Social Work 521:  
Interpersonal Practice with Individuals, Families and Small Groups  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course presents foundation knowledge and skills essential to interpersonal practice while considering the community, organizational, and policy contexts in which social workers practice. It integrates content on multiculturalism, diversity, social justice, and social change issues, and it relies on the historical, contextual, and social science knowledge presented concurrently in the foundation SWPS and HBSE courses. The student’s field experience and future practice methods courses will build upon the skills presented in this basic course. Throughout this course, students examine social work values and ethics as well as issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ability as these relate to interpersonal practice.

COURSE CONTENT:

Students will learn various social work roles (e.g., counselor, group facilitator, mediator, broker, advocate and resource planner), recognizing that these roles must be based on an awareness of cause and effect and on the adherence to social work values and ethics. Students will understand the importance of developing relationships with clients, colleagues, supervisors, other professionals, and many other constituencies that make up the organizations in which they work. Students will also learn how self-awareness and the conscious use of self affect the helping relationship.

In this course all phases of the IP treatment and prevention process (i.e., engagement, assessment, evaluation, planning, intervention, and termination) will be presented with attention to how they are applied to work with individuals, families, and small groups. Students will learn to assess problems in clients’ lives that relate to attributes of the client (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability) as well as situational and environmental factors relevant to the client’s social functioning.

Students will understand patterns of functioning, learn to assess strengths and limitations, and to plan, implement and monitor change strategies. Students will learn the importance of evaluating methods of change based on situational effectiveness and on
whether their implementation enhances the client’s capacity for self-determination and the system’s capacity for justice. Various prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation models will be covered as well as various IP skills. In subsequent IP courses, more emphasis will be placed on specialized assessment procedures, evaluation, treatment interventions, termination.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1) Describe ecological-systems, bio-psycho-social, problem solving, structural, and pathology versus strengths based frameworks in practice with individual, families, and small groups AND critique the strengths and weaknesses of these various frameworks.

2) Recognize the impact of race, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, power and privilege on interpersonal practice by:
   a) demonstrating self-awareness about how their attributes and life experiences impact on their capacity to relate to others with different personal attributes and life experiences, and
   b) describe how others who are very different may perceive them and how status and power issues impact professional relationships with clients, colleagues, and other professions.

3) Carry out the roles of advocate, broker, counselor/therapist, group facilitator, and resource developer and assess the appropriateness of these roles in context.

3) Demonstrate basic interpersonal practice skills including active listening, empathic Responding, critical thinking, case recording, and contracting.

4) Conduct culturally sensitive interpersonal practice by:
   a) engaging diverse client systems
   b) employing assessment protocols of PIE, ecomaps, genograms, network maps, and group composition.
   c) Articulating treatment and prevention goals, developing measurable treatment and prevention objectives, and employing measurement tools to monitor and evaluate practice while maintaining sensitivity to the special needs of clients.
   d) Implementing treatment protocols consistent with treatment plans and sensitive to clients' situations.
   e) Recognizing basic termination issues that pertain to interpersonal practice.

5) Operationalize the NASW Code of Ethics and recognize value dilemmas that emerge in interpersonal practice.

RELATIONSHIP OF COURSE TO FOUR CURRICULAR THEMES:

MULTICULTURALISM AND DIVERSITY will be concentrated in the topics of relationship building, communication, assessment, intervention, termination and evaluation. These topics will explore how the differences between worker and client impact and shape these critical dimensions of social work practice. Critical consciousness about power imbalances between worker and client and between client and agency will also be explored.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL CHANGE will be central to the topic of various roles assumed by social workers and in clienthood. The focus of the course is on small system change (individual, families, and groups) but the larger social context and implications for change will be embedded in PIE, ecological assessment, and in the experience of applicants as they enter social agencies. These themes will be integrated into this course through the
use of case examples and case scenarios that will be selected by the instructor to exemplify skills in practice.

**PROMOTION, PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION** will be themes reflected in various purposes and models of contemporary social work practice. In addition, this course will emphasize skills that can be implemented with promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation as practice goals and outcomes.

**BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH** will be presented in this course to support practice methods, skills and assessment procedures. Planning, decision-making and intervention procedures will be directly borrowed from the behavioral and social sciences.

**RELATIONSHIP OF COURSE TO SOCIAL WORK ETHICS AND VALUES:**

Social work ethics and values will be addressed within the course as they pertain to issues related to working with clients and colleagues. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to give students direction about these ethical issues. In particular, this course will focus on 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, issues that arise when working with colleagues, such as referral, consultation, dispute resolution, and mediation will be addressed.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**


**RECOMMENDED TEXT:**


**COURSE DESIGN:**

This course will use a combination of power-point lecture material, class discussion, case material, role-plays, small group discussion, and videos as appropriate.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

REQUIREMENTS:

1. You are expected to complete the required reading assignments, as detailed in the syllabus. In addition, there are several recommended readings to help those of you who wish to pursue further study of a specific area or topic. The required readings are located in your text(s) or in books and journals on reserve in the Social Work Library. A list of books on reserve for this course will be distributed in the first class.

