Course Description

This course deals with practice theories and techniques for working with children and adolescents and their parents. The course will provide grounding in perspectives related to child and adolescent development, attachment/transactional theory, the parent/child relationship, learning theory and parenthood, including ethnic/cultural variations in child rearing practices. The interaction between the environmental risk factors, protective factors and developmental factors, as they contribute to coping resiliency and disorder, will be covered. The practice components will address major clinical concepts including assessment/formulation, treatment planning, work with parents, and developmentally appropriate engagement and intervention techniques. The course is organized in terms of the sequence of development, and common mental health disorders and problems of childhood and adolescents, and will cover clinical issues and treatment approaches relevant to each disorder and developmental stage.

Course Objectives

- Describe and apply a number of assessment procedures (such as direct observation of or interviews with the client, parent or caretaker, and collateral contacts with teachers, caseworkers, or other professionals) which identify internal or external risk and protective factors that may effect children and youth.
- Describe the primary developmental tasks and characteristics of childhood and adolescence as they relate to selection and implementation of developmentally appropriate techniques for engaging and treating children and youth.
- Identify the ways that continuity or disruption in primary care relationships may impact children and adolescents and their therapeutic relationships.
- Conduct and write up an assessment, which uses information on the child’s or adolescent’s physical, emotional and cognitive development, temperament, relationship history and performance, as a basis for formulating an understanding of the child’s presenting problems and circumstances.
- Implement evidenced-based and research supported prevention and intervention strategies (such as, cognitive-behavioral therapy, play therapy and parent training) which are compatible with client and family or caretaker goals, needs, circumstances and values.
- Monitor and evaluate implemented interventions in regard to: effectiveness; sensitivity to client/worker differences; about the impact of clients’ and families social identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion) on their experiences of power and privilege; the appropriateness of the intervention, to specific client needs resulting from conditions, such as maltreatment, deprivation, disability and substance abuse.
Format of Course

The objectives of the course will be pursued through lecture, discussion, demonstrations, case presentations and analysis, videotapes and role-plays. There will be two examinations of short essay format, one at mid-term and one at the final session. The examinations will integrate theory, direct practice strategies, research and case analysis. Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class activities and discussions. Excessive absence will result in the lowering of the students’ grade.

Course Requirements and Grading

- Mid-term examination (February 21st) 45%
- Final examination (April 18th) 45%
- Class participation: 10%
  Attendance, participation in class discussions, and clinical role plays

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

*Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed throughout the course. Racial, ethnic, gender, and social class differences in the timing, sequencing, nature, and outcome of interpersonal practice with children, adolescents and their families will be discussed. *Social Justice and Social Change* will be addressed throughout the course through information and discussion on the ways in which social status mediates the experience of children, adolescents and their families, and the effect on direct practice with this population. *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* will be central to this course. Specific principles of program design, implementation, and evaluation will be presented throughout the course. *Behavioral and Social Science Research* will be the substantive foundation for this course. Emphasis will be placed on the review, critique and understanding of empirically proven practice methods which promote health and well-being, and prevent problems in children, adolescents and their families.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

Social work ethics and values in regard to confidentiality, self-determination, and respect for cultural and religious differences, are particularly important when working with children and youth. Social workers working with children and adolescents often need to make critical intervention decisions which may have to balance risks to the child’s or adolescent’s safety or emotional well-being with their need for ongoing connection to their families and communities. This course discusses the complexities of the ethical dilemmas as they relate to work with the child and youth populations and they ways that the professional Code of Ethics may be used to guide and resolve value and ethical issues that may arise in direct practice.
Topics and Required Reading Assignments


Additional readings will be on reserve in the School of Social Work Library or handed out in class.

A. Psychosocial Assessment and Evaluation (January 10th)


B. Anxiety Disorders in Children and Youth (January 17th and 24th)


C. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Tic Disorders (January 24th and 31st)


D. Depressive Disorders in Children and Youth (February 7th and 14th)


8. Evidenced-Based Psychotherapies for Children and Adolescents. New York: Guilford Press (pp. 135-147).


E. Mid-Term Examination (February 21st)

F. Childhood Trauma, Abuse & Neglect, and Play and Attachment (March 7th and 14th)


G. ADHD/Disruptive Behavior and Parenting (March 21st)


H. Interpersonal Practice with LGBT Youth (March 28th)


I. Developmental Disorders/Autism/Social Skills (March 28th)


J. Psychopharmacology with Children and Youth (April 4th)


K. Eating Disorders (April 4th)


L. Children and Divorce, and Final Exam Review (April 11th)


M. Final Examination (April 18th)