Interpersonal Practice for Issues of Concern for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered People

Social Work Course # 707: Fall, 2003, 3816 SWB. Thursdays 2-5. Version 1

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I use e-mail frequently and find it a quick way to get back to students about specific questions. I check e-mail every day that I am on campus. I will also be available for the occasional scheduled 1:1 consultation either in person or on the WWW. Please do not call me at home, rather leave a message on my office machine.

Course Description
This course addresses issues of concern in interpersonal practice with clients that identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered or Non Straight or Questioning (LGBTNSQ). This course builds on basic IP skills and knowledge of, primarily, individual therapy. Issues which are of greater concern, or for which services and in some cases, knowledge are lacking, for these groups, include the development of sexual identity, coming out, social stigma, substance abuse, HIV and AIDS, the interaction of discrimination due to gender and/or ethnicity with the discrimination due to sexual orientation, violence within relationships and violence against these groups, discrimination on the basis of orientation, suicide, family development and parenting, passing and community interaction, and policy. The course tightly focuses on skills needed for working with these specific issues.

As I reflect on this course in its 5th iteration, I find that I cannot fit many topics and wish to be able to do so. I need your help to include some of these in discussion, readings and journaling. These topics include religion, more depth on bi-sexuality, and further work on internalized homophobia, politics, violence against LGBT people and many other issues. We are limited by time and needs. So, please help us all learn bringing these and other important topics into the classroom.
Course Design
Methods of learning will include: lecture, discussion, debate, guest speakers, exercises and journaling.

Course Content
Content of this course will include basic statistics and current up to date knowledge about how each of the issues above, as well as others, is of special concern to LGBTNSQ clients. Issues of the processes of treatment will be reviewed in light of the information covered. For example, assessment looks different when we change the personal pronouns in our questions and use the information presented in the course. Knowledge of the coming out process would lead a clinician assessing a suicidal adolescent to understand that the issue of sexual identity must be discussed as a possible exacerbating factor. The processes of advertising, altering accessibility and working within religious and other communities with LGBTNSQ clients will be discussed. Even treatment evaluation is altered due to special concerns about outing a client within a given agency.

Ethical considerations of practice with LGBTNSQ clients will also be thoroughly reviewed throughout the course (e.g., caution about outing clients in a group supervision session or seeing clients in different context in a small community). Students will also have many opportunities to review their own biases and prejudices about sexual orientation and gender identity in assignments and discussions.

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

I. Comprehend and critically analyze theories regarding the development of sexual identity.

II. Articulate the basic areas of concerns covered by the course and the points of special relevancy for LGBTNSQ clients (e.g., hostility, rejection, authenticity, suicide, substance abuse).

III. Demonstrate sound and sensitive therapy skills for some of the issues in the course.

IV. Articulate social work ethical values regarding practice with LGBTNSQ clients.

V. Describe the impact of characteristics of economic class, culture, ethnicity, gender, disability status, religion, and age on LGBTNSQ clients.

VI. Write about and summarily describe the latest research and detailed therapy methods for some of the issues described in the course.
VII. Address questions, concerns and biases regarding sexual orientation’s intersection with the issues in the course when working with clients (e.g., being able to discriminate between issues that are related to sexual orientation and those that are not).

**Curricular Themes**

A. **Multiculturalism and Diversity:** Students will learn and be able to discuss and exemplify sensitivity to, in role play, the impact that gender, race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, education, geography (rural vs. urban) and other variables may have on LGBTNSQ clients and intersect with the primary issues discussed in the course. Critical concepts within the course will include positional, critical consciousness and intersectionality.

B. **Social Change and Social Justice:** Social Workers must be able to empower, interpret actions, take and be aware of intersections of therapy issues and actions towards social justice. In working with LGBTNSQ clients, students will learn that they may be working toward social change and improvement of social justice in an agency or community. The impact of such work will be discussed in class. Students will also learn about the fight for social justice that this client population has made and is making. Finally students will discuss how to empower themselves and others as well as victims of social injustice to work against oppression.

C. **Promotion and Prevention:** Students will learn skills for health and mental health promotion and prevention of problems, particularly in dealing with the issues of substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, sexual identity development and discrimination.

D. **Social Science:** The readings for this course are extensive and evaluation of the current state of science is an integral part of understanding the research and methodology constraints and limits for LGBTNSQ issues and treatment concerns. Students will learn about and analyze the strength of science in the areas the course covers. In addition, evaluation of treatment will be reviewed and special issues of evaluating therapy with LGBTNSQ clients will be emphasized.

