COURSE TITLE: Integrative Seminar in Child Welfare
DIVISION NUMBER: 790
COURSE NUMBER: 739
Prof. Kathleen Coulborn Faller
LOCATION: Elective SWPS Course

1. Course Description:

This integrative seminar will integrate micro and macro levels of practice; research in child welfare, as it relates to all levels of practice; the relationship of child maltreatment and other social problems; and perspectives from several disciplines, specifically social work, other mental health professions, law, and medicine, as these disciplines address problems of child maltreatment and child welfare. The substance of this seminar will highlight the impact of minority status and poverty on child welfare issues. The primary focus will be on child welfare issues in the United States, Canada, and Western European countries.

2. Course Content:

This advanced level, integrative seminar is intended to be taken by students in their third or final term of masters level study. The purpose of this course is to integrate content related to child maltreatment and child welfare along several dimensions. First, a range of issues in child welfare from direct practice, community, agency, and policy perspectives will be examined. For example, 1) memory and trauma, 2) abuse allegations, divorce, and child custody, and 3) abuse of children in substitute care will be reviewed. Second, the course will explore and integrate research findings related to child welfare issues, services, and practice. Third, the relationship of child welfare and child maltreatment to other social problems, such as poverty, domestic abuse, child health, and parental substance abuse will be covered. Finally, students will be given an opportunity to explore issues in child welfare drawing upon substantive material from different disciplines. For example, this course will integrate certain medical diagnoses, such as Battered Child Syndrome, Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, and Non-organic Failure to Thrive with related psychosocial assessments of and intervention with children and parents when these conditions are present. Likewise, legal issues will be addressed, such as legal liability, the use of the courts to effect safety for the child, termination of parental rights, testifying in court, and the option to criminally prosecute some types of maltreatment.
3. **Course Objectives:**

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

1. Conceptualize and describe interventions in child welfare problems from direct practice, community, administrative, and policy perspectives.
2. Demonstrate knowledge about research findings, as they relate to a range of child maltreatment and child welfare issues, policies, and programs.
3. Demonstrate knowledge about the relationship of child maltreatment and child welfare to other social problems.
4. Demonstrate knowledge about substantive material from other professional disciplines, such as law and medicine as they are related to child maltreatment and child welfare.

4. **Course Design:**

This course will make use of lectures, discussion, small group exercises, student presentations, and media, especially videotapes about the issues covered in this course. Guest speakers from relevant disciplines and experts in issues addressed in the course will be employed. Students will be required to demonstrate specialized knowledge related to a child welfare issue of their choice, which they will explore by means of a literature review, visits to relevant programs, and direct contact with impacted individuals.

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

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed by examining how age, class, culture, ethnicity, race, religion, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation, national origin, and gender impact on the conceptualization of child welfare issues, the development of services, and the delivery of child welfare interventions.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be addressed by teaching students that children are at a fundamental disadvantage in systems that are controlled by adults. The child welfare system is not necessarily designed to first address the needs of clients, but may be constructed to be convenient for professionals. Although the stated goal of the child welfare system is to assure the well-being of children, in many respects, it is an institution of social control. In addition, students will learn that economically disadvantaged and minority children and families are differentially responded to by the child welfare system. Students will gain a critical awareness of these issues, and thus, become more informed practitioners of social work.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation.** This seminar will foster exploration of the full spectrum of child welfare interventions, through consideration of both micro and macro interventions and the relationship of child welfare to other problems. This will include a focus on how intervention into related social problems, such as child-related health care and income
maintenance, can promote child well-being and child welfare. This course will also emphasize how addressing parental problems, such as domestic violence, can prevent child maltreatment.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** related to child welfare will be central to the material taught in this course. Two of the objectives of this course reflect this intent: 1) the inclusion of research related to child welfare practice, and 2) the exploration of the relationship of child welfare to other social problems.

