SW 601 Adolescent Development and Behavior  
Winter 2005

Scott Weissman, M.S.W., C.S.W.  
Office: SSW 3760  
Phone: (734) 913-9548  
Email: sweissman119482MI@comcast.net

Course Description:

This course will examine the individual, interpersonal and contextual changes and behaviors that are part of normal adolescent development. Within the context of normal adolescent development, the course will focus on: (1) the epidemiology and etiology of adolescent problem behaviors; (2) the extent to which these behaviors vary across gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status; (3) the ways in which these behaviors relate to normal adolescent development; and (4) existing programs and policies designed to prevent, and, to a lesser extent treat problem behaviors.

Course Content:

The broad content of this course will focus upon the changes, contexts, and psychosocial development and problems of adolescence. The key changes that occur during adolescence are biological, cognitive, and social. The section of this course on biological changes will focus on the pubertal process and its physical, psychological, and social impact, as well as subgroup and generational differences in its onset and timing. The cognitive development portion of this course will examine the theoretical perspectives on adolescent thinking, and changes in adolescent thinking patterns and abilities that occur from pre-adolescence to late adolescence. Finally, this course will examine the social (e.g., economic, legal, political, and interpersonal) changes that occur as adolescents make the transition to adulthood.

The social contexts that are central to the development of most adolescents include family, peers, schools, work, and leisure environments. The family issues that this course will examine include different parenting styles and their impact on a variety of adolescent outcomes, the effects of changing family patterns on adolescent development, and reciprocal relationships between the family and adolescents. The peer-related issues that this course will address include the historical origins of adolescent peer groups, the nature and structure of peer groups, and the influence of peers on both pro-social and problem behavior. Course content on schools will focus on the varied purposes of schools, the ways in which their organization influences adolescents' learning, and their direct and indirect influence on adolescents' future life chances.

Employment issues that will be addressed include changes in the nature of adolescent employment, the long and short term costs and benefits of adolescent employment, and the meaning of work for young people who do not attend college. Content on adolescent leisure activity will examine its role in socializing adolescents for adulthood, its influence on adolescents' academic success and failure, and its economic importance.
The final section of this course will focus on adolescent psychosocial problem behaviors, such as alcohol, and other substance use, violence, suicide, eating disorder, precocious sex, and delinquency. Particular attention will be given to the epidemiology, etiology, trends and population distributions of these problems. Considerable attention will also be given to identification of the risk and protective factors for these problems and the policies and programs related to their prevention and treatment.

**Course Objectives:**

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

1. Identify and describe the biological, psychological, and social changes that characterize normal adolescence.
2. Identify and describe the primary interpersonal and contextual influences on adolescent behavior.
3. Identify and describe the ways in which the individual, interpersonal, and contextual factors common to adolescence intersect and relate to adolescent problem behaviors.
4. Identify what social workers and other professionals can do to promote adolescent health and well being and prevent and treat adolescent problem behaviors.
5. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to adolescent development and behavior.

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:**

*Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed throughout this course. Racial, ethnic, gender, and social class differences in the timing, sequencing, nature, and outcome of adolescent developmental experiences will be central to every facet of this course.

*Social Justice and Social Change* will be addressed through information and discussion on the ways in which social status mediates the experiences of adolescents and the ways in which various programs, practices, and policies help or hinder the successful development of all young people.

*Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* will be central to this course, particularly in the section that focuses on adolescent problem behaviors. General principles of program design, implementation, and evaluation will be presented and examples of successful programs and policies will be discussed.

*Behavioral and Social Science Research* will provide the substantive foundation for this course. Emphasis will be placed on the review, critique, and synthesis of the existing scientific knowledge base as prerequisite to interventions that promote health and well being, and prevent or treat adolescent problems.