**Relationship of this course to Social Work Ethics and Values**

This course is an example of the value social work places on diversity and work with oppressed populations. NASW ethics will be reviewed in relationship to working with LGBT clients and evaluation of practice. These ethics will be analyzed for potential weaknesses and misuse as well as for use as guides to practice. The struggle of LGBTNSQ clients to be recognized as a client population and the struggles of practitioners and researchers working with these issues will also be discussed.

**Instructor Responsibilities**
The instructor will facilitate the course objectives by completing the following tasks.

1. Collaboration with the students as responsible adult learners regarding the course process, structure and content.

2. Provision of USEFUL and constructive feedback for student's work, especially for any skill building effort.

3. Struggle with students towards the goal of becoming a group of critical thinkers regarding practice with LGBT individuals.

4. Provision and maintenance of a safe forum for discussion and learning.

5. Availability for and responsiveness to student questions and regular student evaluation and feedback.

Student Responsibilities*

1. Be on time and prepared with an integrative concept from readings and assignments aimed at responding to the week's focus questions.

2. Function as a team member in the following areas:
   ♦ preparation
   ♦ appropriate treatment of others and safe behavior in the classroom

3. Complete class assignments, as outlined below, in a timely, heuristic and high quality fashion.

* I see each student as responsible for his/her learning experience. We, as a team and the group as a whole must contribute to the experience, but the student is ultimately responsible for the depth, challenge and enjoyment of learning. If you are interested in discussing alternate or additional assignments, readings, requirements and the like, I welcome you to speak with me about possibilities or ideas that you may have. This is unlikely to lessen one's work load, but may fit your needs and interests best.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, I encourage you to contact me at your earliest convenience. Many aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way that I teach can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress throughout the semester. The earlier you make me aware of your needs, the more effectively we will be able to use the resources available to us, such as the services for Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site, and the like. If you do
decide to disclose your disability, I will (to the extent permitted by law) treat that information as private and confidential.

**Student Assignments**

**20% Contribute to the class seminar**

This part of your grade will be evaluated by the instructor. Attend and be active in lectures and discussion. Read the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them and to role play skills.

Be prepared to answer questions by the instructor. Be prepared to ask intelligent and sensitive questions of the speakers!

*Included in this part of your grade is bringing in 2 newspaper articles or other sources covering GLBTNSQ issues for class on October 16th & The Pink Triangle Exercise (see the last page of this document – due October 30th – in your journal for that week.*

**5% One page description of your individualized assignment: OCTOBER 2nd**

This assignment must be meaningful to you and reflect your new knowledge in this area. The project must stretch the knowledge you have about LGBT clients and their issues in therapy. In the overview of your assignment, I will be looking for the following in 1-3 pages. Please be as clear as possible.

1. Title
2. Medium or media (paper, photo, electronic, video, multimedia, etc.) and proposed length
3. Rationale behind the assignment: what are you trying to accomplish, what are you trying to learn and how will it be useful to your understanding of LGBT clients and their issues in therapy.
4. How your project will reflect course materials and use the course experiences to accomplish your objectives for this assignment

**5% First draft of your individualized assignment: OCTOBER 30th**

This assignment will allow you to “run things” by the instructor for feedback. Feedback will be offered on how well you are meeting your goals and suggestions will be offered to assist in clarity, completion, finding resources, etc.

**35% Final Individualized Assignment: DECEMBER 4rth**

**35% Journals. JOURNALS MUST BE WRITTEN EVERY WEEK OF CLASS.**

Please note that journal should be written in weekly - the day of class is best and quality degrades with every day you wait after class. I recommend scheduling time every week the day of or the day after class. Even if you miss a class they must then focus upon the reading and notes from class members. Journals should reflect the following, please note that 1-2 build up and are essentially included in number 3. See a later page for the ‘journal checklist’ to help you keep track of what you write in the journals.
1. Thoughts that reflect that you read the material and have carefully and critically considered it- problems, questions and what the authors could have said- should have said - might have said - about the written materials. **What did you think about it?**  
**What might others say about the topic and the materials based on your knowledge? What have you read that makes you see this differently and how so?**

2. Feelings about the class experience, about what you are learning and experiencing in the classroom and in relationship to the materials. **How does the learning feel??**  
**Where is it going?**

3 **Conclusions about a given week that INTEGRATE material, STRETCH your thinking through feelings and passions, GROW new seeds and thoughts in your mind that go beyond the material rather than just reflecting it.**  
NOTE: If this is well done, the first three will also be accomplished.

