Course Description

This course takes a multicultural and critical perspective on understanding individuals, families, and their interpersonal and group relationships; lifespan development; theories of well-being, stress, and coping and adaptation. The emphasis within this course is on knowledge about individuals and small social systems and the implications of this knowledge for all domains of social work practice. Students will be introduced to the concepts of risk and protective factors, with relevant examples at the individual and small group levels. Students will also consider the implications of this knowledge for intervening in social problems and supporting rehabilitation once problems have developed. Major components will be concerned with the processes of oppression, privilege, and discrimination and factors that help peoples and small social systems change. The knowledge presented will include the inter-relationships between smaller and larger social systems, and in particular, how biological factors and the larger social and physical environments shape and influence individual and family well-being.

Course Content

Content will include selected theories of human behavior, human development, families and small groups, and individual and small system change. Students will consider how relevant concepts have been developed, the types of knowledge and data that inform different theories, and current gaps and controversies in biological, behavioral, and social science knowledge and theory. The course will emphasize similarities and differences related to human diversity and dynamics of oppression and privilege. An important aspect is to emphasize how individual and small system factors and processes can facilitate attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, family characteristics and group processes that either promote multicultural human well-being and social justice or help to recreate inequities and disease.
Course Objectives

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

1. Demonstrate knowledge about and be able to critically analyze relevant theories of families, small groups, and human behaviors, development, and change through the life course emphasizing similarities and differences and the effects of oppression and

2. Articulate the concepts of risk and protective factors and give examples at the individual, group, and family levels.

3. Describe the impact of such characteristics as economic class, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, and age on risk and protective factors, human development, human interactions, and the structures of small social systems.

4. Identify the inter-relationships between small and larger social systems, and describe how biological factors and larger social and physical environments interact to influence individual and family well-being.

5. Describe how relevant concepts have been socially constructed, what knowledge and empirical evidence supports selected theories, some current gaps in knowledge, and key controversies about these theories and knowledge.

6. Conceptualize how individual and small system factors and processes can either promote multi-cultural human well-being or recreate inequities and problems.

7. Examine theories of individual, family, and group change and their relevance for all types of social work practice towards a multi-cultural and social just world.

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes - to Social Work Values - Ethics

Multiculturalism and Diversity will be addressed through analysis of differences in needs among subgroups within society and the differential application and impact of policies and services.

Social Justice and Social Change will be addressed by considering issues such as the distribution of social security and other benefits, varying standards for assessing the need for intervention (e.g., protective services and guardianship), and differing outcomes for behavior considered harmful to self or others.

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation will be addressed by considering the spectrum of policies and services ranging from promotion and prevention (e.g., pre-retirement
programs and in-home services) to treatment and rehabilitation (e.g., income support for those with inadequate resources and nursing homes).

**Behavioral and Social Science Research** will be addressed by the inclusion of theoretical frameworks for understanding social roles, social stratification, and societal functioning among the elderly. The findings of research studies relevant to the design and evaluation of policies and services for older adults will also be included.

**Social Work Values & Ethics** will be addressed in terms of the extent to which policies and services adequately meet the needs of the individual.

**Course Design**

My hope this term is that we create a climate that fosters “epistemological curiosity”, as Freire describes it. We will teach and learn from one another, drawing on our different perspectives and experiences. We will experiment with new knowledge and skills. We will explore the implications of own multiple identities and our backgrounds as we approach social work. We will consult with each other on our projects and assignments. We will plan for ongoing learning and development.

My background includes years of experience training and teaching students, practitioners and community members. My own training is in active, cooperative and learner-centered pedagogy. I will develop varied approaches to the use of class time and am open to your ideas about how best to use our time.

We will conduct the class in a seminar fashion, which means students will be expected to fully participate in the learning process. Seminars will include a range of activities, lectures, guest speakers, discussions, audiovisuals, and student presentations. The above activities will be integrated at critical points in the semester to facilitate a better understanding of the course content.

**Guidelines for Participation** – Together we will develop guidelines for participation and spend time getting to know each other’s backgrounds and interests. We will revisit and revise our guidelines as needed. Please approach me about revisiting them if you feel that the classroom environment is no longer supportive of epistemological curiosity.