2. Class attendance is required, except in the case of unavoidable extenuating circumstances, in which case, the student should make every effort to try to inform the instructor before class if an emergency prevents attendance. Because this is a practice methods class, active participation is encouraged, and student participation and input is valued. (Class participation = 10% of the final grade.)

3. There are five assignments in this course, as detailed below. You are expected to complete four written papers and to make a class presentation based on one of the papers.

ASSIGNMENTS:

ASSIGNMENT # 1: CRITIQUE OF TAPED INTERVIEW

Arrange with a friend, acquaintance, fellow student, etc. to tape a 20 minute interview with them in which they have agreed to share with you a real concern of theirs which they feel comfortable discussing with you. Assure them of your intent to safeguard their confidentiality about what is said - i.e., you will be the only one to listen to this tape, you will not reveal their identity in your paper, and you will disguise some particulars which will not affect the substance of the critique but will protect their confidence. After the interview is done, ask your subject for some feedback re: how they experienced you in your roles as listener, as "counselor." Did they feel accepted, listened to, understood?

Before listening to the tape, make your own process notes as you recall what was said in the session, the order it was discussed, etc. When you play the tape, observe how your notes correspond (or not) to the reality.

In listening to the tape and reflecting on your role, pay attention to the skills we are covering in class, and that you are reading about in Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen - preparation and centering, empathic responding, authentic responding, paraphrasing, focusing, summarizing, and questioning.

In a 3-5 page typed paper, discuss:
1. Your subject’s report of how they experienced the interview and your attending style.
2. Your own sense of how you comported yourself in the counselor role.
3. The degree of agreement with your notes and the actual tape.
4. Your observations of your subject’s non-verbal communications, and the degree of congruence or non-congruence with verbal statements.
5. Discuss the skills you used, and critique how effectively you think you used them.
6. Comment on how you were feeling in the counselor role? How comfortable or uncomfortable?

DUE: OCTOBER 1 15% OF FINAL GRADE
ASSIGNMENT # 2: A PERSONAL “CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS” ANALYSIS

After reading chapter three in Garvin and Seabury, “Interpersonal Practice Beyond Diversity and Social Justice: The Importance of Critical Consciousness,” by Reed, Newman, Suarez, and Lewis, write a 3-5 page typed paper in which you:

a. Locate yourself in each of the eight “key social group categories.”
b. Discuss the degree of importance of each group memberships to yourself at this time in your life. Which memberships impact on you the most? The least?
c. Which memberships are a source of pride/pleasure/well-being?

In the article, Reed et al discuss the concept of positionality. They note that some of our identifications give us privilege and some may result in being oppressed by “insider” group members. (e.g., as a white male, one may enjoy some degree of privilege, but as a gay white male or “differently-abled” white male, one would also experience some degree of oppression.) As you reflect on your own experience with positionality, discuss:

a. Which of your eight social group memberships affords you any degree of privilege?
b. Which (if any) have resulted in your experiencing oppression?
c. Focus on one of your memberships, whether it causes you a degree of privilege or oppression, and discuss how you think this will impact on your client work? Has it affected your personal critical consciousness in any way that will make you a more or less effective caseworker, particularly in the area of multi-cultural sensitivity?

DUE: October 29 15% OF FINAL GRADE

ASSIGNMENT # 3: RESEARCH PAPER ON A SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE TOPIC:

One class is underway, students will self-select into groups of no more than four members. Each group will select a topic with which they are not already familiar to study in depth, and each group member will write a research paper (12-15 pp.) on the subject. The group will then do a joint presentation to the class. A list of possible topics will be distributed in class, and guidelines for research papers will also be distributed.

DUE: NOVEMBER 19 25% OF FINAL GRADE

ASSIGNMENT # 4: STUDENT PRESENTATION

The students who have written their research paper on a particular subject will meet as a group to plan an in-class presentation on the topic. Groups will be encouraged to employ a variety of teaching tools in their presentation, and to educate about the substance of the topic, as well as to comment on the nature of the group process in preparing the presentation. A list of more specific guidelines will be distributed in class.

DUE: November 26 and December 3 20 % OF FINAL GRADE

ASSIGNMENT # 5: FINAL TAPE CRITIQUE

Students will do a taped interview of approximately 30-45 minutes in length with a different person than the one chosen for the first interview. As before, the person will agree to tell you about a real concern of theirs which they feel comfortable sharing, and you will provide the earlier stated (see assignment # 3) confidentiality guarantees. The student will discuss the interview in 3-5 typed pages according to criteria and guidelines which will be distributed in class.

DUE: DECEMBER 10 20 % OF FINAL GRADE
COURSE OUTLINE: OVERVIEW

Class 1: Sept. 3  
Overview of Course, Intro. to Social Work Practice, Social Work Values and Roles  
Ethics: Principles and Dilemmas

Class 2: Sept. 10  
Relationship Building Skills: Preparing, Empathy, Active Listening

Class 3: Sept. 17  
Relationship sustaining and enhancing skills:  
Verbal following, exploring, focusing

Class 4: Sept. 24  
The Person of the social worker:  
Multi-cultural awareness and skills of working with Ethnic, racial, class, gender, cultural diversity.

