

University of Arkansas at Little Rock Graduate School of Social Work
Human Behavior and the Social Environment

Course Number: 7330 Credits: 3 Prerequisite: Acceptance to MSW Program
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I. DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

In this course, students will learn selected human behavior theories supporting social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. The selected theories are those taught in subsequent advanced direct practice coursework. Exploring theories requires doing the work, thinking critically, and questioning the basis for one's perspective. Students will be expected to know these theories well in subsequent coursework.

Theoretical perspectives and scientific findings about human development across the lifespan will be reviewed in detail. Applicability of theories and scientific findings to non-mainstream groups (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities and children) will be addressed. Students will develop an appreciation of the interactions between biological, psychological, and environmental influences on human development and behavior. Students will gain knowledge of the professional values and ethical standards that support social and economic justice and how to apply standards of ethical practice to populations-at-risk and members of diverse populations.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

1. Students will develop working knowledge of biological, psychological, social and community theories that explain human behavior in the social environment throughout the life cycle.
2. Students will develop the ability to critically evaluate and apply knowledge to understand and predict human behavior, both individually and in the social environment
3. Students will develop the ability to assess the social, emotional, organizational and environmental context in which people live and utilize this information in practice and service deliver
4. Students will develop the ability to utilize theories and models of practice to guide the processes of problem identification and assessment as well as intervention development, deployment, and evaluation
5. Students will develop an understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences including identifying cultural and sociological factors that support and hinder the development of women, members of ethnic and racial communities, gay and lesbian persons, people with disabilities, the impoverished and members of other populations who have historically been oppressed.
6. Students will analyze and understand how the use of power impacts human and social growth and development.
7. Students will demonstrate an ability to apply research evidence as well as evolving theory about human development and the social environment to inform practice.

8. Students will acquire the ability to apply strategies for ethical reasoning and the NASW Code of Ethics to arrive at principled decisions and develop tolerance for ambiguity in resolving ethical conflict
9. Students will learn to acknowledge and take ownership of own biases and beliefs rather than attribute them to groups of people or oppressed members of society. (In other words, rather than attribute negative characteristics to a social group or to a member of that group, students begin with, “This is how I have been taught to believe,” or “I don’t like to admit it, but I do have the belief that...”.)

III. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Learning methods used in this course may include class and small-group discussion, in-class learning activities, videos, lecture, guest presenters, and individual and team presentations.

I will strive to foster an educational experience that is rigorous, open to questioning and inquiry, and fosters critical thinking and respect for differing opinions and values. At the same time, I expect excellence from every student by thoroughly preparing for each class, listening and participating actively in class discussions, and by thoughtfully completing each assignment.

The social worker uses the self as a tool in the helping process and must constantly examine the self to identify barriers to effective use of the self. *As part of becoming a professional social worker, students should explore their individual selves, expand their self-awareness and question their (possibly long-standing) biases and beliefs. The learning process involves risk and students will be supported as they take risks to challenge their own biases. To promote the classroom as an enclave of respect for this type of personal growth, professional development and for diverse opinions and beliefs, all student contributions to class discussions should be considered confidential. No student will be required to disclose information.*

TEXTS:

Saleebey, D., (2001). *Human Behavior and Social Environments*. New York: Columbia University Press.

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th or 6th ed.). Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association.

Additional materials will be assigned and made available to you.

NOTE: Listed readings may be changed by the instructor, but the assignments and grading system will not change.

POLICY ON CLASS ATTENDANCE

Learning in a graduate professional program is based, in large part, on the interaction that occurs between persons in the classroom. Regular attendance is required. Absences of greater than 20% (**3 class sessions**) of the total class time is sufficient grounds for summarily failing the course (i.e, receiving a grade of F). Attendance will be kept for each class.

Comment on attendance, participation, and keeping up with the course:

The graduate class experience will be richer if all students turn in assignments on time and attend class ready to work. By completing the assigned readings prior to each class, you will be prepared to share your original thoughts and reactions to the readings with the class and generate lively discussion. As a general guide for time management, the standard educational expectation is that students spend 2-3 hours outside of class time “studying” for every hour spent in class.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Students with Disabilities:

It is the policy of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or to accurate assessment of achievement—such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos—please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students are also welcome to contact the Disability Resource Center, telephone 501-569-3143 (v/tty). For more information, visit the DRC website at <http://ualr.edu/disability/>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Social work (SW) students are encouraged to become members of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), since all SW students are expected to adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics (available at <http://www.ualr.edu/swdept/msw/CodeofEthics.mht>). The instructor expects all students to be familiar with this Code of Ethics, as well as University policies on academic integrity (available online at <http://www.ualr.edu/swdept/msw/handbook.html> under the heading **Scholarship and Professional Standards**). An essential feature of these codes is a commitment to maintaining intellectual integrity and academic honesty both in the student’s work and in assistance to others. In accordance with these policies, all assignments should be prepared specifically for this course, and *should not* have been (or be) used in any other course.

