SW 625: INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Winter ‘03
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Course Description:
This course will examine practice theories and techniques for working with children, adolescents, and their parents. This course will provide grounding in the following perspectives: attachment/transactional theory, child and adolescent development, and parenthood, including ethnic/cultural variations in child rearing practices. The interaction between environmental risk factors, protective factors, and developmental factors as they contribute to coping, resiliency, and disorder will also be covered. Major clinical concepts including assessment, treatment planning, work with parents, and developmentally appropriate engagement and intervention techniques will be addressed. This course will be organized in terms of the sequence of development and will cover clinical issues and treatment approaches relevant to each developmental stage.

Course Content:
This course will present prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation models appropriate to interpersonal practice with children and youth in a variety of contexts. Content will focus on the early phases of intervention, including barriers to engagement that may result from client-worker differences, involuntary participation on the part of the child, youth, or family, and factors external to the client-worker relationship, such as policy or institutional decisions that may influence or shape the therapeutic relationship. Since the intervention strategies taught in this course rely significantly on the social worker as a critical component of the change process, attention will be paid to the understanding of self as an instrument in the change process. A variety of methods for engaging children, youth, and their families (or other caretaking adults such as foster parents) will be presented. Assessment content will emphasize client and caretaker strengths and resources as well as risks to child or youth well-being that may result from internal or external vulnerabilities caused by trauma, deprivation, discrimination, separation and loss, developmental disability, and physical and mental illness. Particular attention will be paid to cultural, social, and economic factors that influence client functioning or the worker’s ability to accurately assess the child, youth, or family.
Content on treatment planning will assist students in selecting interventions which are based on a thorough assessment, appropriate to the child’s or youth’s situation, and sensitive to and compatible with the client’s and family’s expressed needs, goals, circumstances, values, and beliefs. Summary descriptions of developmental stages (i.e. infancy, toddlerhood, preschool age, school age, and adolescence) will be presented in terms of developmental characteristics and milestones, salient developmental challenges, and themes such as self-esteem and the development of peer relationships. This information will form the background for discussions and case examples which illustrate the relationship between development and behavior, including communication and relational capacities and the necessity of selecting developmentally appropriate intervention techniques (e.g. the use of displacement techniques, such as play or drawing, with preschool children). Most frequently these techniques have as their goal the reduction of psychological distress and the improvement of individual functioning and interpersonal relations. Helping parents or other caretaking adults to understand the child’s or youth’s issues or behavior in developmental terms will also be discussed. A range of intervention approaches will be presented such as individual play therapy, family therapy, conjoint treatment of parents and children, cognitive behavioral interventions, group work, parent training, and parent guidance. Since work with children and youth almost always requires multiple intervention modalities, attention will be given to creating effective intervention plans through the integration of different modalities. Those intervention methods which have been empirically demonstrated to be effective will be given particular emphasis. Methods for monitoring and evaluating interventions will also be discussed and demonstrated in this course.

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

1. Describe and apply a number of assessment procedures (e.g. direct observation of or interviews with the client, parent or caretaker, and collateral contacts with teachers, caseworkers, or other professionals) that identify internal and external risk and protective factors that may affect children and youth.

2. Describe the primary developmental tasks and characteristics of childhood and adolescence as they relate to the selection and implementation of developmentally appropriate techniques for engaging and treating children and youth.

3. Identify the ways in which continuity or disruption in primary care relationships may impact children, adolescents, and the therapeutic relationship.

4. Conduct and write up an assessment that includes information on the child’s physical, emotional, and cognitive development, temperament, relationship history, and performance as the basis for formulating an understanding of the child’s presenting problems and circumstances.

5. Implement research supported prevention and intervention strategies (e.g. play therapy and parent training) that are compatible with client and family or caretaker goals, needs, circumstances, and values.

6. Monitor and evaluate interventions with regard to: effectiveness, sensitivity to client-worker differences; impact of clients’ and families’ social identities (i.e.
race/ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion) on their experience of power and privilege; and appropriateness of the intervention to specific client needs resulting from conditions such as maltreatment, deprivation, disability, and substance abuse.

Course Design:
Class format will include lecture, discussion, case analysis, and viewing of videotapes. Written assignments will integrate theory, research, and case analysis, and when possible, the student’s practicum work.

