The University of Michigan
School of Social Work

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Course Title: SW Practice with Children and Youth
Course Number: SW 696
Division Number: 764
Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisites: Foundation level practice method course
Location: Required methods course in the Children and Youth in Families and Societies Concentration

Course Description:
This advanced level methods course in the Children and Youth in Families and Societies concentration, builds upon the foundation level practice methods course and prepares students for employment in the many human service delivery systems which address the needs of children, youth, and their families. This crosscutting skills course encompasses both direct/micro (i.e., assessment, intervention, prevention) and indirect/macro (program design, evaluation, administration, community organization, policy analysis) practice methods used to address problems presented by or to children and youth in a variety of contexts. The development of social work skills applicable to promotion, prevention, remediation and social rehabilitation activities with diverse child and youth populations at all levels of intervention will be emphasized.

Course Content:
Effective social work practice with children and youth requires a holistic and multi-leveled approach, an emphasis on prevention and early intervention, and the involvement of families, other primary caretaking adults, and involved professionals, in the identification, development, delivery, and evaluation of services. In addition to being able to assess and intervene with children and youth, social workers must also develop the skills necessary to assess the resources and the risk factors which may exist in the child’s or youth’s family, neighborhood, community, and in the larger social environment. In this course the emphasis of intervention is as much on the context as on the individual. Intervention strategies focus on ways to bring about change at levels such as the classroom or school, the peer group, and the community or population, as well as at the individual level. Indirect practice skills covered in this course are aimed at promoting...
interpersonal competence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, achievement, and moral
development in children and youth by making the contexts within which they develop
more responsive to their developmental needs.

Direct practice methods covered in this course provide students with the skills necessary
to provide short-term interventions, evaluate direct practice, develop service delivery
systems and work effectively with individuals, families and groups in families, institutions
and communities. Skills for engagement, assessment, intervention, prevention, and
evaluation relevant to contexts such as families, neighborhood and community, schools,
group care facilities, residential care, hospitals, correctional programs and institutions,
courts, governmental and nongovernmental agencies will be covered. Intervention
strategies may be derived from a variety of approaches and theoretical perspectives,
self-help and peer support, group work, family life education, empowerment models, and
family preservation. Students will learn to engage and communicate effectively with
children and youth, families and community members, and other service providers.
Assessment skills taught will emphasize the importance of being able to identify special
needs, abuse and neglect, family violence, substance abuse, and circumstances of
extreme stress, danger, or deprivation, and accurately assess the level of risk these
circumstances present for the children or youths concerned. Once the child’s or youth’s
situation has been thoroughly assessed, the student will learn how to design individual
programs of intervention that are based on clearly articulated goals and priorities.
Throughout the course, cultural competence and sensitivity to differences among
families and the impact of worker/client differences in values, experiences, and power
will be emphasized. In addition, the student will learn to understand the significance of
“multiple identities” (the interaction of factors such as age, ability, personality,
environmental conditions, ethnicity, citizenship and immigration status, social class,
gender, sexual orientation and religion) in shaping the uniqueness of families and
individuals.

Indirect practice methods covered in this course include skills applicable to the areas of
community organization and development, administration, policy and planning, and
research and evaluation. Presentation of material from these areas recognizes the
importance of working with multidisciplinary teams, service delivery agencies, and formal
and informal community systems, in order to obtain necessary resources and support
services for children and youth. Specific skills addressed include advocacy, needs
assessment, working collaboratively with community agency and groups, administrative
and supervisory issues impacting service delivery, budgeting and fiscal issues, program
design and development, program and practice research and evaluation, and child and
youth policy analysis.

Course Objectives:

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

1. Apply an ecological perspective to social work practice with children and youth.
2. Effectively communicate with and establish collaborative relationships with children
   and youth, their families, and other significant members of their social environment.
3. Apply collaboration building and consultation skills to strengthen families and
   organize communities in response to the needs of children and youth.
4. Assess risks to the child’s or youth’s safety, health, security, and well-being, and identify the strengths and resources available in the child’s environment to address these concerns.

5. Plan and demonstrate micro and macro interventions which are based on identifiable goals and priorities in a culturally sensitive and culturally competent manner.

