The University of Michigan School of Social Work

SW 605-002: Infant and Child Development and Behavior

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Class Time: 8-11am, Tuesdays
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1. Course Description

This course will focus on biological, psychological, and social experiences, challenges, and changes characteristic of the first decade of life viewed from a multicultural perspective. “Normal” development, as well as the prevalence, etiology, and prevention of a variety of developmental concerns and problem behaviors will be reviewed. Emphasis will be placed on the integration of research and practice, with particular attention to the development of resiliency and social competence among infants and children. This course will also analyze how various environmental influences such as parental circumstances and behavior, poverty, and social justice issues impact infant and child development.

2. Course Content

This course will present developmental and social systems frameworks for assessing human development during the early stages of the life span. Individual development will be considered within the context of human relationships and particular social environments. Emphasis will be placed on fostering the student’s understanding of how culture and biology interact to promote or inhibit adaptation and coping at particular life stages within social settings. Human development from conception through the transition to adolescence will be explored through a variety of topics including: ecology of the family as a context of human development, biological aspects of development, family and care-giving
relationships, social risk factors and resilience, peer relationships and the school environment, and the interface of mental and physical health and well-being.

Insights that illuminate the life span developmental process will be drawn from a variety of social science disciplines, including developmental and social psychology. The relationship between theoretical insight and social work practice will be continually addressed. Special attention will be given to the relationship among life stages, critical life conditions, (i.e. poverty, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation), life events (i.e. separation, illness, transition to school) and psychological and physical functioning.

Throughout the course, relevant social science research will be examined and emphasis will be placed on the research methodology employed concerning issues of gender, ethnicity, and social class. The relevance of this course to Interpersonal Practice Methods courses and Field of Service course, such as those dealing with families and children, will be explicated.

3. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, student will be able to:

1. Describe key developmental stages and their associated issues, conflicts, and tasks during the infancy, toddler, early childhood, and late childhood periods.
2. Describe patterns of life cycle development from a multicultural perspective, including gender, ethnicity, social class, and religious and regional beliefs.
3. Describe how theoretical knowledge of coping and adaptation in children, their caregivers, and the care-giving contexts relate to social work practice.
4. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate and critique various theories of development.
5. Discuss relevant ethical concerns related to infant and child development and behavior.

4. Course Design

This course will include a series of readings, lectures, class discussions, videotapes, and student presentations. Students may be asked to assume various roles during experiential exercises.
5. Relationship to Four Curricular Themes

**Multicultural and Diversity** themes will be addressed by careful attention to the impact of culture, gender, social class, religion, family structure, and ability on child behavior and development.

**Social Justice and Social Change** will be addressed through discussion of the impact of economic and social oppression on infant and child development.

**Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be addressed through an emphasis on factors that may contribute to infant, child, and family resiliency or increase vulnerability. We will identify the kinds of environmental conditions, programs, and interventions that promote optimal development at this critical life stage.

**Behavioral and Social Science Research** will be emphasized by drawing on empirically based knowledge from a number of disciplines, particularly developmental psychology.

6. Relationship to Social Work Ethics and Values

Since child development is so profoundly impacted by environmental and social conditions, a number of ethical dilemmas may arise for social workers working with infants and children. Dilemmas will highlight the importance of identifying client strengths and working with the entire family or community in determining appropriate interventions. This course will address the impact of social conditions and social policy and the need for macro and micro intervention to improved the conditions under which many children develop.

7. Assignments

1. Paired Topic Presentation-20 % (Sign up in class)
2. Research Paper- 30 % (Due, in class, February 17)
3. Developmental History-25% (Due, in class, March 16)
4. Child Observation-25% (Due, in class, by April 6)

Class Attendance and Participation

Attendance and active participation in class are required. Part of active participation is coming to class with the required readings completed and participating in group activities and class discussions. Please call or e-mail me
ahead of time if you will be absent from class. Excessive absences will result in a lowering of the final grade.

**Paired Class Presentation** (20% of final grade) Sign up in class

Each student will be required to do a class presentation, with one of your fellow students, on a topic selected from the instructor’s list. Presentations will be 20-30 minutes in length, verbally delivered during class, and should include a handout for your peers. If you would like me to make copies of your handouts for the class, please give me the original, in class, one week prior to your presentation. Due to class size and time constraints, presentation 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 your classmates and to notify me at least one week prior to the presentation.

Please turn in a detailed outline of your presentation to me in class the day of your presentation. A PowerPoint outline used during your presentation is an aid to classmates and highly recommended.