**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values**

Values and ethics will be addressed as they relate to working with young people. This course will emphasize the importance of understanding the range of normal adolescent development, working with disadvantaged populations, and sensitivity to the possibility of unintended negative consequences of interventions such as promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

**Recommended Journals:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adolescence</th>
<th>International Journal of Adolescence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Journal of Public Health</td>
<td>Journal of Adolescent Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Psychologist</td>
<td>Journal of Adolescent Health Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and Youth Care Quarterly</td>
<td>Journal of Adolescent Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and Youth Services</td>
<td>Journal of Early Adolescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>Merrill Palmer Quarterly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Required Texts:


C. Recommended Texts and Articles:


Required and some recommended texts will be on reserve at the Social Work Library

B. Suggestions of Popular Fiction/ Videos Highlighting Adolescent Characters:

White Oleander                     Girl, Interrupted
This Boy’s Life                    October Sky
The Virgin Suicides                Welcome to the Dollhouse
Boy's Don't Cry                    The Best Little Girl in the World
What's Eating Gilbert Grape?       The Ice Storm
Basketball Diaries                  Thirteen
The Incredible True Story of Two Girls in Love
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 10</td>
<td>Introduction /Class Expectations</td>
<td>Feldman &amp; Elliot Chapter 4 – Historical Perspectives – (coursepack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History of Adolescence, Particular issues for Minority Youth</td>
<td>F&amp;E, Ch. 2, The Role of the Pubertal Process (coursepack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F&amp;E, Ch. 14, Self and Identity Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Steinberg &amp; Morris – Adolescent Development (coursepack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gibbs &amp; Huang – Intro &amp; Overview – Children of Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tatum – The complexity of Identity – Chap 2 (Coursepack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tatum, Identity Development in Adolescents Ch. 4 (coursepack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 17</td>
<td>MLK Birthday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 24</td>
<td>Developmental Tasks of Adolescence: Identity Construction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 31</td>
<td>Moral and Psychosocial Changes during Adolescence: Sexual Identity and the Impact of Gender</td>
<td>Pipher, Ch. 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Making of an 8 Year Old Woman – NY Times (coursepack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pollack, Introduction, Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F&amp;E, Ch. 13 (coursepack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inside the Teen Brain (Brownlee) (Coursepack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender Differences – Chap 4 (Potter) (coursepack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gibbs &amp; Huang – Issues of sexuality across culturally diverse youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video: Reviving Ophelia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 7</td>
<td>Developmental Tasks of Families of Adolescents</td>
<td>Pipher, Ch 3, 4, 5, &amp;6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pollack, Ch 5&amp;6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Owens, Ch. 10
Gibbs & Huang, Ch. 7
F&E, Ch 6&10 (coursepack)
*Multisystemic Therapy* (coursepack)

**Video: Tough Guise**

**Paper 1: Due**

**Feb. 14**  
*Psychosocial Factors and Stressors 1*

- Poverty
- Sexual Orientation
- *Media Project 1*

**Readings:**

Pollack, Chs. 9  
Owens, *Queer Kids* Chaps 1-4  
*Isolation or Inclusion: Creating safe spaces for lesbian & gay youth* (coursepack)

*(Presentation: from the Office Of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Affairs, will present on working with LGBT teens)*

**Feb. 21**  
*Psychosocial Factors and Stressors 2*

- Trauma
- *Media Project 2*

**Readings:**

Jenson, Ch. 5 – *Violence and Aggression in Girls* (coursepack)  
Owens, Ch. 6  
Steiner, Ch. 9, Coursepack

For next class – media research. Look at 3 issues and how they play out in the media

i. Representation of minorities
ii. Messages about sexuality and alcohol consumption
iii. Messages about close and/or intimate relationships

All media is acceptable. TV, Movies, Computer, Radio, Magazines, etc.

Please bring at least 10 examples to class to share
March 7  

**Peer Relationships, Leisure and Work**

- Media Presentation

**Readings:**

Pollack, Ch. 8  
Males, M. *Myth: The Media Tell the Truth about Youth* (coursepack)  
Feldman and Elliott, Ch. 7, *Peer Groups and Peer Cultures*  
Feldman and Elliott, Ch. 9, *Leisure, Work, and the Mass Media*

*(Presentation from Corner Health Center Theater Group at 3:45PM. Both classes are invited.)*

March 14  

**Thinking about prevention in relation to Eating Disorders**

- Eating Disorders  
- *Media Project 3*

**Readings:**

Pipher, Ch. 9  
Steiner, Chs. 9 (coursepack)  
Gibbs & Huang Ch 10 – *Children of Color in Systems of Care*  
Scales and Leffert – *Developmental Assets* (coursepack)  
Mattaini, *Peace Power* (coursepack)