Class 5: Oct. 1  
Helping Process Overview: More skills  
Overview of treatment models: differential approaches  
ASSIGNMENT # 1 DUE

Class 6: Oct. 8  
Multi-Dimensional assessment, planning & intervention:  
Individuals: use of DSM IV  

Oct. 15  
NO CLASS, FALL BREAK

Class 7: Oct. 22  
Skills of working with groups

Class 8: Oct. 29  
Assessment, planning & intervention: families  
Guest Speaker: Ms. Joan Zald, A.C.S.W.  
ASSIGNMENT # 2 DUE.

Class 9: Nov. 5  
Skills of moving beyond assessment:  
Goal setting, contracting, implementing change,  
Additive empathy, interpretation, confrontation

Class 10: Nov. 12  
Sensitive Social Work Practice with Lesbians, Gay Men  
And Bisexual People.  
Guest: Jim Toy, A.C.S.W.

Class 11: Nov. 19  
Skills of working with special populations (involuntary clients, Clients suffering depression and other mood disorders).  
ASSIGNMENT # 3 (RESEARCH PAPER) DUE

Class 12: Nov. 26  
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: ASSIGNMENT # 4

Class 13: Dec. 3  
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: ASSIGNMENT # 4

Class 14: Dec. 10  
Skills in the ending phase of casework practice  
ASSIGNMENT # 5 DUE
COURSE OUTLINE: CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Class 1: Sept. 3  Overview of Course, Introduction to Social Work Practice, Social Work Values and Roles

Class 2: Sept. 10  Relationship Building Skills: Preparing, Empathy, Active Listening,

Required reading:
Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen, Chapters 1-5

Recommended Reading:
Compton and Galaway, Chapter 7: “Values and Social Work Practice.”
Family Therapy Networker, March/April, 2002. Several articles focus on the topic: “The Ethical Dilemmas No One Talks About.”

Class 3: Sept. 17:  Relationship sustaining and enhancing skills:
Verbal following, focusing, exploring

Required reading: Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen, Chapter 6
Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen, Chapter 7

Class 4: Sept. 24:  The Person of the Therapist: Multi-cultural Awareness and Skills of working with diversity: ethnic, racial, gender, class, cultural, religious, sexual orientation, physically abled.

Required reading:
Paniagua, Freddy, Assessing and Treating Culturally Diverse Clients, Chapters 1, 2, 8 and 9.


Ridley, Charles R., Overcoming Unintentional Racism in Counseling and Therapy.

Recommended Readings:
Compton and Galaway, Chapter 5: “Practice Across Difference.”


Class 5: Oct. 1  Helping Process Overview:
Overview of Differential Treatment Models
ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

Required reading:


Class 6: Oct. 8 :  Multidimensional Assessment: Planning and Intervention: Individuals; Use of DSM IV.

Required reading:  Hepworth, Rooney and Larsen, Ch. 8

Recommended Reading:


OCTOBER 15: NO CLASS, FALL BREAK

Class 7: Oct. 22  Skills of Working with groups

Required reading: Hepworth, Rooney, Larsen, TEXT, Chapter 11.

Class 8: Oct. 29:  Assessment, Planning and Intervention: Families

Required Reading: Hepworth, Rooney and Larsen, Ch. 10 and 16.

Recommended reading:
McGoldrick, Monica and Randy Gerson, Genograms in Family Assessment, especially chapters 1, 2 and 4.
 ASSIGNMENT # 2 DUE

Class 9: Nov. 5: Skills of moving beyond assessment; skills of implementing change. Additive empathy, Interpretation, Confrontation
Required Reading: Hepworth, Rooney and Larsen, Ch. 12, 13, 14, 15, 19.

Class 10: Nov. 12: Skills of Sensitive Social Work Practice with lesbians, gay men and bisexual clients
Guest lecturer: James Toy, A.C.S.W.

Class 11: Nov. 19: Skills of working with special populations (involuntary Clients, clients suffering depression and other mood disorders).
Required reading:
Recommended reading:

Class 12: Nov. 26: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (Assignment # 4)

Class 13: Dec. 3: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (Assignment # 4)

Class 14: Dec. 10: Skills in the termination process
Required reading: Hepworth, Rooney and Larsen, Chapter 20

FINAL TAPE CRITIQUE DUE (Assignment # 5)
ADDITIONAL REFERENCES:

The following list cites a number of valuable additional works with which you may want to become acquainted during your social work education, and is offered to you as a resource for your information. Throughout this course, I will occasionally refer you to some of these books for optional additional reading.


PERIODICALS:

As social workers, you should also become familiar with the following journals:

AFFILIA, The Journal of Women and Social Work
American Journal of Orthopsychiatry
Child Welfare
Family Process
Family Therapy Networker
Health and Social Work
Journal of Clinical Social Work
Journal of Multi-Cultural Social Work
Journal of Social Issues
Journal of Social Work Education
Public Welfare
Proceedings, National Conference on Social Welfare
Smith College Studies in Social Work
Social Casework
Social Service Review
Social Work
Social Work Research Abstracts

You should also be aware of the Encyclopedia of Social Work, updated regularly by NASW.