SW 614 Uses and Implications of Psychological Testing in Social Work

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Course Description:

This class presents psychological testing as applied in educational and mental health settings. It covers some of the historical development of testing, its social functions, the technology of testing, and tests commonly used in schools and clinics. Social consequences of testing, legal, and public policy issues are also discussed. Given that SW 614 fulfills a requirement for eligibility to become a school social worker, the primary emphasis of this course will be on learning testing and assessment information that will be useful in working in the public schools as a school social worker.

The course will include lectures, demonstrations, readings, and discussions regarding a broad range of assessment issues. Case examples will be presented and discussed and students are encouraged to contribute examples of assessment issues and concerns for discussion. In addition to the course material, I am aware that, as a current clinician and school psychologist, I will also be conveying a style and viewpoint of professional practice which may provide an additional model for students as they develop their own identity as a social worker.

Course Content:

The content of the course will cover a range of types of assessment techniques focusing on cognitive, learning, projective, personality, rating scale, preschool, neurological, occupational and behavioral assessment approaches. In addition to formal psychological testing, the course will also discuss an array of assessment approaches that are relevant to serving as a school social worker. Particular objectives for the course are listed below:

Course Objectives:

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

1. Understand the uses of testing and assessment instruments commonly used in mental health and, particularly, in educational settings.
2. Understand the results and interpretations of commonly used psychological tests, and the relationship of this information to the assessment data that is generated by other professionals on an assessment team i.e., social workers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, etc.

3. Understand the ethical issues related to the use of testing materials and results.

4. Understand and use assessment instruments that are appropriate for social work evaluations.

5. Understand the limitations of testing data including test reliability, validity, measurement error, and test bias, and assessment issues related to minority populations.

6. Understand the relationship of tests and testing to the goals of the client, the agency, the community, and the applicable laws and regulations, particularly special education rules.

7. Understand the dynamics of sharing assessment results with clients and families and its impact on placement, program planning, and treatment or interventions.

8. Understand theories of personality, intelligence, learning, communication, and diagnostic systems such that testing and assessment information can be understood in a theoretical context.

9. Understand assessment issues related to special populations/disorders.

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:**

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be explored through investigating the relationship between types of testing and its potential for differential impact on racial, gender, disabled and ethnic populations. This will include discussions of incidents of the inappropriate use of testing, both past and present as it pertains to minority populations.

- *Social Justice and Social Change* and it’s relationship to testing and assessment will be explored particularly as it relates to the impact of assessment methods on inappropriate labeling and/or placement decisions. Emphasis will also be placed on exploring the current national campaign for accountability through systematic testing and the resulting misuse of testing. The impact of intervening variables in test results will also be discussed particularly as they relate to students and communities that are of lower socioeconomic characteristics.

- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* and the role of testing and measurement will be explored with particular emphasis on the limits of test results in making decisions regarding diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitative decisions.
• Behavioral and Social Science Research will be presented in this course to support the theoretical, statistical, and clinical basis for test designs and assessment procedures. Research will also be referenced regarding the beneficial as well as the inappropriate use of tests in particular situations.

**Relationship of the 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 their parents, and colleagues. The NASW Code of Ethics, and the Ethical Standards of the American Psychological Association documents will be used to give students direction about these ethical issues. In addition, relevant federal guidelines as put forth in the Individuals with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act will be reviewed in light of their impact on ethical issues related to assessment.

**Textbooks:**

Required:


Recommended:


**Requirements:**

1. Midterm: take-home exam

2. Final: in class exam

3. Good attendance

4. Class participation

5. Paper (10-12 pages) on topic related to testing and measurement

Requirements #1 through #4 are required activities to be in the B range and only
the B range. To have an opportunity to receive a grade in the A range you must also complete requirement #5. Completing #s 1 through 5 does not insure a grade in the A range, it only provides an opportunity for a grade in the A range. For those who elect to do the paper, due date is June 30.

**Schedule:**

**May 5th**  Introduction to Testing and Measurement  
- History of psychological testing  
- The domain of testing, and testing in perspective  
- Ethical and legal issues in testing  
- Issues of test bias regarding different populations  
- Federal laws relevant to testing and assessment  

**May 12th**  Psychometrics (Wodrich; chap. 1)  
- Test construction  
- Reliability, validity  
- Normal curve, standard deviation  
- Understanding test scores, score conversion, test results  
- Error factors, and limitations of test score interpretation  

**May 19th**  Intelligence Testing (Wodrich, p. 103-131, 93-97, 84-86, 142-144)  
- Intelligence theory, history, and controversy  
- The WISC III  
- Mental Impairment  
- Other cognitive tests  
- Nonverbal IQ tests  
- “Multiple intelligences”, “emotional intelligence”  

**May 26th**  Memorial Day Break  

**June 2nd**  Achievement Testing and Learning Theory (Wodrich, Chap. 6)  
- Learning Disabilities  
- Achievement testing (WIAT, WRAT, WJ 3rd)  
- History, controversy, uses, and limitations  
- Basic learning theory, and academic interventions  
**Midterm Exam Handed out**  

**June 9th**  Adaptive, Visual-motor, and Memory Assessment (Wodrich, p. 80-84, 4, 133-142)  
- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale  
- Bender-Gestalt, Visual-Motor Integration Test  
- Memory Scales: Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning  
**Midterm Exam Must Be Returned**
June 16th  Preschool Assessment and Developmental Disorders (Wodrich, Chap. 3, Wodrich, p. 42-47)
- Assessment of cognitive functioning and developmental level
- Temperament
- Developmental disorders
- Interviewing preschoolers, working with parents

June 23rd  Behavior Rating Scales, Questionnaires, and Structured Interviews (Wodrich; 206-217)
- Behavior Rating Scales: broad spectrum and disorder specific
- Self Report Inventories
- Structured Interviews

- Projective testing: Rorschach, TAT, RATC
- Projective testing: Sentence Completion, projective drawings
- Objective measures: MMPI II
- Personality dimension models: NEO

Due Date: Optional Paper Must Be Handed In

July 7th  Neurological, Speech and Language, and Occupational Assessment (Wodrich, and p. 245-288)
- Domain of Neuropsychological assessment
- Domain of speech and language assessment
- Domain of Occupational assessment

July 14th  Behavioral and Emotional Assessment (Wodrich, p.289-305)
- General considerations: diagnostic systems, bias, referral processes
- E.I. evaluations, “Social Maladjustment”
- Mental Status Exam
- Taking a history
- Classroom observations, file reviews
- Strategies for working in the schools
- Particular assessment issues related to particular disorders

July 21st  Final Exam