4 Finally, you should **ask 3-5 questions** that you are led to from the class readings, your class experience, the class lectures and speakers and your own reading and experience.  
**PLEASE DO NOT FORGET THE QUESTIONS!!**

The journals can be hand written, if you write legibly. I will comment on this after you hand in the first journal. **Drawings, collages, doodles, pictures, whatever are also more than welcome.** The text needs to be neat and readable. Two plus pages per week is about right, more is ok, less may be a problem depending on how well you write and express yourself.

The journals will be handed in every 2-3 weeks. Please see below for more details.

A partial pseudo sample:  
**Dr B. - this week when I saw the speakers I remembered the reading on the horrible experiences that Transgendered clients can have in their childhood. Going back to out discussions about counter transference with Dr. Albucher, I wondered, would I have the ability to hear the trauma of the halted, smashed, disrupted and culturally stifled need to be a different physical sex? I shudder as I think about it.**

**But, then seeing Melissa and her friends be so gleeful and happy and playful made me feel differently in retrospect as a result of this analysis.....**

**Additionally, I found the book, Transgendered warriors, as you suggested. In that book, the author shares - I think... this made me feel...**

**The next questions I have based on all this are...**
**Texts & Readings:** There are three required texts. The texts are available at The Common Language Book Store located at 215 S 4rth Avenue, 734-663-0036. They do ship books. They typically do not open until 10am. Please spend some time in the bookstore, if you are unfamiliar with it.

**Required:**

**Strongly Recommended:**

**Course pack:** The recommend articles are on reserve at the UM SSW library. There is no purchasable course pack (it would be very expensive). The reader may be out of order, but most of the articles are there!

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**Week by Week Description and Focus Questions (which may help with the journals)**

**September 4: Fears, phobias and foibles.**
This week will be a class introduction; to each other, to the seminar and to the content and reading strategies of the course. We will spend some time building a group in order to enhance learning as an adventure! Introduction to symbols and terms. Ground rules. Heteronormativity and internalized phobias, heterosexism & "compulsory heterosexuality." *Start reading!!*

**September 11: Issues of Skills and Privilege:** The skills of therapy and how they may need to be adapted for working with LGBT clients will be discussed. This week reactions of therapists and agencies to LGBT people and therapist anxiety will be discussed. Privilege and addressing it in treatment will also be explored. Finally a bit of how these intersect with boundaries will be explored.

Silverstein, 3, 5 & 18
Garnets & Kimmel: Part IV (pages 349-440)

Recommended:

**September 18: Culture & History: Therapy**
Getting on the same ground regarding vocabulary (sex, sexual identity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation). The intersection of definitions, popular culture and our own beliefs as social workers. Homophobia and transphobia. Local statutes, policies and debates. Basic issues regarding treatment.

_Guests: Jim Toy & company_

Recommended:
- NASW Social Work Ethics

**September 25: The sex in sexual orientation.**
What is it we, as a culture and profession, are so concerned about in working with LGBT clients?

This week we will also practice therapy skills using role play. If you have particular situations that you want to discuss, please let me know in advance! If you bought the recommended book- **Whitman & Boyd**, bring it in for practice with exercises in treatment.

Silverstein, Chapter 1, 14, 5 & 15

Recommended:
October 2: Identity development and coming out of the closet.
The therapy challenges of coming out. What is sexual identity? How is sexual identity developed? How is it considered by science and by society?
One page description of your individualized assignment due today

Garnets & Kimmel: Part III (pages 217-348)

Recommended:
October 9: HIV
What are the latest trends in data on HIV in America and internationally? Is HIV a Gay disease any longer? What are the latest treatments? Is there any hope treatment of super strains of HIV?

Guest: HIV/AIDS with Larry Gant, Ph.D.

Recommended:

October 16: Legal issues and Politics.
Where are the best places to get insurance? What legal issues such as wills and agreements need special consideration for GLBT clients?

Please bring in two articles or books or whatever to share special issues, concerns/areas with the class. You will have 5-10 minutes to discuss what the material is and how and why it is relevant to the class. Please type up and have copied for the class a reference sheet.

Hand in journals 4 - 6 today

Speaker: Stephen Rassi

October 23: Breast Cancer
Health problems have decimated and destroyed many individuals and families. There is much special knowledge needed to understand, assess, treat and grieve appropriately. Today will
follow up from Dr. Gant’s lecture on October 9th with a focus on dealing with illness in treatment and grieving processes.

Silverstein, Chapter 17 & 13
Garnets & Kimmel: Part IV (pages 563-646)

Recommended:

**October 30: Substance abuse and suicide.**
Substance abuse and suicide may be serious problems for LGBT clients due to the oppression they suffer. What can we do to understand and help with these life threatening problems?

We will also discuss the Pink Triangle exercise.