**Research Paper** (30% of final grade) Due February 17th

Select a topic that focuses on a particular aspect of infant or child development and behavior. Choose a concept discussed in class or in readings that you would like to learn about in more depth. Topic examples: resiliency; effects of divorce on children; the effects of racism, gender discrimination, or poverty as contexts for child development; the role of play in development; autism; mental retardation; speech delays; the effects of early exposure to lead; moral development; international adoption, identity development in bi-racial children; children of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered parents; the development of empathy; the effects of neighborhood violence, etc. These are only examples; any similar topics are acceptable. The topic should be of personal interest to you. If you have questions regarding appropriate topic selection, please see me. Research the topic by using at least 8 current primarily peer-reviewed journal articles, selected documents, or books. In order to be current, these sources should have been published in the last ten years.

Discuss the findings from your readings, including the following themes:

1. An overview/definition of the topic you have chosen.
2. Developmental stages or associated developmental issues, conflicts, and/or tasks relevant to your topic.
3. Relevant multicultural and social justice issues including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, economic class etc.
4. Social work practice issues of prevention, assessment, and/or treatment relevant to your topic.
The paper will be 10 double spaced pages in length and have 8 current references cited. Following the APA format, include a bibliography of the references. Use footnotes if needed. Clear and appropriate citation is important and required.

**Developmental History** (25% of final grade) Due March 16th

Complete a developmental history for an infant or child. The instructor will provide a developmental interview format for those of you who are not already using one in your field placement. The interview does not have to take place in a clinical environment. You can interview any parent about their child’s development or an adult about their own developmental history. Using the information obtained from the developmental interview format, write up a 3 page, double-spaced, developmental history.

**Infant/Child Observation** (25% of final grade) Due by April 6th

Observe a child (age birth-11 years) individually or in a group, for approximately 15-20 minutes. Carefully observe the child’s behavior without making judgments or forming conclusions. Unless it would be absolutely too intrusive, take specifics notes about the context of the observation and what the child is doing during the period of observation. Depending on the age of the child, observations about physical activity, verbal expressions, play sequences, activity shifts, interactions with others etc. may be relevant.

Write an approximately two-page description of your observations. Next discuss the child’s behaviors within the context of two relevant developmental theories. Give a brief, cited, overview of the theories you have chosen and how each was helpful to you in understanding the child’s behavior. For example, if you choose one of Erikson’s eight stages of (human) development, how did the child’s behavior demonstrate Trust vs. Mistrust? Or, if you choose attachment theory, what did you notice about the child’s attachment behaviors? In this section, please give examples you observed and explain how the behavior was relevant to the two chosen developmental theories.

The paper should be 4-5 pages in length (including the child observation and discussion). **This paper is due anytime during the semester, but no later than April 6.**

**8. Readings**

Required Text: 
Available at Shaman Drum Bookstore, State Street Ann Arbor

Additional Readings as Assigned

**Recommended:**


**9. Class Calendar and Readings**

January 6th, Introduction to class and course content

January 13th, Contexts of Development; Developmental Assessment
Davies, Introduction I. -Chapter 2 (pp. 3-83)

January 20th, Prenatal and Neonatal Development
Davies, Chapter 3 and Introduction II. (pp. 84-116)

January 27th, Infant Development
Davies, Chapter 4 (pp. 117- 149))

Feb 4th, Infant Development (continued)
Davies, Chapter 5 (pp. 150-169)

Feb 10th, Toddler Development
Davies, Chapter 6, (pp.170-205)

Feb 17th, Toddler Development (continued)
Davies, Chapter 7 (pp. 206-226)

**Research Paper Due**
Feb 24<sup>th</sup> - No Class

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Preschool Development
Davies, Chapter 8 (pp.227-273)

March 9<sup>th</sup>, Preschool Development (continued)
Davies, Chapter 9 (pp. 274-292)

March 16<sup>th</sup>, Middle Childhood Development
Davies, Chapter 10 (pp. 293-340)
**Developmental History Due**

March 23<sup>rd</sup>, Middle Childhood Development (continued)
Davies, Chapter 11 (pp. 341-365)

March 30th, Late Childhood Development
Assigned Readings

April 6<sup>th</sup>, Late Childhood Development (continued)
Assigned Readings
**Observation Paper Due**

April 13<sup>th</sup>, Developmental Knowledge and Practice
Davies, Chapter 12 (pp.366-372)