**Paper 2 due**

March 21  

**Thinking about prevention in relation to Suicidality, Self Injurious Behaviors and ADHD**

- ADHD  
- Suicidality  
- Self-injurious behaviors  
- *Media Presentation*

**Readings:**

Steiner, Ch. 2 (Coursepack)  
Pollack, 253-262  
Pollack, 12  
Owens, Ch. 8
March 28  
**Youth Development and Empowerment!!! The dangers of pathologizing Youth**

- Substance Abuse
- **Media Presentation**

**Readings:**  
Steiner, Ch 3 (coursepack)  
Pipher, Ch 10  
Owens, Ch. 8

April 4  
**Internalizing Behaviors and Divorce**

**Media presentation**

**Readings:**  
Steiner, Ch 4&5 (coursepack)  
Pipher, Ch 8  
Pollack, Ch. 14, Review Ch. 12  
Owens, Ch. 9

April 11  
**Schools and Achievement/Violence in Schools/Community**

**Readings:**  
Pollack, Ch 10,13  
Pipher, Ch 11  
Surgeon General Report on Youth Violence (coursepack)  
Jenson, *Youth Violence* Ch. 1,4 (coursepack)  
Owens, Ch. 5  
*Kids & Guns: How Politicians, Experts, and the Press Fabricate Fear of Youth* by Mike Males (online book)  
http://home.earthlink.net/~mmales/contents.htm  
Columbine High School Shootings: Community Response: In School Violence: Assessment, Management, Prevention (coursepack)  
*Young Killer: Bad Seed or Work in Progress?* NYTimes (coursepack)

*(Presentation: James Robert and Aaron Pollack, teachers at Pioneer High School, will speak about adolescents and the school experience)*

April 18  
**Getting Launched: Challenges of Late Adolescence, Ideals and Ambitions**

- **Media Presentations**

**Readings:**  
Pipher, Ch 12,13 & 14  
Owen, Chs. 11, 12  
Gibbs & Huang, Ch. 11

**Paper 3 due**
Format of Course

General Overview

This course will approach adolescent behavior and development from the three following perspectives:

1. **The current research** – students will be asked to read about and consider the latest research about adolescence. Issues of Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice will be integrated into each of the areas being discussed/explored throughout the Course.

2. **The experiential** - students will be asked to explore their professional and personal experiences in working/living/interacting with adolescents.

3. **The personal** – students will be asked to reflect on their own adolescent development to facilitate deeper understanding of the issues. This personal exploration is meant to help students integrate their personal stories with their actual experience of adolescence and with the insights delineated in the research.

Grades

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

- **10%** = participation and attendance at class sessions = punctual, present, respectful, active effort to participate
- **10%** = Group presentation relating some type of media (film/video, magazine articles, MTV video, music, etc.) to the particular topic being covered in class and in the readings
- **20%** = Paper 1
- **30%** = Paper 2
- **30%** = Paper 3

Small Group Presentations

Media

Each small group will be responsible for:

1. Identifying a form of media which deals with the particular theme of the class.
2. Presenting your media example (no longer than 10 minutes)
3. Facilitating a discussion (using discussion questions) which relates your example to the in-class readings. (no longer than 20 minutes)

Each presentation should be no longer than 30 minutes. During the 2nd class, you will be assigned a date for your presentation.

Your presentation should have specific learning objectives that include:

- “terms” (actual terms from the readings);
- “facts” (important facts you feel the class should remember); and
- “principles of practice” actual practice principles revealed either in the video or in the readings.
  (example: “treatment utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach works best with Eating Disorders”)

8.
At the time of your presentation, I would like to get a copy of your hand-out(s) attached to a note from the group (signed by each individual) which states clearly what each individual did in preparation for the presentation.

Grades will be based upon the following:
25% - Were “terms” from the readings effectively brought out in the presentation?
25% - Were “facts” from the readings effectively brought out in the presentation?
25% - Were principles of practice clearly brought out in the readings?
25% - Did the presenters make clear the connection between the media presentation and the “terms,” “facts,” and “principles of practice” from the readings.

The Papers

The grading for each individual paper is spelled out in detail in the next section.