**First draft of final assignment due today**

**Hand in journals 7 & 8 today**

Garnets & Kimmel: Part III (pages 217-348)
Silverstein, Chapter 8

Recommended:

What is it we, as a culture and profession, are so concerned about in working with LGBT clients

**November 6: Issues and concerns specific to Transgendered clients**
Transgendered clients are rarely seen, but knowledge of them is critical. How does a Transgendered person feel? Where and how can they get help? When is surgery warranted? What pre-surgical treatment is useful? Benjamin standards of care

*Guests- Melisa and other Crossroads members*

*In your journals for today please discuss the text assigned for today and the class experience.*


Recommended:

**November 13: Play day**
Today we will catch up on any lost topics and focus heavily on skills via several role plays.

**November 20: What is a family? Family issues and development.**
Family therapy with non heterosexual families. Is there a change in power, in the understanding of family based about orientation? Children & parenting therapy issues of LGBT parents. Concerns about having a child become or learn to be LGB or T. What’s happening with marriage, single parent adoption and other issues?

*Guests: Dennis*

Hand in journals 9, 10 & 11 today

Silverstein, Chapter 2 & 15
Garnets & Kimmel: Part V (pages 441-562)

Recommended:
November 27: Thanksgiving Holiday

December 4: Aging and conclusions.
It is quite clear that if there are so many LGBT people that there must be more aging LGBT people as the population over 60 increases in general. What are their special needs, concerns and issues?

Final assignment due today!!!
Hand in final journal (12) today.
Guests: Don Pelz

Silverstein, chapter 18
Garnets & Kimmel: Part VI (pages 563-646)

Recommended:
- Garnets and Kimmel, 500-534, 599-604
The Pink Triangle Exercise

This is a simple exercise in concept. For a 3-5 hour period I want you to experience or to consider experiencing another’s position. I want every student to be safe and to be careful as hate crimes and discriminatory practices are quite common against LGBT people. So, if this is scary or you cannot do this in a safe way, please write your thoughts on why you made the choice and include emotions, thoughts, considerations etc. as described below.

Otherwise - for a 3-5 hour period spend time as someone of a different and openly identifiable orientation than yours. So, walk in a mall, or on the diagonal holding hands of someone of a different gender than you might usually choose to. Or add GLBT paraphernalia to your clothes or backpack or consider taking the same off. Act straight or non straight. Go somewhere where people of your sexual orientation do not go - I do not recommend a bar, but rather a special event or store or part of town. Observe, take notes, and learn.

Please write up the following in 2 - 4 pages.
1. What did you do/not do?
2. For how long did you do this?
3. How did it feel?
4. What did you learn? This is critical- for example if you passed as straight and usually do not and know what that is like, this is an opportunity to really examine that- how did you feel about passing- what did it mean to you - to others? This analysis, from a critical perspective is the essence of this assignment. Please spend time on this and be careful in your thoughts.
Journal weekly checklist
(to help you recall what goes into the journal each week)

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Thoughts?</th>
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<th>Conclusions?</th>
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1. Thoughts that reflect that you read the material and have carefully and critically considered it- problems, questions and what the authors could have said- should have said - might have said - about the written materials. **What did you think about it? What might others say about the topic and the materials based on your knowledge? What have you read that makes you see this differently and how so?**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th>Class topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Journal due dates¹</th>
<th>Silverstein</th>
<th>Garnets &amp; Kimmel</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Sept 4</td>
<td>Fears and intro.</td>
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<td>Part 1 &amp; APA statement (756-784)</td>
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<td>Jim &amp; Co.</td>
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<td>Sex</td>
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<td>If you bought the recommended book Whitman &amp; Boyd, bring it in for practice with exercises in treatment</td>
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<td>Oct 2</td>
<td>Identity development &amp; coming out</td>
<td>One page description of final project due</td>
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<td>Part III (pages 217-348)</td>
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<td>Oct 9</td>
<td>Larry Gant</td>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>2 articles/books/ etc. to share</td>
<td>4 - 6 due</td>
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<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>Legal issues plus</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 23</td>
<td>Breast Cancer</td>
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<td>Part IV (pages 563-646)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 30</td>
<td>Substance abuse and suicide</td>
<td>First draft of final due. Be prepared to discuss the Pink Triangle exercise today</td>
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<td>7 &amp; 8 due</td>
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<td>Nov 6</td>
<td>Crossroads</td>
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<td>Play day</td>
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<td>Dennis</td>
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<td>Part V (pages 441-562)</td>
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<td>Thanksgiving!!</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Dec 4</td>
<td>Don Pelz</td>
<td>Final assignment due today</td>
<td>Final journal (12) due</td>
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<td>Part VI (pages 563-646)</td>
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