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed through discussion of client-worker differences and power/privilege differentials based on culture, ethnicity, race, gender, and social class. Case examples of intervention and readings will reflect this theme.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be addressed through discussion of differences between problems responsive to interpersonal practice interventions and those which result from poverty, discrimination, and disenfranchisement, requiring systemic as well as individual interventions. Advocacy for disadvantaged, deprived, victimized and underserved or inappropriately served children and youth and their families will also be emphasized.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be addressed through discussion of early intervention, parent guidance, and advocacy as methods of preventing or mitigating later developmental problems. Discussions will also emphasize intervention theories and techniques which support the child’s or adolescent’s developmental potentials.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** will be addressed in relationship to the selection, monitoring, and evaluation of assessment and intervention methods with specific emphasis on current research in the areas of developmental psychopathology, attachment, risk, resiliency and coping, trauma, and maltreatment. Students will develop skills necessary to critically evaluate intervention theories and approaches used with child and youth populations.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:
Social work ethics and values in regard to confidentiality, self-determination, and respect for cultural and religious differences are particularly important when working with children and youth. Social workers working with children and adolescents often need to make critical intervention decisions which may have to balance risks to the child’s or adolescent’s safety or emotional well-being with their need for ongoing connection to their families and communities. This course will cover the complexities of ethical dilemmas as they relate to work with child and youth populations and the ways that the professional Code of Ethics may be used to guide and resolve value and ethical issues.

**REQUIRED READING**

Selected Readings (To be discussed in class)

**RECOMMENDED READING**


**ADDITIONAL REFERENCES**

In addition to the assigned and recommended texts, assorted articles and social work texts may be placed on reserve in the Social Work library. They will be designated ON RESERVE and can only be obtained from the librarian.

**PERIODICALS**

As social work professionals interested in children and youth issues, you should familiarize yourself with the following journals:

- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal
- Child and Family Behavior
- Child Development
- Child: Health, Care and Development
- Child Psychiatry and Human Development
- Child Study Journal
- Child Welfare
- Children and Youth Care Forum
- Children and Youth Services
- Children’s Health Care Journal
- Children Today
- Early Child Research Quarterly
- Families in Society: Journal of Contemporary Human Services
- Health and Social Work
- Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology
- Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- Journal of Child and Adolescent Group Therapy
- Journal of Child and Youth Care
- Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines
- Journal of Clinical Child Psychology
- Journal of Marital and Family Therapy
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(1) Attend each session: absences may lower your grade since some material considered essential to achieving the objectives of the course will only be presented in class. In addition, class discussions and participation in exercises are considered an important part of your learning experience (10% of the grade)

(2) Groundwork Assignment (Details to be discussed in class) (30% of grade):
   (a) Distinguishing “social work practice” from “therapy” with children and youth (Due January 13)
   (b) Exploring a developmental theory from a diverse perspective. (Due January 27)
   (c) Diagnosis and treatment: Challenges of a diverse society. (Due February 3
       (re: Ages 0~10 years) or February 10 (re: Ages ~11~18 years)

(3) Developmental History (Due March 11 - 15% of grade)
(4) Clinical Assessment (Due March 25 - 20% of grade)
(5) Treatment Plan (Due April 14 - 25% of grade)

UNITS OF STUDY: SUMMARY

Week 1 (January 6)   Introduction
Week 2 (January 13)  Contemporary Issues Affecting Children and Adolescents in Family Systems
Week 3 (January 20)  ***MLK, Jr. Day of Celebration ***
Week 4 (January 27)  The Process of Helping Children and Adolescents
Week 5 (February 3)  Assessing Difficulties and Competencies of Children: Implications for Intervening
Week 6 (February 10) Assessing Difficulties and Competencies of Adolescents: Implications for Intervening
Week 7 (February 17) Theories, Strategies and Techniques for Practice
Week 8 (February 24) ***Spring Break ***
Week 9 (March 3)     SW Practice w/ Infants and toddlers
Week 10 (March 10)   SW Practice w/ Pre-School and Early School-Aged children
Week 11 (March 17)   SW Practice w/ Older Children and Pre-Adolescents
Week 12 (March 24)   SW Practice w/ Adolescence
Week 13 (March 31)   Special Issues: Children and divorce
Week 14 (April 7)    Special Issues: Children and out-of-home care
Week 15 (April 14)   Prevention and SW Practice w/ Children and Youth
UNITS OF STUDY

Week 1 (January 6)  Introduction

Week 2 (January 13) Contemporary Issues Affecting Children and Adolescents in Family Systems

R&F Chapter 1 History and Social Policies Shaping Practice with Children and Adolescents, pp. 1-30; Chapter 3 Contemporary issues affecting children and adolescents in family systems, pp. 50-67.

