1. Course Description:

This course will examine multicultural and critical perspectives on understanding: individuals, families, and their interpersonal and group relationships; life span development; and theories of well-being, stress, coping, and adaptation. This course will emphasize knowledge about individuals and small social systems and the implications of this knowledge for all domains of social work practice. Students will be introduced to the concepts of risk and protective factors, with relevant examples at the individual and small system levels. Students will also consider the implications of this knowledge for intervening in social problems and supporting rehabilitation once problems have developed. Major components of the course will be concerned with the processes of oppression, privilege, and discrimination and factors that help people and small social systems to change. The knowledge presented will include the interrelationships between smaller and larger social systems, and in particular, how biological factors and the larger social and physical environments shape and influence individual and family well-being.

2. Course Content:

Content will include selected theories of human behavior, human development, families and small groups, and individual and small system change. Students will consider how relevant concepts have been developed, the types of knowledge and data that inform different theories, and current gaps and controversies in biological, behavioral, and social science knowledge and theory. Emphasis will be placed on similarities and differences related to human diversity and dynamics of oppression and privilege. In addition, this course will focus on how individual and small system factors and processes can facilitate attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, family
characteristics, and group processes that either promote multicultural human well-being and social justice or help to recreate inequities and problems.

3. Course Objectives:

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

- Demonstrate knowledge about and be able to critically analyze relevant theories of human behavior, human development, families and small groups, and individual and small system change through the life course emphasizing similarities and differences and the effects of oppression and privilege.
- Articulate the concepts of risk and protective factors and give examples at the individual, group, and family levels.
- Describe the impact of such characteristics as economic class, culture, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, and age on risk and protective factors, human development, human interactions, and the structures of small social systems.
- Identify the interrelationships between smaller and larger social systems and describe how biological factors and larger social and physical environments interact to influence individual and family well-being.
- Describe how relevant concepts have been socially constructed, what knowledge and empirical evidence support selected theories, some current gaps in knowledge, and key controversies about these theories and related knowledge.
- Conceptualize how individual and small system factors and processes can either promote multicultural human well-being or recreate inequities and problems.
- Examine theories of individual, family, and group change and their relevance for all types of social work practice towards a multicultural and socially just world.
- Discuss typical ethical concerns related to human differences, social relationships, well-being, and change through the life course.

4. Course Design:

The instructor will select required and recommended readings and in addition will include a range of pedagogical methods, e.g., discussions, films, written assignments, and experiential exercises related to course materials. Guest speakers may be invited to address special topics.

5. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity.** Students will examine the ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age, and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement affect individuals and small social systems. Emphasis will also be placed on the processes of oppression, privilege, and discrimination, as well as the factors that help people and small social systems to change.
• **Social Justice and Social Change.** Students will analyze selected theories in terms of the factors and processes that either promote social justice and change or help to recreate inequities and problems.

• **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation.** Students will learn about social problems, as well as the spectrum of interventions and supportive rehabilitation currently used to alleviate these problems.

• **Behavioral and Social Science Research.** Students will critically analyze relevant theories of human behavior, human development, families and small groups, and individual and small system change through the life course. The research supporting these theories will provide a foundation for the content in this course.

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

This course will address ethical and value issues related to working with individuals, families, communities, and small social systems. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to inform practice in this area. For example, students will learn about client issues, such as confidentiality, privacy, rights and prerogatives of clients, the client’s best interest, proper and improper relationships with clients, interruption of services, and termination. In addition, this course will focus on the social worker’s responsibility to promote the general welfare of society by preventing and eliminating discrimination, ensuring equal access to resources, expanding choices and opportunities for all persons, encouraging respect for diversity, advocating for changes in social policies, and encouraging informed participation by the public.

7. **Source Materials:**

a. **Books**


b. Journals

*American Journal of Community Psychology*

*American Journal of Health Promotion*

*American Journal of Public Health*

*American Psychologist*

*Contemporary Drug Problems*

*Death Studies*
COURSE PHILOSOPHY AND FORMAT

Social work practice presumes the practitioner’s knowledge of theories of human development and human behavior, i.e., her or his understanding of how the development and behavior of people are explained and how social work intervention impacts them. The public also makes this assumption. In fact, social workers may be called on to provide expert testimony in legal cases involving knowledge of human development and behavior. For example, social workers may be asked to testify in court regarding a possible relationship between an individual’s traumatic experiences during childhood (e.g., severe abuse) and their adult criminal behavior. Although understanding human development and behavior may seem intuitive, both are very complex phenomena. The interaction between the biological, cultural, and social environment and behavior and development complicate this picture further. For this reason, careful and informed attention to knowledge building in the areas of human development and behavior is essential for social workers. I take seriously the responsibility for such knowledge building in this course.

The course will be conducted in a seminar fashion, meaning that you will be expected to participate fully in the entire learning process. Classes will involve a range of activities, including lectures and discussions, speakers, small group activities, class presentations, and videos. In the second class session, small groups will be formed which will continue for the remainder of the semester. We will begin each class with small group discussions of weekly reaction papers and reports to the full class.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation: It is my desire that your experience in this course will be beneficial to you in your future practice as a social worker. Therefore, I will make every effort to facilitate your success in the learning experiences that have been incorporated by 1) providing didactic and experiential encounters that have been found useful to social workers; 2) providing a supportive learning environment; and 3) being clear regarding expectations of you in the course. Please call my attention to any questions or lack of clarity regarding any of the assignments.