**Course Tools Website** – This course will utilize CourseTools technology to support in class learning. CourseTools Next Generation is here, and I am excited to use it this term. As this is my first time teaching the course, we’ll explore the potential for CourseTools to support the in-class learning in SW 500. To start, we will use the schedule, discussion and announcement features to promote discussion of the course themes, content and activities. Please offer suggestions or ideas as to how we can use this technology to maximize our learning experience.
Special Circumstances – If there are any circumstances that require me and/or the class adapt to your special needs, please consult with me about them.

Religious Observances – Please notify me if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Electronic Devices – Due to their disruptive nature, I request that we turn off cell phones and pagers while in class, as they are disruptive to the learning environment. If you must be on call for an emergency, please let your home or office know that you are only available for emergencies that no one else can handle. Please set devices to vibrate only.

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.

Course Readings

The text for this course is available at Common Language Bookstore, 215 S. Fourth Avenue (downtown Ann Arbor, just off Liberty, phone number (734) 663-0036.


The textbook will be augmented with journal articles and with a novel. With the purchase of your text, you have access to INFOTRAC COLLEGE. INFOTRAC "is a fully searchable online university library containing complete articles and their images." A series of readings available via INFOTRAC is listed within the syllabus and will augment the text. A list of novels that relate stories of characters across the lifespan will be distributed for you to choose from for one of the assignments.

Course Requirements, Assignments & Grading

Writing that expresses information accurately, concisely and in a timely manner is a necessary component of effective social work practice. Therefore, written assignments for this course will be expected according to schedule and will be evaluated for both the content presented and the clarity of the presentation. If serious and unforeseen problems arise that prevent this, please notify me as soon as reasonably possible.
Appropriate referencing is required on all written assignments. Failure to use quotation marks for short quotations or indentations for longer, direct quotes with appropriate citations will result in a grade of zero as will failure to provide citations for indirect quotations. If you do not know how to reference a paper, now is the time to learn. Please seek assistance before you submit your assignments. One source is "Writing Term Papers..." by professor Kossoudji, in your Student Guide to Master's in Social Work Degree Program. See also other appropriate university publications for penalties that may result from scholastic dishonesty such as plagiarism or cheating on tests.

The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association is the style manual to be used by all students. Page ranges given for papers based on work that is double-spaced with one-inch margins and a 12-point font. All papers should be in narrative format.

LSA has a College Writing Workshop with graduate fellows and faculty of the English Composition Board. The Writing Center assists students in completing specific assignments or projects to help in improving academic writing skills. Feel free to use this service. Students have found it very helpful. For further information and an appointment contact:

Sweetland Writing Center
1139 Angell Hall, 1003
734-764-0429

Written assignments are graded according to the following criteria. Please review this section before handing in each of the papers.

Completeness & Thoroughness (30 points)
How fully has the issue been addressed? Has the student sufficiently researched the issue using library resources, interviews, and other means to gain differing perspectives and full knowledge of the issue? Does the paper leave the reader with the impression that major questions have been considered or are important issues not addressed? Has the paper been carefully proofread?

Organization & Clarity (15 points)
Is the paper well written and organized in a logical manner? Are there appropriate transitions between, paragraphs, and sections? Is the sentence structure, syntax, and grammar of appropriate quality for a graduate student? Have subtitles been used to improve organization? Has the student addressed issues in a way that someone unfamiliar with the issue can understand as well as someone knowledgeable about the particular issue?

Referencing (25 points)
Are there a sufficient number of references? Has the theoretical and empirical literature on the subject been incorporated into the paper? Are the references well integrated in the text of the paper? Has referencing been done appropriately and according to the style of the American Psychological Association?
Originality & Creativity (30 points)
Has the student used his or her analytical skills in a way that suggests more than a restatement of what others have said about the issue? Has the student compared, contrasted, and integrated the different viewpoints and material on the subject in a way that shows that she or he has a thorough understanding of the issue? Has the student suggested points that others have not addressed?

The course readings, class activities and assignments are intended to support students in integrating interests, knowledge, and experience with the course content. Building on this, students will engage theorizing – analysis and critique of theories and application of theories to a planned change effort related to students’ interests and experience. An additional theme of the course is to explore how our privileged and oppressed social identities shape our interests, experiences and approach to social work. Students’ final grades will be assessed based on the assignments below according to the following grading scale.