Optional:
Boyd Webb Chapter 1: Children’s Problems and Needs; Chapter 2: Necessary background for helping children; Chapter 15: A changing world’s impact on practice with and for children
Davies: Chapter 2: Risk and protective factors: The child, family and community
Chapter 3: Analysis of risk and protective factors: Practice application

Week 3 (January 21)  *** MLK, Jr. Day of Celebration ***

Week 4 (January 27) The Process of Helping Children and Adolescents

R&F Chapter 2 Cultures, Communities and Families, pp.31-49; Chapter 4 The process of helping children and adolescents, pp. 68-101.

Optional:
Boyd Webb: Review Chapter 1: Children’s Problems and Needs and Chapter 2: Necessary background for treating children. Also, review the following issues discussed in Boyd Webb: ethical conflicts (pp. 189,243,244,276 and 277); custody disputes (pp. 242-244), for school social worker (pp. 189, 190) and in working with substance-abusing families (276, 277).
Gibson, et al: Chapter 1: A conceptual framework for the psychological assessment and treatment of minority youth; Chapter 11: Multicultural perspective on two clinical cases

Week 5 (February 3) Assessing Difficulties and Competencies of Children: Implications for Intervening

R&F Chapter 5 Assessing the competencies and difficulties of children and adolescents

Optional:
Boyd Webb  (Review) Chapter 4: The biopsychosocial assessment of the child; Chapter 5: Contracting, Planning Interventions, and Tracking Progress
Lukas: Chapter 5: How to conduct the first interview with the child; Chapter 6: How to take a developmental history


**Week 6 (February 10)**  
*Assessing Difficulties and Competencies of Adolescents: Implications for Intervening*  
R&F Review Chapter 5 Assessing the competencies and difficulties of children and adolescents

Optional:  
Canino, Ian and Spurlock, Jeanne (2000). *Culturally diverse children and adolescents* *(2nd ed.)*. Chapter 2 History Taking and Chapter 4 Diagnostic Categories

**Week 7 (February 17)**  
*Theories, Strategies and Techniques for Practice*  
R&F Chapter 6 Theories, strategies and techniques for practice

Optional:  

Boyd Webb  (Review) Chapter 5: Contracting, planning interventions and tracking progress; Chapter 7: One on one with the child

**Week 8 (February 24)**  
***Spring Break***

**Week 9 (March 3)**  
*SW Practice w/ Infants and toddlers*  
Choose at least one of the following:  
Davies: Part II: Introduction: A developmental lens on childhood; Chapter 4: Infant Development; Chapter 6: Practice with Toddlers


VIDEOS: (1) News about Newborns; (2) Cooing, crying and cuddling: Infant brain development (3) Growing minds: Cognitive development in early childhood

**Week 10 (March 10)**  
*SW Practice w/ Pre-School and Early School-Aged children*  
Pelcovitz, David (1999). Betrayed by a trusted adult: Structured time-limited group therapy with elementary school children abused by a school employee. Chapter 8


**Choose at least one of the following:**

Davies: Chapter 8: Preschool Development; Chapter 9: Practice in Preschool; Chapter 10: Middle childhood development; Chapter 11: Practice with school-age children

Berk, Laura (2002). *Infants and children (4th ed.*). Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Section V: Middle Childhood: Six to eleven years

**VIDEOS:** (1) *How difficult can this be?*

**Week 11 (March 17) SW Practice w/ Older Children and Pre-Adolescents**

R&F Chapter 8: Methods and practices in school systems


**Week 12 (March 24) SW Practice w/ Adolescence**


**Optional:**

Gibbs et al. Chapter 6: African American Adolescents (by J.T. Gibbs); Chapter 8: Puerto Rican Adolescents (by Inclan and Herron); Chapter 10: Biracial Adolescents (by J.T Gibbs)

**Week 13 (March 31)  Special Issues: Children and divorce**


**Week 14 (April 7)  Special Issues: Children and out-of-home care**

R&F, Chapter 10 Methods and practices in child welfare agencies


Optional:

Boyd Webb Chapter 10: Children in out of home placements; (Review) Chapter 13: Children in substance-disordered families;

**Week 14 (April 7)  Prevention**

R&F Chapter 9 Methods and practices in mental health agencies.


Optional:

(TBA)

**Week 15 (April 14): Summary / Wrap up**