ALL papers will be marked down by 5% for every day late. The paper is due at the beginning of class on the due date. Any paper turned in later than this will be considered one day late. In order to be fair to all class members, this policy needs to be uniform. If you are unhappy with your feedback and/or grade on a paper, the paper may be rewritten and turned in no later than 1 week after it has been returned to you. The average of the two grades will then be your grade for the actual paper. The second paper should be turned in with the changes highlighted and any deletions crossed out.

“B” papers meet all the criteria for the assignment but do not demonstrate thinking beyond the criteria. An “A” paper will take the information being discussed and help the reader to see that information in a new light. In other words, an “A” paper is a paper which incorporates YOUR wisdom and one in which you have drawn your OWN conclusions.

Paper # 1(personal perspective): Due on Feb. 7. No more than 5 typed pages, 20% of total grade

This paper should be a personal exploration of your own experiences as an adolescent. Since this is a personal paper, creativity is welcome. The paper should include sharing your experiences of both the different domains of adolescent development as well as the psychosocial issues with which you struggled.

This paper will be assessed on the following criteria:
1. Did the writer touch on both psychosocial issues and contexts of adolescence? Did the writer articulate her/his personal experiences of adolescence in light of these issues and contexts? – 30%
2. Were there specific examples given? Did the writer connect these examples to the larger themes that the paper addresses? 30%
3. Did the writer establish some kind of structure to the paper? Did the structure allow for pertinent conclusions to be drawn – 30%
4. Form: Is the writing professional? Is the grammar correct? Are the sentences clear? Are there typographical errors – 10%

Paper # 2 (research-based perspective): Due on March 14, no more than 8 typed pages (not including the synthesis), 30% of total grade

This paper will consist of choosing a particular adolescent psychosocial issue of interest and relevance to your chosen concentration where there has been some empirical research on treatments (i.e. teen pregnancy, adolescent depression, and suicide). Set up this paper by grouping research that seems to
articulate a particular direction or outcome in the area you have chosen. In other words, if there are 4 studies which describe improved school outcome for depressed adolescents for a specific treatment model or program, grouping them should give you a sense of where the field is headed with a possible best-evidence practice. Alternatively, if there is no cogent group of studies in the area you have chosen, or if there are studies showing that particular treatments do not seem particularly valid, then briefly describe the variety of directions you have found in this area.

Please see me if you plan to do your paper on Eating Disorders.

This paper will be assessed on the following criteria:
1. Did the writer clearly meet the basics of the assignment – is there a review of the relevant literature, does the review point out “best evidence” practice for a specific issue, is there a summary and conclusion? - 30%
2. Is there a central question and is the paper logically organized around this question? Is the writer’s theme or central question clearly connected to all material that is presented? – 30%
3. Is creativity evident? Has the writer pieced together the material in a way that is uniquely her or his own? Has the writer taken a stand and drawn conclusions or connections that are unique relevant to the particular issue being discussed? – 30%
4. Is the writing professional? Is the grammar correct? Are the sentences clear? Are there typographical errors – 10%

Paper #3 (experiential perspective): Due on April 11, 5-8 typed pages, 30% of total grade

For this paper you are asked to:
1) identify a teen population with whom you are unfamiliar, what barriers there have been to you becoming familiar with this population, the stereotypical misunderstandings of this population, and 3-5 areas of concern that the research-literature emphasizes for this population. Be sure to footnote any references you use when referring to the research. If possible, you may obtain all references from the course text, Children of Color.
2) interview at least one teen from this population (asking about his/her views of minority status, peers, school, work leisure, what motivates, frustrates, angers them. Who are their heroes, heroines?) preferably in a setting of the teen’s choosing – at school, Pinball Pete’s, a café, etc. You may also interview a young adult who is not too far from her/his teen years, as long as that person can reflect easily on her/his adolescence.
3) explore how your interviewee’s perceptions and experiences match up to (or contrast with) your understandings from the research.

This paper will be assessed on the following criteria:
1. Did the writer include each of the paper’s required steps as listed above? 30%
2. Did the writer draw conclusions from comparing/contrasting her/his interviews with the findings in the research- 30%
3. Is creativity evident? Has the writer pieced together the material in a way that is uniquely her or his own? Has the writer taken a stand and drawn conclusions or connections that are unique relevant to the particular issue being discussed? – 30%
4. Is the writing professional? Is the grammar correct? Are the sentences clear? Are there typographical errors – 10%