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

Issues related to social work values and ethics will be an inherent part of this course. For example, reporting requirements for child maltreatment raise many ethical issues that apply to social workers and other professionals who work with children. In addition, since children are minors, social workers often act according to the child’s best interest rather than according to the child’s wishes. Students will analyze these ethical dilemmas, as well as the ethical issues involved in the relationship of child welfare to other social problems.
**Syllabus**

**SW739: Integrative Seminar in Child Welfare; Fall 2001**

**Meeting time and place:** Thurs. 6:30-9:30; 2752 SSWB

**Instructor:** Prof. Kathleen Coulborn Faller

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**Office hours:** Wed. 4:30-6 at 555 S. Forest; Thurs. 5-6:30 at 2704 SSWB

**By appointment at 2704 SSWB**

**Course description:**
This is an advanced integrative seminar open to social work graduate students in their third and fourth terms and to Social Work Advanced Standing and graduate students from other disciplines with permission from the instructor. It integrates direct practice material with material relevant to policy and planning. It also integrates material from across disciplines, incorporating information from law, medicine, mental health, and public health. The relationship of child welfare and maltreatment to other social problems, for example racial discrimination, family violence, substance abuse, and poverty, will be covered in this course. Finally the course integrates findings from research with practice knowledge.

Select topics, chosen because they are of particular relevance to practice and policy related to child welfare, will be covered.

**Course requirements:**

1. **Attend class.** To benefit from this course, students must be there. This is not a class in which the content can be learned merely by doing the reading. A sign in sheet will be passed out each class. Three unexcused absences will affect your grade.

2. **Do the reading.** For your convenience there will be a course pak. Some readings may not be available for the course pak. These will be passed out in advance of the class session for which they are relevant. The reading requirements are modest. Students are expected to do the reading before each class. Students should anticipate being asked to summarize the readings as part of their class participation.

3. **Participate in class discussion.** This is a course for advanced students who will have something to contribute to the dialogue about these very important issues. Thus, an expectation is that students will participate in class discussions.
4. **Complete a final project.** Projects should be multifaceted. They may involve literature review as well as field exploration relevant to a chosen topic. I encourage joint projects, but recommend that the number of persons involved be limited to three because of logistical problems if too many people work on a project. I am available to assist students in planning their projects. All topics should be cleared with me. Students should turn in a paragraph or an outline describing their topic by the fifth week of class.

**Caveats:**
This is not a practice course. The practice course in the Child Welfare series is SW730. Rather the Integrative Seminar will address select critical issues related to child welfare.

Be forewarned, the instructor is an exacting grader. Written material related to projects will be graded for organization and writing quality as well as for substantive content. The grading criteria for the School of Social Work are roughly as follows:

- **A+** = extraordinary work that could not be improved upon.
- **A** = exceptional, excellent work.
- **B+** = very good; the expected grade for good students who work hard.
- **B** = good.
- **B-** = not so good; marginal for graduate school performance.
- **C+** = below the standards of graduate school performance.

**Course outline:**

**First session: Sept. 6--- Integrative Seminar**
- Course requirements
- Child welfare in a social context
- Why focus on child abuse?
- History of concerns about child maltreatment
- The Backlash
- Prevalence and incidence rates of child maltreatment

**Readings:**
1. [Current Trends in Child Abuse Prevention, Reporting, & Fatalities](#)
2. [Total Estimated Cost of Child Abuse & Neglect in the United States](#)
3. Executive summary of NIS-3
   (Students aren’t expected to have read these before the first class.)

**Video:** The Child Savers

**Second session: Sept. 13— Corporal punishment and its effects**
- Spanking survey
- Is corporal punishment bad *per se*, or does it just produce different kinds of people?
- Have the use of and views about corporal punishment changed over time?
What are practices in other countries?
What advice should social workers offer parents about corporal punishment?
Who decides what is appropriate parenting behavior?
Do different environments require different parenting styles?