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<td>99-94</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>74-70</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
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Class Participation – 15% of final grade
I believe in the power of peer learning; everyone’s participation is critical for everyone’s learning. Participation includes participation in and providing leadership in classroom discussion, class attendance & punctuality, participation during class activities, consultation with colleagues on assignments, and presentation & discussion of key aspects of your learning this term with the class. This will be assessed not only by attendance and punctuality, but also on quality of participation in the classroom environment.

Classroom Activity
Each student is expected to make one short presentation during the semester. The presentation should be about 10 minutes in length to allow for discussion. Suggested activities:

- Report on a publication about an aspect of life span development from a newspaper article, magazine, or TV show for the general public. Comment about the publication or presentation in terms of what we are discussing about life span development, developmental theories, and disruptions in well-being.
- Report on issues in other cultures, or in this culture in poverty stricken families or families at risk, as they pertain to what we are studying.
- Present notes or consultation notes demonstrating the need to know about developmental theories. Remember, this is not a clinical course and what you said to the client is unnecessary, only the material presented by the client and why knowledge of developmental theory is important.
- Present material related to ways in which experiences of privilege and oppression due to social identities (gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age, ability, sexual orientation, and religion) affect individuals and small social systems.

Integration Papers on Weekly Readings – 15% of final guide
This assignment is an opportunity for you to integrate course content with social work practice, values & ethics, connect the content to what you are learning in other courses & field experience,
practice writing skills and develop the ability to think critically about HBSE knowledge and theory and their importance to social work practice.

Reaction papers should be written in response to supplemental readings that are relevant to your interested and educational goals. The articles have been selected to give students the opportunity to focus more on some area discussed in the text. (While students are expected to read more than one article for the assignments, only one is necessary for the written analysis.)

Integration papers are not book reviews; please do not repeat what authors have said. Instead, integration papers are concise statements on the selected reading, briefly summarizing the featured points and relating them to the theories covered in class, experience in the field or your own personal experience. From this integration, focus on analysis and critique of the article – your thoughts on its shortcomings, strengths, implications for research and/or practice and how it compares to your past learning or experience. Please be sure to use article citation at the beginning of each paper. Integration papers are not to exceed three pages and one is due for each of the units.

Unit 1 – 9 September, 16 September, 23 September, 30 September
Unit 2 – 7 October, 21 October, 28 October
Unit 3 – 4 November, 11 November, 28 November, 25 November, 2 December

**Group Observation and Analysis Paper – 20% of final grade**
This assignment is an opportunity to observe a small group in the school, in a community (of interest or of locality), or in your placement. This could be a social group, informal group, therapeutic group, church group, etc., that meets criteria and structure of a small group as defined in class and the literature. After you have observed the group, you will submit a reflection on what you observed, analyzing and illustrating the various aspects of group theory discussed the readings, class discussions, experiences and additional sources (e.g. membership, leadership, boundaries, norms, roles, decision-making, task vs. maintenance, group process).

Describe, briefly, any human diversity related issues observed during the meeting. Think about the persons constituting the group, those persons attending the meeting, the environment in which the meeting takes place, or the issues dealt with by the group. Be especially sensitive to dynamics around race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age and ability.

This paper should not exceed 6 pages and is due 28 October 2003.

**Family Diversity Analysis Paper – 20% of final grade**
A list of "Selected Diversity Novels" will be distributed. Select and read one of the books listed. Using your book selection, and any journal articles or research reports related to the issues evident in the reading, write an analysis that includes the following elements:

- Discuss how the families represented in the reading are different in terms of structure and/or functions from so-called "traditional" families. Have these differences been greater or less pronounced in the past than they are currently?
Describe briefly the strengths available in the families discussed that could serve as resources for understanding and working with families similar to those reflected in the reading.

Describe the social systems with which the families represented in the reading link or interact (groups, organizations, institutions, community) and discuss the impact of the linkages and interactions for individual family members.

Describe the likely consequences of discrimination and oppression on the ability of the families and their members to reach or maintain optimal stages of life-span development, health, and well-being. Using your knowledge from your social welfare class, suggest a family-centered policy or service that might help remove the barriers presented by discrimination and/or oppression for the families reflected in the reading. [Note: NASW Speaks is also a good resource for this.]