Any incidents, complaints or allegations of individual cheating, plagiarism, collusion (asking others to cheat) or duplicity will be taken seriously. Failure to follow principles of the academic integrity or the NASW Code of Ethics will result in negative consequences such as a failing grade for the course or dismissal from the Graduate School.

Paraphrasing, summarizing or quoting of others’ work should be properly referenced according to APA style. Truly original ideas come about infrequently. Misrepresenting the work of others as one’s own idea or failure to apply the rules related to the concept of *common knowledge* are the most prevalent pitfalls. Students will avoid most problems by following the general rule: **Whenever in doubt, cite your source.** If you have questions after reading the policies, please ask. Allegations, complaints or questions about academic dishonesty, (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) will be resolved in accordance with established University procedure.

IV. UNITS, CONTENT, READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

Session

1. Introduction

- A. Welcome & Introductions
- B. Orientation to the course (syllabus, texts, assignments, etc.)
- C. Expectations and resources
 - 1. Attendance & participation
 - 2. Written work
 - 3. Campus & internet resources
- D. A Historical Perspective: The Founding Mothers, A Brief History of Social Work
 - 1. Mary Richmond & the Friendly Visitors
 - 2. Jane Addams & the Activists
 - 3. A New Profession Emerges
 - 4. Critics of Social Work (other than political opponents)
 - "Unfaithful Angels"
 - Well-Intentioned Purveyors of Pathology
 - 5. The NASW Code of Ethics

2. Selected Perspectives for Practicing Social Work

- A. Meta-Perspectives
 - 1. Transactional Perspective
 - 2. Biopsychosocial Perspective
Reading: Saleebey Ch. 4
- B. Perspectives
 - 1. Ego Psychology
Reading: Saleebey Ch. 6 (pp. 187-198)
 - 2. Cognitive Psychology
Reading: Saleebey Ch. 7 (pp. 216-228)
 - 3. Systems Perspectives
Reading: Saleebey Ch. 7 (pp. 205-215)
 - 4. Sociological Perspectives
Reading: Social Capital (Portes)
 - 5. Further Thoughts & What was Left Out
Reading: Saleebey Ch. 7 (pp. 289-296)

Optional Readings: Saleebey Ch. 3, Ch. 7 (pp.229-241)

3. Selected Perspectives for Practicing Social Work (continued)

4. Selected Perspectives for Practicing Social Work (continued)

5. **Infancy: Parents and Their Babies**

- A. Before Baby: Pre-Pregnancy and Pre-Natal Contributions
- B. The Biology of Being a Baby
- C. Temperament
Reading: Saleebey Ch. 5 (pp. 132-142), Ch. 4 (pp. 100-105)
- D. Daniel Stern and "The Interpersonal World of the Infant"
Reading: Stern Ch. 2 (pp. 13-36)
- E. Parents and the Ecology of Babies
Reading: Saleebey Ch. 5 (pp. 142-150)
- F. Society and the Ecology of Parents (Attachment)

6. **Early Childhood: A Secure Base and a Place to Play**

- A. Risk & Resilience Acquired From Infancy
- B. The Biology of Early Childhood
Reading: FoC: Infants & Toddlers (pp. 21-34)
- C. Play: The Work of Pre-School
Reading: What Grown-Ups Understand About Childhood study
- D. Walking & Talking: The Consequences of Mobility and Language
- E. The Ecology of Pre-Schoolers: Family & Day Care
Reading: FoC: Infants & Toddlers (pp. 35-52)
- F. The Ecology of a Family

7. **Middle Childhood: It's a Big, Bumpy World**

- A. Risk & Resilience Acquired From Early Childhood
Reading: Ghosts in the Nursery
- B. The Biology of Middle Childhood
- C. School: The Consequences of Teachers, Classes, Tests, Fashions, Sports, Recess...
- D. The Psychology of School-Aged Children
Reading: Saleebey, Ch. 10 (pp. 340-369)
- E. The Ecology of the School-Aged Child: Family, Teachers, Peers, & Neighborhood
Reading: Nettles et al., School Adjustment...
- F. The Ecology of the School and the Neighborhood

8. **Special Topics in Childhood**

- A. Death, Grief, & Loss in Childhood
- B. Developmental Problems
- C. Maltreatment; Risks and Consequences
Reading: English, The Extent and Consequences of Child Maltreatment
- D. Poverty
Reading: McLoyd, Socioeconomic Status and Development

9. **Adolescence**

- A. The Biology of Adolescence
Reading: Blakemore, The Development of the Adolescent Brain

- B. When Does It End?
- C. The Psychology of Adolescence: Sex, Drugs, Friends, and Other Risky Business
Reading: Saleebey, Ch. 11 (pp. 370-417)
- D. The [Chaotic] Ecology of the Adolescent
- E. The Ecology of Cultures