Readings:

Video: Oprah Winfrey--The Spanking Debate

Third session: Sept. 20--Child welfare and co-morbidity: Guest lecturer Melnee McPherson, M.S.W., M.A., Doctoral Student, Joint Program
The prevalence of substance abuse among maltreating parents
Substance abuse as a causal factor in child maltreatment.
How to take a substance abuse history.
Fetal alcohol syndrome
Infants born drug addicted

Readings:
1. Substance abuse and child maltreatment
2. Factors to consider when assessing the needs of children
3. Blending Perspectives and building common ground.
4. Parental drug abuse and children at risk
5. Bays, Substance abuse and child abuse

Video: Confessions of Rosalie

Fourth session: Sept. 27—Results of the Spanking survey
Remembering child maltreatment, children
Children’s memory and suggestibility
Types of normal memory
Research on children’s reports of experiences
Research on children’s suggestibility
Ecological validity of research findings

Readings:

**Video:** Sally

**Fifth session: Oct. 4--Remembering child maltreatment, adults:**
- Research findings on repressed and false memories
- Different types of memory
- The media and popular assumptions about memories
- Memory and the legal arena
- Memory and the mental health arena
- Organizations active in the memory debate
  - The False Memory Syndrome Foundation
  - ACCOA

**Readings:**
1. Faller, Important studies on repressed memory.

**Video:** Excerpts from the PBS specials, "Divided Memories"

**Project proposals due**
Sixth session: Oct. 11--Child welfare, poverty, ethnicity, and discrimination
Ethnicity and the child welfare system
Are minority parents more likely to maltreat their children or are they more likely to get caught??
What impact does poverty have on the quality of children's lives?
What is the relationship of ethnicity, poverty, and neglect?
What are the practice and policy implications?

Readings:

Case examples

Seventh session: Oct. 18--Parental mental health problems and child welfare
Competing and conflicting agendas for children and mentally ill parents.
Personality disorders and parenting.
Major psychiatric illnesses and parenting.
Dual diagnoses and more.

Readings:
1. Faller & Bellamy, Mental health and child welfare
2. Buchholz, Psychiatric diagnoses of self-reported child abusers

Videotape: The D case

Eighth session: Oct. 25--Child welfare and the law—with Frank Vandervort, J.D., Manager, Child Welfare Legal Resource Center, Law School

Videotape: Testifying in Child Sexual Abuse: A Courtroom Guide

Readings:
1. Faller, When professionals go to court: preparing to testify
Ninth session—Nov. 1—Allegations of child abuse and divorce
The dynamics of abuse allegations and divorce
Research on false allegations
Calculated lies versus misinterpretations
How the courts respond to allegations of abuse in situations of divorce.
Responses to the failure of the legal system
   The National Center for Protective Parents
   Mother’s Nightmare
   The Underground
Strategies for effectively handling allegations of abuse in divorce

Readings:
1. Faller, Olafson, & Corwin. False allegations of sexual abuse in divorce: A review of the research
2. Faller and DeVoe, Allegations of sexual abuse in divorce;
3. Gardner, The Parental Alienation Syndrome
4. Benedek & Schetky, False allegations of sexual abuse and custody disputes
5. Faller, Divorce and child sexual abuse.

Videotape: The Chrissy Foxworth case

Tenth session: Nov. 8—Family violence and its relationship to child welfare

Is there a correlation between spousal violence and child abuse?
Do battered women neglect their children?
What are the effects on children of witnessing parental violence?
What are appropriate interventions when there is spousal abuse child abuse?

Readings:
3. Faller, Types and indicators of domestic abuse
4. Faller, Domestic abuse and child maltreatment.

Videotape: Faces of Fear

Eleventh session: Nov. 15---Child welfare and lawsuits
Vulnerabilities of social workers in the legal arena
Protecting yourself from lawsuits
Coping with being sued
Readings:  
Faller, Lesson learned from lawsuits

Videotape: Court testimony

Nov. 22—Thanksgiving

Twelfth session: Nov. 29—Child abuse and Indian Country  
History of treatment of Indian Children and their families  
Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978  
Challenges to the Act  
Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act  
What lies in the future for Indian children

Videotapes:  
The Indian Child Welfare Act  
Bitter Earth

Readings:  
Earle, K. *Child Abuse and Neglect: An Examination of American Indian Data* excerpts  
Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978  
Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act

Thirteenth session: Dec. 6—Ritual abuse  
Definitions of ritual abuse.  
Does ritual abuse exist? The spectrum of belief about ritual abuse.  
Prevalence of reports of ritual abuse and contexts in which it is reported  
Legal and mental health strategies for handling ritual abuse

Readings:  
4. Waterman et al.,

Video: Children at Risk

Dec. 13--Projects due

Celebration of the end of the term at Prof. Faller's house.