Course Description:

This course will build on the content presented in course 540 (i.e. Theory and Practice of Interpersonal Practice). 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.

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.

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.

Course Section Format and Outline
Therapeutic skills can be categorized as falling into three domains. *Conceptual skills* relate to the ability to look at the raw data of the session through the lens of family therapy. *Perceptual skills* are about the ability to see and accurately describe the behavioral data of a session. *Executive skills* include the use of assessment tools, the ability to structure a session and to structure the progression of a “case” using selected interventions. Every class will incorporate a focus on each of these domains.

Lectures and readings will be designed to help you develop your family therapy “lens” and knowledge of various theories and interventions. Videotapes and related discussions will be used to develop your perceptual abilities. Role plays, exercises, and related discussions will be
used to allow practice of executive skills. Journal exercises will be regularly assigned to facilitate reflection and self-awareness as related to the practice of Family Therapy and “the self in the system”.

Because much of your learning will be experiential, attendance is very important. Everyone will be allowed one absence without any impact on the course grade. If you miss two or three classes, you may request an assignment to make up participation points. No make up assignments will be given for more than three missed classes.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

- Attendance and participation 20%
- Journal exercises 20%
- Two quizzes 10% each
- Case presentation and simulation 20%
- Paper 20%

Course Texts:

September 6: Introductions; Social Work and Family Therapy

September 13: Theoretical Underpinnings: Systems Theory and Post-modernism
Discuss Smith & Nylund Ch. 1
Sample case presentation and simulation.

September 20: Culture in Family Therapy; Assessment Process and Tools
Discuss McGoldrick Ch. 1, 2 & 4
Discuss Boyd-Franklin Ch. 1-3
Journal 1 due.

September 27: Escape from Bickering: Michael White Master Session (video)

October 4: Parenting and Parenting Children with Special Needs;
Structural Therapy with Harry Aponte (video)
Boyd-Franklin Ch. 5 & 7; Smith & Nylund Ch. 7
3 Therapy Simulations
Journals 2 & 3 due
October 11: Divorced and Blended Families
Of Rocks and Flowers (video)
3 Therapy Simulations
Quiz #1 due

October 18: Parenting Adolescents
From a Secret Place (video)
Boyd-Franklin Ch. 6; Smith & Nylund Ch. 12 & 15
4 Therapy Simulations
Journal 4 due

October 25: Addictions
Solution Oriented Therapy with Bill O’Hanlon (video)
Smith & Nylund Ch. 6 and 16
2 Therapy Simulations
Journal 5 due

November 1: Adoptive Families; Migration
First Person Plural (video)
McGoldrick Ch. 18, 26-28
3 Therapy Simulations
Journal 6 due

November 8: Marital/Relationship Issues
Strategic Therapy with James Coyne (video)
3 Therapy Simulations
Journal 7 due

November 15: Eating Disorders; Smith & Nylund Ch.13
Narrative Therapy with Dr. Steve Madigan (video)
3 Therapy Simulations
Journal 8 due

November 22: Aging and Life Cycle Issues
Big Mama (video)
Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter (video)
3 Therapy Simulations
Quiz #2 due

December 6: Sexual Abuse; Boyd-Franklin Ch. 4
Smith & Nylund Ch. 3 and 8
3 Therapy Simulations

December 13: Final Paper due
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).

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.

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.