COURSE TITLE: Human Differences, Social Relationships, Well-Being, and Change Through the Life Course

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
3. **Course Objectives:**

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

1. 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.

2. Articulate the concepts of risk and protective factors and give examples at the individual, group, and family levels.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Conceptualize how individual and small system factors and processes can either promote multicultural human well-being or recreate inequities and problems.

7. 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.

8. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to human differences, social relationships, well-being, and change through the life course.

4. **Course Design:**

The instructor for this course will select required and recommended readings. In addition, the instructor will include a range of pedagogical methods, such as participatory 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
Journal of Community Health
Journal of Multicultural Social Work
Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare
Psychological Bulletin
Public Health Reports
Social Work
Social Work with Groups
Young Children

Course statement approved by faculty: 5/22/1996.
Course statement prepared by: [faculty].
(Edited by H. Raschke, 8/25/98).

COURSE PHILOSOPHY AND FORMAT

Social work practice presumes the practitioner’s knowledge of theories of human behavior and human development, that is, her or his full understanding of how the behavior and development of people are explained and the impact of social work intervention. 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 behavior. Although understanding human development and human behavior may seem intuitive, both are very complex phenomena. The interaction between the social environment and behavior and development complicate this understanding further. For this reason, careful and informed attention to knowledge building in the areas of human behavior and human development 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 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.
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, it is expected that you will attend all class sessions and that you will participate in the required class activities.

Two absences are permitted without penalty. You should use your discretion in being absent, but absences may be permitted for such reasons as your own illness or that of a family member, death of a person close to you, observation of religious holidays, job or field placement interviews, or other personal needs. 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 otherwise result in an automatic deduction of 5 points from your final grade for each missed class session. Students who have an extended illness or incapacitation causing them to miss class for medical reasons, beyond the two allowed, have the alternative of requesting a grade of Incomplete for the semester.

Required Texts:


IMPORTANT: Your text will come with a colorful card carrying the web address and a passcode to INFOTRAC. You will be able to use this to access over one million articles and books on a variety of topics or relevance to this course. Do Not Throw This Card Away. It will be useful in accessing the references you will need to prepare for course assignments.

Assignments:

Weekly reaction papers to the assigned readings (3 points/week) 36 points maximum
Multidimensional Framework Assessment - Oral Presentation and Paper 50 points maximum
End of term small group dynamics analysis paper 14 points maximum

100 points max. total

Writing Policy: 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.

A. Weekly reaction papers to the assigned readings (36% of Final Grade).

You will be assigned readings from the text and in a few instances from supplementary articles that will be placed on reserve in the SW Library). Weekly reaction papers should be written in response to these assigned weekly readings. They should be one typewritten page long and should contain your thoughts, personal or professional reactions, or discussion of questions stimulated by the reading. These will be discussed in your small group meetings at the outset of each class. There will be elements of the readings that you will disagree with or that are not consistent with what you have experienced. This forms excellent content for your reaction paper and subsequent discussion. **Weekly reaction papers are due by the end of each class session.**

B. Multidimensional Framework Assessment Presentation and Paper (50% of Final Grade)

This assignment combines an oral group presentation and a paper. It provides an opportunity for you to connect theories that may be used by social workers to explain behavior, with events or situations that tend to be surrounded by controversy. The assignment is expected to stimulate your critical thinking skills. The complete format for this assignment will be distributed separately. **Papers are due two weeks after the presentation.**

C. Small Group Analysis Paper (14% of Final Grade)

Keep a log of your small group experiences and observations. Pay particular attention to elements of small groups discussed in Ashford, LeCroy, and Lortie, pp. 113-122, including discussion of context (pp. 122-151) as appropriate. Near the end of the semester, write a 5-page paper discussing these experiences and observations, using the headings provided in the assigned readings as they are relevant to this assignment. **Papers are due: December 14.**

**Grade Calculation:** 95-100 points = A; 90-94 points = A-; 85-89 points = B; 80-84 points = C; 75-79 points = C-; 65-69 points = D; 60-64 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. Other assignments may be made during the semester. Also, issues of diversity and multiculturalism are interspersed throughout the readings. The topical areas for each class session are only a few of many and are discussed, in the assigned readings, as they have implications for females and males of multiple cultural groups. Finally, the topic areas presented are discussed, in the assigned readings, in terms of their implications for individuals, families, and small groups.

September 11  **Session 1 - Introduction to the class**
Class introductions, introductions to the syllabus, lecture, exercise
*Assigned reading: Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, *A multidimensional framework for assessing social functioning*

**UNIT ONE**
Conceptual Themes and Theoretical Propositions

September 18  **Session 2 - Assessing Social Functioning**
Theoretical Approaches
Dimensions of Human Behavior and the Social Environment
Foundation Knowledge of Theories
  - Biophysical dimensions
  - Psychological dimensions
  - Social dimensions
Relationship to Intervention Planning

September 25  **Session 3 – Assessing Biological Dimensions**
Biophysical growth and development
Genetics and human behavior
Biophysical hazards

October 2  **Session 4 – A Framework for Assessing the Psychological Dimension**
Psychodynamic theory
Psychosocial development theory
Cognitive development theory and information processing
Behavior and learning theories
Social learning theory
Attitude theory and theories of emotional development

**UNIT TWO**
Families and Groups

October 9  
**Session 5 – A Framework for Assessing the Social Dimension**
Ecological systems theory  
Family systems theory  
Family development theory  
Small group theory  
Social support theory  
Communities, organizations, and institutions as social context  
Theory of rational action  
Conflict theory  
Postmodern theory


UNIT THREE  
Prenatal – Infancy - Childhood

October 16  
**Session 6 – Prenatal development**
Pregnancy  
Genetic testing and management: ethical issues  
Fetal development  
Birth and complications


October 23  
**Session 7 – Infancy (Group presentations begin)**
Developmental tasks of infancy  
Attachment theory  
Adoptive families


October 30  
**Session 8 – Early Childhood (Group presentations continue)**
Prosocial development theory  
Language development

November 6  **Session 9 – Middle Childhood (Group presentations continue)**
Biophysical progress
Intelligence
Multicultural rites of passage

**UNIT FOUR**
Adolescence – Young Adulthood

November 13  **Session 10 - Adolescence (Group presentations continue)**
Puberty
Identity development theories
Theories of moral development

November 20  **Session 11 – Young Adulthood (Group presentations continue)**
Theories of adult development
Companionship and intimacy
Infertility

**UNIT FIVE**
Middle and Late Adulthood

November 27  **Session 12 – Middle Adulthood (Group presentations continue)**
Career and relationship renewal
Midlife

December 4  **Session 13 - Late Adulthood**
Theories of successful aging

December 11  **Session 14 – Wrap up**
Course evaluations
*Small group experience papers are due.*