6. Incorporate social work values and ethical principles in planning and implementing interventions for children and youth.

Course Design:

This course instructor will select readings and design assignments for the course. Various classroom teaching strategies may be used, including lecture, multimedia presentations, small and large group discussion, presentations by students and guest lecturers, role-plays, and experiential exercises. Students’ experiences in the field will be utilized as much as possible in assignments and case presentations and discussions.

Relationship to curricular themes:

a. **Multicultural and diversity issues** will be emphasized throughout this course, not only in relationship to direct intervention with children and youth and their families and communities, but also in regard to the need to develop and maintain effective collaborative relationships with other community resources and service providers. Students will learn to recognize the existence of group differences in a number of areas (such as nonverbal communication, individual and family values, family and community structures, preferred and accepted responses to crisis, response to exclusion or oppression) and how these may impact intervention relationships with children, youth, and their families.

b. **Social change and social justice issues** will be addressed in relationship to children and youth as populations who experience vulnerability due to developmental and status factors (i.e., age and dependence), in addition to other impacts they may experience due to membership in other groups which encounter exclusion and discrimination. In recognition of this, abuses of power within the family (i.e., domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse and exploitation) will be addressed as issues related to social justice and human rights, and not just as indicators of individual and family psychopathology. Advocacy for children and youth, especially those whose families and communities are particularly impacted by social inequality and social injustice, will be emphasized at individual, family, organizational, community, and policy levels.

c. **Promotion and prevention** are particularly important for child and youth populations, due to the increased likelihood of negative outcomes as services or interventions are delayed, and the “time-limited” nature of childhood and youth. These areas are addressed in the direct practice areas through family life education, family preservation activities, screening early identification of children at risk, and family and community based early intervention with children and youth in a variety of contexts. At the indirect practice level, program development and evaluation, staff and professional training, fiscal and economic issues and policy analysis addresses the relationship between policy decisions and risks to children and youth.
d. Social science knowledge is presented as the necessary basis for conducting empirically grounded assessment, intervention and evaluation practice at all levels of intervention. Course materials draw upon research knowledge from a variety of social sciences, as well as other professions and disciplines (i.e., social work, medicine, psychology, sociology, economics, law, etc.), and emphasize the need for multidisciplinary collaboration and communication around issues related to children and youth. Social science research concepts and methods are described in relationship to both social work practice and program evaluation processes.

Relationship of this course to Social Work Ethics and Values:
Practice with children and youth requires considerable attention to issues of ethics and values, due to the special challenges these populations offer the social work practitioner. For example, confidentiality cannot be maintained when suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported, and issues of self-determination and autonomy often arise when an adolescent discloses important information that has not been shared with a parent or other responsible adult. Social work values and social science knowledge may also conflict with the child-rearing beliefs and practices of some cultural or religious groups. Resource limitations or lack of training or sensitivity may result in inappropriate treatment for some children or youth and their families, and others may be excluded entirely. Finally, social policy decisions significantly affect the lives of children and youth, the stability of their families and communities, and their access to resources and services. Although this course emphasizes, in relationship to each of the substantive areas outlined above, the importance of examining the complexities of ethical and value issues as they apply to the problems of children and youth; social work values and ethics, as outlined in the professional Code of Ethics, are presented as the necessary and appropriate guidelines for practice when ethical dilemmas arise in social work practice.

Course Requirements:

1) Attend each session, absences will lower your grade since:
   a) Some material considered essential to achieving the objectives of the course will only be presented in class
   b) Class discussions and participation in exercises are considered an important part of your learning experience.

Class attendance and participation in class discussions and skill development sessions 10 %

2) Class presentation- Sign up in class 20%

3) Practice/Research Literature Review Paper –Specialized Child/Youth Population Focus
   Due:  June 9, 2003 40%

4) Training Module/Community Change/Advocacy-Skills in Action - Small Group Assignment
   Due:  July 14 and July 21 30%
Required Course Readings:

A course packet of required readings is available for purchase at Dollar Bill’s. One set of the readings is also located on Reserve at the School of Social Work Library.