10. Young Adults: Adolescence Evolving

- A. The Biological Peak of Life
- B. The Psychology of Young Adults: Evolving Into Adults
- C. Onset of Mental Health Problems
Reading: Saleebey, Ch. 5 (pp. 150-163)
- D. The Ecology of the Young Adult: College and Work
- E. The Ecology of a Lifestyle
- F. Spirituality
Reading: Canda, 1988, "Spirituality, religious diversity, and social work practice"

11. Adulthood

- A. The Biology of Adults
- B. Coping With Illness
- C. Perspectives on Adult Psychology and Psychopathology
Reading: Snowden, Bias in Mental Health Assessment & Treatment
- D. The Many Ecologies of Being an Adult in America
Reading: Saleebey, Ch. 2 (pp. 34-60)
Reading: Dykstra, Roads Less Taken

12. Adults in the Family Context

- A. Family Redefined
- B. Perspectives on Adults in the Family and Family Dysfunction
Reading: Minuchin, Families and Individual Development
- C. The Ecology of the Parent
 1. What is a 'Good Enough' Parent?
Reading: Donald, Parenting Capacity
 2. Maltreating Parents
Reading: Cicchetti, Operationalizing Malreatment
- D. The Ecology of the Spouse
 1. Marriage & Divorce
 2. Domestic Violence
Reading: Danis, The criminalization of domestic violence

13. Late Adulthood

- A. The Biology of Aging
- B. The Ecology of the Aging Adult
Reading: Saleebey, Ch. 12 (pp. 462-465)
 1. Families, Empty Nests, and Consequences of Decisions

- 2. Work, Career, & Ageism
- 3. Social Policies on Aging
Reading: Ekerdt, Born to Retire
- C. Psychological Aspects of Aging & Making Meaning of a Life
Reading: Rowe, Human Aging: Usual & Successful
- D. Retirement
- E. Coping With Loss

14. Special Topics in Adults

- A. The Limitations of Science to Provide Answers
- B. Cultural Minorities:
 - 1. Racial Identity
 - 2. Gender Identity
 - 3. Homosexuality
Reading: Iwasaki & Ristock, Nature of stress among gays & lesbians
 - 4. Religion and Culture
 - 5. Being in the Majority
- C. Poverty
Reading: Rank & Hirschl, Welfare as a life course event
- D. Incarceration and Re-Entry
Reading: Pettit & Western, Mass incarceration & the life course

15. TBA

V. METHODS OF EVALUATION and GRADING

Students will be evaluated in this course through the use of papers, exams, a presentation, and by the self and group assessment of the level of participation to class/group discussion. The papers will move from simple to complex in content and form. The professor will provide grading standards for each assignment.

GRADING SCALE

A = 100-92% B = 91-82% C = 81-72% F = 71% or below

ASSIGNMENTS

All written work must be typed in a 12-point font (Times New Roman is preferred) using one-inch margins, double-spaced, and it must be formatted and referenced according to the 5th or 6th edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) style. All work must be submitted electronically via email prior to the beginning of class on the due date. No late work is accepted without penalty unless the instructor has granted prior approval. **Acceptable formats are MS Word format (.doc extension) and OpenDocument format (.odt extension) ONLY.**

All writing is evaluated based on content (70%), editing for spelling, grammar, punctuation and similar issues (15%), and compliance with APA style (15%).

Type of evaluation	Description	Due	Point Value
Mid-Term	Following the completion of the units on theories and perspectives, students will be given a take-home Mid-Term exam.	Session 5	50
Final	The final exam will be given during Final Exams week. It will be comprehensive.	N/A	150
Annotated Bibliography for Term Paper	Obtain at least 5 sources for the term paper (excluding class materials). Write an annotated bibliography for them.	Session 4	25
Draft of Term Paper	Submit a complete draft of the term paper including the cover page, abstract, and reference list.	Session 6	50
Completed Term Paper	Select a theory of human behavior NOT discussed in class. Select a social work problem or a stage of life. In the paper, <u>analyze and integrate information in detail</u> how the theory selected applies to the social work problem or stage of life. Students may use readings or other material from class but must have <i>at least 12 additional scholarly sources (see Day One for what is an acceptable source)</i> . Analysis and integration of the source material is <u>required</u> . This might include (but is certainly not limited to) assessments of the quality of research reviewed, strengths of the theory, utility of the theory for social work, and how conflicting material may be integrated. The term paper should be 15 - 20 pages, <u>excluding</u> cover page, abstract, tables & other illustrations, and the reference list.	Session 10	100
Assignments	Several brief writing assignments will be given during the semester. They will be due by the next class and worth a total of 100 points. Details will be provided as they are assigned.	As assigned	100
Attendance and Participation	Attendance and participation in class discussions and in team/small group exercises is required. Participation will be evaluated by the instructor.	N/A	25
Total points			500