1. Course Description:

This course will build on the content presented in course SW 521 (i.e. Interpersonal Practice with Individuals, Families, and Small Groups). This course will present a theoretical analysis of family functioning and integrate this analysis with social work practice. Broad definitions of "family" will be used, including extended families, unmarried couples, single parent families, gay or lesbian couples, adult siblings, "fictive kin," and other inclusive definitions. Along with theories and knowledge of family structure and process, guidelines and tools for engaging, assessing, and intervening with families will be introduced. The most recent social science theories and evidence will be employed in guiding family assessment and intervention. This course will cover all stages of the helping process with families (i.e. engagement, assessment, planning, evaluation, intervention, and termination). During these stages, client-worker differences will be taken into account including differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other factors. Various theoretical approaches will be presented in order to help students understand family structure, communication patterns, and behavioral and coping repertoires. The family will also be studied as part of larger social systems, as having its own life cycles, and as influencing multiple generations. An overview will be given of current models of practice.

2. Course Content:

Content on the engagement phase will emphasize methods for overcoming barriers to helpseeking that are both internal and external to the family. Students will learn how to identify client-worker differences and how to find common ground with clients. In particular, students will learn methods for engaging the most reluctant family members. Assessment content will
draw from the major theories of family functioning and life span development, as well as meta-
theories that address social forces (e.g. sexism and racism). A sampling of reliable assessment
measures will be introduced and applied. Goal setting and planning will flow from the
assessment of the family, the goals of the family and its individual members, empirical evidence
for different approaches, and ethical considerations. A variety of intervention and prevention
models will be presented, along with the specific methods and procedures of each model.
Included will be work with nontraditional families, couples counseling, and divorce and
separation counseling. The role of social work in the primary prevention of family problems will
be emphasized (e.g. family life education programs). Methods for the evaluation of intervention
and prevention efforts will be covered, including the use of self-report and observational
measures.

3. Course Objectives:

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

1. Articulate a conceptual framework that takes into account individual and family needs,
problems and experiences within the family, and resources and opportunities of the social
environment. Within such a framework, students will be able to:
   a) identify the normative experiences, risks, and needed tasks as families move through
each developmental stage.
   b) discuss these challenges, risks, and tasks as they apply to women, the poor, families
of color, and gay and lesbian families.
   c) describe the resources, strengths, and effective family processes across diverse
populations including those based on ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and class.
2. Apply family assessment frameworks that are ecological and family-centered and take into
account the influence of oppressive social forces. Such assessments will account for the
presence and impact of family violence, the presence and impact of substance abuse, and the
impact that the students’ own value system has on their assessment formulations.
3. Establish a professional relationship with family members in order to engage in assessment,
goal setting, and planning. The capacity to establish relationships with families will include
an appreciation of cultural diversity and the unique strengths of nontraditional families.
4. Identify various models of prevention and intervention and explain the applicability of each
model to the challenges faced by families. From an array of family-centered models of
practice, students will select prevention and treatment interventions that can be applied to
families and their larger social context.
5. Select appropriate outcome measures that are reliable and determined by agreed upon goals
in order to evaluate the effects of family-centered interventions.

4. Course Design:

The content of this course will be delivered using a combination of cognitive, affective and
experiential methods. Specifically, the design will include lectures, assigned theoretical and
practice reading, and discussion (cognitive); exposure to the actual experiences of families in
general and to those of particular families, through such media as case materials, videotapes, and client personal descriptions (affective); and role-playing as worker and as family member (experiential).

5. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed by considering the unique characteristics of families of various ethnic and racial groups and by tailoring engagement, assessment, goal setting, planning, and intervention to these characteristics. Assessment procedures will focus on strengths rather than deficits in family functioning.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be addressed through a multi-systems perspective in which students will view the family as a system within, and affected by, a larger social structure. Family assessment will consider the impact of poverty and discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other factors in causing or maintaining families' problems. Traditional solutions to family problems will be analyzed for their potential to maintain oppression. Empowerment models of practice will be stressed, including the involvement of natural helping networks and teaching advocacy skills to families.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be addressed by identifying the family functions and processes, which are useful for the successful development of its members. Prevention programs will be described that are designed to help the general population and at-risk families to avert problems before they develop (e.g. marital enhancement, parent education, premarital counseling, parent-school linkages, etc.).

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** will be addressed by discussing the relationship of theoretical and empirical knowledge to family practice, by describing the theoretical frameworks within which practice methods may be carried out, and by identifying and critiquing the techniques and outcomes of evaluation which have been used with each practice method.