Prompt attendance at, and participation in all class sessions is essential. SW 500 provides knowledge that serves as the basis for preparation in a number of subsequent courses. Since the knowledge derived from the class is based in large part on in-class activities, you should attend all class sessions and participate in class activities. In spite of this expectation, two absences are permitted without penalty. Use your discretion in your absences, but absences may result from your own illness or that of a family member, the death of a person close to you, observation of religious holidays, job or field placement interviews, or other personal needs. Please e-mail members of your small group if you must be absent from a class. Please notify me if it is essential for you to be absent beyond the two allowed classes, since additional absences will not typically be excused and absences from more than two class sessions will result in an automatic deduction of 3 points from your final grade for each missed class session. Students for whom an extended illness or incapacitation interferes with their attendance and fulfillment of in-class and/or out-of-class activities should strongly consider withdrawing from the course and taking it later at a more convenient time.

Required Text:


Assignments:
- Infancy and toddlers
- School Age Children
- Adolescents
- Young Adulthood
- Middle adulthood through Aging

The before mentioned stages will be areas of interest that you will develop your specialized group presentation for. The group presentation will include a brief overview of the significant developmental issues of that stage but then you will have also chosen, after discussion with this instructor, a focus of a significant ‘need’ that this group is facing that you as Social Workers have researched and would like to present to your colleagues resources and findings. Be creative in your presentations. Speakers, videos, handouts etc. Presentation should be approximately 45 min. Each group member will then turn in a paper by the following week discussing;
• Summary of his/her findings
• Obstacles encountered
• Next steps/plans if any
• Overall experience
This paper should be 3-5 pages in length.

**The Final Paper: Theory Paper**
Choose a theory discussed in class.
• Describe the theory
• Contrast ant compare the theory to the Systems theory
• Identify the strength and weaknesses of the theory
• Discuss the theory’s compatibilities with social work values and ethics
• Choose one journal article that identifies your theory and discuss
• Discuss a personal experience, or one of a client from the perspective of this theory
This paper should be 8-10 pages in length.

**Writing Policy:** All written assignments will be evaluated for content, ideas presented, clarity, correct spelling, grammar and sentence structure, and proper credit to authors from whose works written material has been derived. One source for appropriate referencing is “Writing Term Papers…” by Professor Kossoudji, in your Student Guide to the Master’s in Social Work Degree Program. The 5th edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) is the style manual that should be used. Papers should be double-spaced, typewritten/word processed, with a 12 point font. All papers should be in narrative format. Also, the College of Literature, Science and Art (LS&A) offers a College Writing Workshop that many students have found useful. For information contact: Writing Workshop, 1139 Angell Hall, 1003, 764-042.

**Grade Calculation:** 94-100 points = A; 90-93 points = A-; 84-89 points = B; 80-83 points = B-; 74-79 points = C; 70-73 points = C-; 64-69 points = D; 60-63 points = D-; 59 points and below = F. A grade of C or better is required to receive credit for the course.
COURSE OUTLINE

Please Note! The following represent weekly reading assignments. The authors have made every effort to present the material from a multicultural perspective, incorporating a diversity of experiences. Content includes emphasis on development and behavior from an individual, small group, family, biological, psychological, and socio-cultural perspective.

September 7  Session 1 - *Introduction to the class*
Class introductions, introductions to the syllabus, lecture, exercise

Introduction to the Text

September 14  Session 2 – Chapter 1: Theories of Development and Behavior
Psychodynamic and psychosocial theory
Learning theory
Cognitive-development theory
Ecological and systems approaches
Life-span and life-cycle theories
Interactions

AND

PART I: PRENATAL DEVELOPMENT, INFANCY, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

Chapter 2: Biological Foundations
Genetics and heredity
Conception, birth, prenatal development, labor and delivery

September 21  Session 3 – Chapter 3: Infant development
The newborn
Physical development
Motor development
Perception
Awareness

October 28  Session 4 – Chapter 4: Cognitive and language development
Evaluating Piaget’s theories of cognitive development
Evaluating Vigotsky’s theories of development of the mind and the impact of culture.

October 5  Session 5 – Chapter 5: Social development
Attachment and trust
Emotional development
Gender identity development
PART II: SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

October 12
Session 6 – Chapter 6: School beginnings
Further cognitive development
School aptitude and readiness
Should race, ethnicity, and social class matter?
Special considerations: Gifted children, children with mental retardation, children with learning disabilities, children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

October 26
Session 7 – Chapter 7: Enlarging the social system
Family relationships
Peer relationships
Influence of the “outside” world (e.g., television) on attitudes and social behavior

November 2
Session 8 – Chapter 8: Moving toward young adulthood
Puberty
Identity development – personal, racial/ethnic
The world of work and career development
Romantic relationships
Potential problem areas: drug use, depression, delinquency, eating disorders

PART III: YOUNG ADULTHOOD AND MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

November 9
Session 9 – Chapter 9: Moving into adulthood
Are age/stage considerations appropriate?
Physical development and health considerations
Cognitive development
Moral reasoning
Personality and self-concept

November 16
Session 10 – Chapter 10: Relationships in adulthood
Friendships
Romantic relationships
Life-style considerations
Stage theory
Divorce
Remarriage/Blending families

AND

November 23
Session 11 - Chapter 11: Work and leisure in adulthood
Selecting and developing an occupation
Gender, ethnicity, sexual harassment, and discrimination in the workplace
Occupational transitions
Relaxation and leisure
November 30  **Session 12 – Chapter 12: Experiencing middle age**  
Physical changes  
Reproductive changes  
Cognitive development  
Personality development  
Family dynamics  

December 7  **Session 13 – Chapter 13: Personal aspects of later life**  
Demographics  
Cognitive processes  
Mental health and intervention  

December 14  **Session 14 – Chapter 14: Social context of later life**  
Psychosocial considerations  
Personality development  
Support systems  
Retirement  
Social Issues  

**Dying and bereavement. Last class: Course evaluations**  
Definitional and ethical considerations  
Legal and medical considerations  

**Small group assessment papers are due by 5:00 PM.**