No fewer than ten references are necessary for this paper, although I prefer as many as are necessary to support your paper. As a diversity exercise, be sure to include literature on the group that is discussed in your selected novel. Use required readings, text and outside citations. This paper should be 6-8 pages and is due 18 November 2003.

Multidimensional Framework Integrative Analysis Paper – 30% of final grade

This assignment is intended to allow you to do a personal assessment of your ability to apply the theories that have been presented during the course of the semester. The focus of this paper is the impact of your personal and professional development on various issues related to human behavior and the social environment. This assignment is not designed to force you to reveal information about yourself that you do not want. It is your paper. You have full control of what you include. It is not the point of this exercise to reveal information that you do not feel comfortable revealing. Please address at least the following elements:

• A general description of yourself as a bio-psycho-socio-cultural being. Be sure to address each part of the hyphenated description! State how the overall combination of these characteristics influenced the opportunities and barriers to which you have experienced so far in your life. The assessment models as outlined in Ashford, et al., or any other theories studied during the semester can be used as a guide. Be sure to cover all aspects of human behavior and social environment in your analysis.

• Using theories of models of individual development or identity formation presented in class and/or the text, describe your progress through the life-span to this point in time. That is, where are you now, and what phases have you passed through?

• A brief discussion of the values you bring with you as your progress through phases of your life-span that remain. Discuss briefly whether these values are likely to be strengths or limitations in your professional development as a social worker.

• Designate your family as a focal system. Sketch the significant subsystems that make up the family and show the linkage to the family of influential elements in the supra system.
• Identify at least four groups and organizations in the larger environment that have been influential in your life. (This does not include your family or individual friends.) For each one, briefly describe how it has affected your personal or professional view of the world.

• Identify and briefly describe at least three major events or factors in the larger environment, such as political or social movements or national problems, which have influenced you. For each one, briefly describe how your development and personal and professional worldview were affected.

• Diversity, discrimination and oppression affect everyone, whether they are part of the dominant group or a subordinate group. Describe the impact of diversity, privilege and oppression on your development and your personal and professional worldviews.

Please use no fewer than twelve references from required readings, text and outside citations for this paper, but use as many as you feel are needed to support your thinking. This paper should be 8-10 pages and is due 9 December 2003.

Course Outline

9/2/03 – Class Introductions

UNIT ONE: Conceptual Themes and Theoretical Foundations

9/9/03 – Multidimensional Framework for Assessing Social Functioning
Ashford, J.B., Lecroy, C. W., & Lortie, K. L. Preface & Chapter 1

9/16/03 – Assessing Biological Dimensions

9/23/03 – Assessing Psychological Dimensions

9/30/03 – Assessing Social Functioning
UNIT TWO: Social Contexts

10/7/03 – Families

10/14/03 – Fall Break – No Class!

10/21/03 – Large & Small Groups

10/28/03 – Communities

UNIT THREE: Lifespan Development

11/4/03 – Prenatal & Infancy

11/11/03 – Childhood

11/18/03 – Adolescence

11/25/03 – Young & Middle Adulthood

12/2/03 – Late Adulthood

12/9/03 – Reflection, Evaluation & Termination

Supplemental Class Readings

INFOTRAC Articles (arranged by date according to class topic)

9/9

9/16


9/23


9/30


10/7


11/4


11/11


11/18


11/25


12/2


Recommended Periodicals

Administration in Social Work
Affilia: Journal of Women & Social Work
Child Welfare
Clinical Social Work Journal
Community Mental Health Journal
Computers in Human Services
Families in Society
Family Therapy Networker
Health & Social Work
Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences
(Graduate Library)
Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research
Journal of Community Practice
Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect
Journal of Family Violence
Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services
Journal of Gerontological Social Work
Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community
Journal of Progressive Human Services
Journal of Social Casework

Journal of Social Work Education
Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare
Labor Notes
New Social Worker
Public Welfare
Prevention in Human Services
Research on Social Work Practice
Social Security Bulletin
Social Service Review
Social Work
Social Work in Education
Social Work in Health Care
Social Work Research

Inactive Titles: Social Work

Social Work Research

Selected Diversity Novels

African American Experiences


**Asian American Experiences**


**Hispanic Experiences**


**Native American Experiences**


**Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Experiences**


**European American Experience**

