SW 696: SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Sp/Su ‘04
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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 cross-cutting 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. In this course, an intensive focus is given to system responsiveness to privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice issues.

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

(1) Apply an ecological systems 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 and 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, and which recognizes diversity across and within groups.
(6) Incorporate social work values and ethical principles in planning and implementing culturally sensitive and competent interventions for children and youth.

Course Design:
This section instructor, in collaboration with student facilitators, will select readings and design assignments for specific sessions of 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 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.

**REQUIRED TEXT**


**RECOMMENDED and ADDITIONAL READINGS**

In addition to the assigned texts, assorted journal articles and book chapters may be recommended. These readings will be identified in class and information about how they can be obtained will be presented in class at least one week prior to class discussion.

**PERIODICALS**

As social work professionals interested in children and youth issues, you should familiarize yourself with the following journals (Note that some of the journals may be located in University libraries other than the Social Work library).

*Child Abuse and Neglect*

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

(1) Attend each session; absences and excessive tardiness 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 (10% of the course grade)

Regarding attendance, please contact me via e-mail about any absence or tardiness PRIOR to class (whenever possible) or immediately thereafter.

(2) COURSE PORTFOLIO to include the following content:

(A) Preamble: your philosophy about child well-being in society and the role of social work (No more than 500 words – Due May 17)

(B) Personal Child or Youth Issue:
(1) Indicate if the focus is on a particular target problem (e.g., depression, anxiety, delinquency, sexual abuse, adolescent suicide, school violence, teen pregnancy, etc.), target population (e.g., faith-based community, children in poverty, youth gangs), a specific service area (mental health, medical health, school, child welfare, juvenile justice, etc.), or social work domain (e.g., interpersonal practice, community organization, policy/planning, research). (2) Describe factors contributing to the problem (i.e., risk factors), and protective factors that support resiliency in the context of your issue. (3) Identify gaps and strengths in our profession’s current efforts to address this social problem. (Paper should be typed (12-pt. font), double-spaced, proof-read and limited to 5 pages maximum, including a minimum of 5 references, properly cited using APA style.) (Due: May 17)

(C) PODS implications:
Consider: (1) Relationship of issue to PODS (i.e., what does a PODS focus add to understanding the current status of your issue?), (2) Illustrative / case example(s), (3) Unique PODS challenges to social work practice, (4) What about international perspective? (i.e., Is your issue a national (US) concern or are there parallel concerns raised in the international community?) (Due: May 31)

(D) Class Lecture Facilitation (TBD)
To include: (a) Lecture Purpose / Goal(s), (b) Instructional materials, (c) PowerPoint presentation, (d) Fact sheet / handouts / visual aids, (e) Discussion / study questions, (f) Recommended readings, (g) Other: Interview comments / guest lecture information, preparation notes, references, other materials.

(E) Critical Issues for Social Work Policy, Research, Education (Curriculum), and/or Direct Practice: consider important issues relevant to these domains that are significant for social work practice. Consider the implications for interdisciplinary / inter-professional practice approaches (3-5 pages – Due )

(F) Summary Resources / Annotated Bibliography (minimum 20 references w/ 10 annotated (annotations not to exceed 50 words))

(G) Self-Reflection / Learning Statement: Each session note must be dated and accompanied with a brief, one-page “learning” reflection. Consider how your learning is consistent with your field experience. As a summary reflection, discuss how the experience from this course effected how you will practice social work with children and youth?

(H) (**Extra Credit) Summary Newsletter (Optional): Consider: relevant SW professional networks, websites, key / exemplary programs / practices, summary of risks / protections, publication reviews, visual aids, data / trends, vision / mission statement, policy implications, evidence-based treatment implications,
illustrative examples (popular / professional media)

3) **Student Portfolio Presentation**
   To be discussed in class. (Approximate due date: July 26)

*Note: I am open to modifying any of the above assignments to fit into your educational and career objectives. If you choose to modify an assignment, you must provide a written plan and schedule an appointment with me to discuss your plan PRIOR to proceeding.*

Regarding late assignments, please discuss with me PRIOR to due date.

**UNITS OF STUDY: SUMMARY**

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**SESSION OUTLINE**

**Week 1: May 10**

I. **Children, Youth and Society: Current Issues**

Introduction to Course

Fraser: Chapter 1: The ecology of childhood: A multi-systems perspective

Polakow: Chapter 1: A crucible of contradictions: Historical roots of violence against children in the US

*Optional:*

Burns and Hoagwood: Chapter 1: Reasons for Hope for Children and Families


**Week 2: May 17**

II. **Child Well-Being: Risk and Protective Factors**

Fraser: (Review Chapter 1); Chapter 2 Risk and resilience in childhood by Fraser, Laura Kirby and Paul Smokowski

Polakow: Chapter 2: Poverty and environmentally induced damage to children by Sue Brooks; Chapter 3: Poverty and youth violence: Not all risk factors are created equal by Joe Vorrasi and Jim Garbarino
Optional:
Dryfoos Chapter 2: Youth in Families, School and Communities, pp. 12-21; Chapter 3: Vulnerable Youth: Sex, Drugs and Violence, pp.24-42.

Week 3: May 24
III. Children and Youth Voices: Their Place at the Table
Fraser: Methods in the analysis of risk and protective factors: Lessons from epidemiology by James Nash and Karen Randolph
Polakow: Chapter 4: Framing children in the news: The face and color of youth crime in America by LynNell Hancock

Optional:
TBD

Week 4: May 27 NO CLASS - MEMORIAL DAY
(Note: Sessions V through VIII will be planned on June 7 since they involve student planning and facilitation. The syllabus will be updated and finalized on June 14.)