Application; Ethical Considerations
- Presenters: WT folks; Matt; Jessa, Krista;
- Consider NASW code in light of adventure practice
- Where might ethical considerations surface?
- Some areas to consider: Boundaries/touching; Facilitator as participant; Physicality of it all; Re-introducing trauma due to unknown Pt. A
- The gift of resistance
- To read:
- Group Facilitation # 4
Session 9- June 26 (could be at a park?)

Adjunctive approaches: Mindfulness, Art; Yoga

• To read:
  • Group Facilitation # 5/Last
  • Stick Journal 2 due June 30
  • Short paper #2 due June 30

(July 3 covered by Park class)

Session 10- July 10

Stick Presentation

• Stick presentation done today
• Additional Assignment Option 1, 2, 3: something due in July sometime

Session 11- July 17

Ending/Rituals/Evaluation

• Importance of endings
• Transformation on the Wave
• Bridge building
• Gifting of Kukui
• Evaluating our efforts
• Final Slide due
• Stick Journal 3 due
• Short paper #3 due today

Expectations and Grading:

➢ Attendance and full participation of a full class session = 10 (110 total points)
➢ Engagement in the stick project = 20
➢ Small group Facilitation= 10
➢ A series of short papers= 30
➢ Poster and Final Slide= 10
➢ Additional Assignments= 30

To receive up to a B+, you need only to complete the first five expectations on this list. To work towards an A or better, it will require you to complete the final expectation on the list (Additional Assignments)

Grading:

A+ 210 points
A 199-209
A- 188-198
B+ 177-187
B 166-176
B- 155-165
C+ 144-154