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

Ethical dilemmas unique to family work will be presented, such as balancing individual and family goals, contracts regarding confidentiality and record-keeping, and addressing oppressive family structures. Presentation of value conflicts that exist toward families in society will be used to raise the students' awareness of personal and professional values.

7. Source Materials:

- **A. Books & Articles**


**B. Journals**
*Families in Society*
*Family Process*
*Family Therapy Networker*
*Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*
*Journal of Family Psychology*

**Required Written Assignments**

1. **Weekly Reading/Written Assignments.** Written assignments are due every week by the end of the class session coinciding with the assigned reading(s) for that week. Weekly written assignments are required when due even when you are absent. Other learning experiences coincide strictly with these readings. Effective this semester, late weekly assignment submissions will not be accepted except by permission of the instructor and then only if they are submitted by the Friday following the Wednesday class in which they are due. Assignments not received according to this policy will not be graded so the student will not receive any of the maximum five points attainable for that assignment. If illness or other personal circumstance prevents you from adhering to the requirements of the course, you may wish to consider withdrawing from the course and taking it at a later and more convenient time.

1a. **Instructions for weekly assignments.** In the Lawson and Prevatt text, questions are found at the end of each chapter other than the last (Chapter 14). a) When an assigned reading involves two chapters, answer the questions at the end of both chapters. b) When the assignment involves readings other than from the text, develop a total of three questions regarding the readings. In these instances, state your question, state what thinking stimulated the question for you, and state your own thoughts in response to the question. c) When an assigned reading involves the Lawson and Prevatt text and the course pack, answer the questions at the end of the text assigned reading and develop two questions about the other readings.

1b. **Grading of Weekly Assignments.** Weekly assignments will be graded according to accuracy and completeness [60% of grade/60 points or 5%/5 points total per assignment, not per chapter].

2. **Brief papers**
Three brief (3-5 page papers) are required throughout the term. Dates they’re required are October 9th, October 30th, and November 20th. Choose three from the list of 5. These papers will be developed from readings in your course pack or from the world wide web and will involve looking at a videotaped family intervention session and developing the paper according
to the topic. You will receive full descriptions of the issues to be addressed in a separate assignment sheet. [10 points per paper/total 30% of the grade.]

Paper topics are:

Family and individual development
Family assessment
Social justice
Family and individual strengths
Values and ethical dilemmas

3. Take-home test.
For this assignment you are asked to look at the same video used in the brief paper assignments in item #2 above and develop a brief paper responding to specific questions to be distributed separately. [106 points/110% of grade.]

Requirements for written assignments: Daily, brief, and take-home assignments will be graded according to accuracy and completeness, must reflect appropriate integration of content from relevant assigned readings, and must be typewritten with correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and use of the 5th edition guide of the American Psychological Association where citations and a reference list are appropriate. Turning in work that is copied from another student or copied or developed from the work or ideas of an author is considered plagiarism and is grounds for failing the course. (See p. 57 of the 2002-2003, Student Handbook) In fairness to other students, a penalty of 3 points must be assigned for every 24 hours or fraction thereof that a brief paper or the take home is late.

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 in social work practice with families; 2) providing a supportive learning environment; and 3) being clear regarding expectations of you in the course. Please call to my attention any questions or lack of clarity regarding any of the assignments.

Because this is a skills-development course, prompt attendance at, and participation in all class sessions is essential. SW 623 is the only course offered in the School for preparation for advanced social work practice with families. Since the knowledge derived from this class is based in large part on experiential activities such as role-playing, it is expected that you will attend all class sessions and that you will participate in the required class activities (described below).

Although attendance at all classes is expected, 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 family member, observation of religious holidays, job or field placement interviews, or other personal needs. 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 beyond the two allowed. Students who have an extended illness or incapacitation causing them to miss class for medical reasons, beyond the two allowed, have the alternative withdrawing from the course and taking it at a later time. Failure to participate in any of the three required experiential learning activities (serving as practitioner, serving as family member, and serving as a member of a reflecting team) will result in an automatic deduction of 5 points from your final grade.

**Grade Calculation**

A = 94-100 points; A- = 90-93 points; B = 84-89 points; B- = 80-83 points; C = 74-79 points; C- = 70-73 points; D = 64-69; D- = 60-63; F = 59 and below.

**Required Reading**


**Required Additional Reading Sources (SW Library Reserve and Course Pack):**