Class Schedule:

May 5 and 12
The Context – Children and Youth Social Work Practice
The Ecological Perspective
Prevention and Intervention Strategies – Framework for Understanding
Professional Change Efforts
Communication Across Cultures/Valuing Diversity
Social Change and Social Justice Issues in Working with Children/Youth and Families


May 19
Interagency Collaboration, Cross System Interventions and Systems of Care Framework
Skills in Communicating and Establishing Relationships with Children, Youth and Families
Evaluating the State of Practice


**June 2**

**Early Interventions and Prevention Services for Special Children and Youth Populations**

**Developmental Disabilities Sector and Children/Youth living in Poverty**


**June 9**

**The Mental Health and the School Based Sectors- Effective Interventions and Preventive Approaches**

**Research Paper Due**


June 16
Continuation of the Mental Health Sector/School Based Sectors for Prevention and Intervention


Burns, B. (1999) A call for a mental health services research agenda for youth with serious emotional disturbance. Mental Health Services Research 1/1, 5-20.

June 23 and June 30
The Child Welfare Sector – Prevention and Intervention


July 7
Working with Adolescents
The Juvenile Justice Sector and Substance Abuse Sector-Prevention and Intervention
Special Issues for Gay and Lesbian Youth
Alliance Building with Adolescents and their families


July 14 and 21
Small Group Presentations - Training Module/Community Change/Advocacy
End of Semester Course Evaluation
Assignments

Individual Class Presentation/Class Discussion  (sign up in class)  

20%

Each student will be required to do a class presentation on two articles selected from the required readings.

a) The first part of the presentation will be an “unpacking” of the articles’ content as it relates to our course content, curricular themes, and specific weekly topic. A PowerPoint presentation used during your presentation is an aid to classmates and highly recommended. This part of the presentation will be 15-20 minutes in length.

b) The second part of the assignment is to provide relevant discussion questions and to lead/facilitate a whole class or small group discussion relevant to your articles/topic. If you provide me with your materials in class, one week in advance of your presentation, I can make copies. Otherwise you are responsible for making discussion questions available to the class.

c) A third part of this assignment is a 3-5 page paper summarizing the main points of your presentation (brief summary of articles, relationship to course content, curricular themes, and specific weekly topic.) This paper, along with a copy of your discussion questions is due on the date of your presentation.

Due to class size and time constraints, presentations must be made on the date you sign up for. If, due to illness or other emergency, you must make a change, it is up to you to arrange to switch with a classmate and to notify me at least one week prior to the presentation.

Practice/Research Literature Review Paper –Specialized Child/Youth Population Focus

Due:  June 9                      40%

Select a topic that focuses on a particular population of children/youth.

Conduct an extensive practice/research literature review of this special population using primarily peer-reviewed journal articles and selected documents or books. In order to be current, these sources should have been published in the last ten years.

Integrate the findings from your review under the following themes:

1. Understanding the Context and Challenges for the Special Population – (Special emphasis on multicultural, diversity and social justice issues in this section)
2. Current Prevention and Intervention Practices/Research with this Special Population (Address the strengths and limitations of the practice/research literature as one examines the diversity within the special population)
3. Policy/Advocacy Issues – with a special emphasis on social change efforts

This paper will be approximately 12 pages (typed 12 pt font, double spaced, and proofread) and must include a minimum of 8 references cited using APA style.
Training Module/Community Change/Advocacy-Skills in Action - Small Group Assignment
Due: July 14 and 21 30%

You will work with three or four other class members on development of a training module for working with a special child/youth population or a community assets/neighborhood based change effort or an advocacy initiative for policy change focusing on a sub-population of children/youth.

You will have 30-40 minutes to present your work to the class. During the in-class presentation your group needs to establish the context for the effort. If your group selects to develop a training module than your group will present one component of training to the class. If your group selects to examine a community assets/neighborhood change effort then your group will engage the class in one of the community change efforts (e.g., nominal group process, community forum). If your group selects to engage in an advocacy initiative for policy change your group might decide to engage in testifying before a policy making board in the class presentation.

Each group will submit a summary of the task work of the group, the actual intervention proposed, and an outline of the activities that the group would engage in the training/change initiative.
(5 pages)