HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT I
SOWK 603
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Department of Social Work

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

The social work profession draws from many interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives to develop knowledge and skills for responding to the challenges faced by client systems across the lifespan. SOWK 603 Human Behavior in the Social Environment I (HBSE I) begins by introducing general systems theories, strengths perspectives, empowerment theory, identity development and other theories commonly used in direct practice as models for understanding human behavior and the interactions of systems of different sizes. The focus of the course then shifts to understanding individual and family development across the lifespan in the context of these models, examining how larger systems influence the processes of human growth and change. Of particular importance are human diversity, including age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation, and the role of oppression in the development of populations-at-risk.

HBSE I provides an overview of human development from birth to old age in the context of family and community. Students will learn and critically analyze theories of human development and behavior with consideration of the: 1) social, cultural and economic forces affecting human development, with an emphasis on populations-at-risk, 2) factors that contribute to the enhancement of “well-being” and empowerment of individuals and families, and 3) social and economic injustices experienced by individuals and families that impact human behavior.

PLACE IN THE MSW CURRICULUM

SOWK 603 HBSE I is the first of two courses in the HBSE sequence and provides the theoretical foundation for SOWK 601 Foundations of Generalist Practice. HBSE I is taken during the first semester of the foundation year in conjunction with SOWK 601 Foundations of Generalist Practice I, SOWK 605 Social Welfare Policy and Services, and SOWK 607 Professional Competence Seminar I. These courses will enhance the students’ learning in HBSE through complementary instruction on micro level practice with individuals and families, issues of diversity, values and ethics, populations-at-risk, and social and economic injustices. In the second course students will continue the HBSE sequence examining larger systems (task groups, organizations and communities).

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

This course contributes to the University mission related to promoting learning through effective teaching and scholarship. The course is also supportive of the College mission to promote exploration, understanding, explanation and transformation of the social world through graduate teaching and learning.

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MSW PROGRAM GOALS

This course supports the achievement of the MSW Program goals, specifically: 1) to prepare competent and effective graduates to be advanced generalist social work practitioners with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities, emphasizing rural and small communities, 2) to prepare graduates to apply and promote the values and ethics of the social work profession, and 3) to prepare graduates to work towards social and economic justice in a diverse society.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

1) Understand the theoretical concepts of individual and family development across the lifespan from birth to death (MSW 2.2).

2) Critically analyze the impact of diversity, including age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation, on individual and family development across the lifespan (MSW 1.1, 1.4).

3) Assess the impact of social, cultural and economic forces on individuals and families, with an emphasis on populations-at-risk (MSW 1.1).

4) Understand general systems theories, strengths perspective, empowerment theory, and other practice theories and models in relationship to individuals and families (MSW 2.2).

5) Understand the consequences of multiple forms of oppression on human development (MSW 2.2, 3.1).

6) Examine the value base of the social work profession in relation to the theories of human development and behavior that guide advanced generalist social work practice (MSW 2.3).

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS (NOTE: Texts used in HBSE-I will be used again in HBSE-II.)


Memoir of Choice from the following list:


**Selected Readings.**

A collection of readings from social work literature will be available online via D2L covering critical issues in areas of human behavior and the social environment. These are listed directly on the course schedule.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Attendance, Preparation, and Participation**

Students are responsible for reading assigned material *prior to* each class, attending the class sessions when they meet, and participating in online discussions when classes do not meet in-person. Students are expected to be prepared for and to participate in all class discussions and exercises. Students will not meet the learning objectives for the course if they fail to read the assigned chapters and articles. Sets of reading and reflection questions or brief study activity will be posted to help students prepare for the following week. *If a student misses three or more of the class sessions (in-person or online) she/he will receive a grade lower grade.*

**Online Assignments**

During the course of the semester, there will be three to four class sessions when students will be meeting course requirements by carrying out reading and reflections on their own. These assignments will require students to post essays, short answers to questions, or other information or responses to the course website. They will then be required to read some of the postings and respond to their classmates. These discussions will be asynchronous, meaning that students will be able to do this work at a time that best fits their schedule during the week the class is not meeting in person. These discussions will be monitored by the instructor and feedback provided to students about their postings.
Exams
There will be a midterm and final exam that will evaluate mastery of reading assignments, discussions, and lectures. These exams will ask a set of short answer essay questions about specific case studies to which students will respond. They will focus largely on your understanding of human development theories and concepts and their application to social work case studies.

Perspectives on Development Presentation
This assignment will provide students the opportunity to engage in individual and pair study and in comprehensive discussion with their peers of chosen theories of human behavior and/or development. Students will select a theory to study through reviewing the scholarly literature and will work with a partner to compare, contrast, and critique the selected theories. They will reflect upon how individual and/or family development may be different for people depending on age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Students will demonstrate the ability to critique the selected theories with regard to the aforementioned aspects of human diversity, including at least one specific population-at-risk. Students will be responsible for presenting their theories and leading a class discussion. Outlines and bibliographies of their presentations will also be made available to the other students in the class. (See details after schedule.)

HBSE Theory Application Paper (Designated Learning Assignment L.O. 2.2)
The final theoretical application paper will require students to critically analyze and apply theories of human development and behavior. They will apply the theories to their own development in their family of origin system and to a person/family in an additional memoir they will select. The paper will be an introspective analysis of student’s family history and relationships and compares this to what they learn about another family of a diverse background different from their own. This paper requires the development of a multi-systems level eco-map of their family and that reflected in the book. Using the concepts and theories discussed in class about individual behavior and development, as well as family development, the impact of the aspects of diversity that apply to their family system, the impact of social, cultural and economic forces, and the impact of oppression, students will present an application of these theories to demonstrate their understanding. (See details after schedule.)

TEACHING METHODS
A variety of instructional methods will be utilized in order to achieve the course objectives. The following methods will be included but not limited to: classroom lecture and discussion, online course materials, online discussion, in-class active learning exercises, educational videos, and guest speakers.

EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING
A total of 200 points can be earned in this course. Points will be accumulated through successful completion of the following: 1) Preparation and Participation (15%); 2) Online Assignments (10%), 3) Midterm Exam (15%), 4) Perspectives on Development Presentation (20%); 5) Theory Application Paper (25%); and 4) Final Exam (20%). Specific guidelines for evaluation of this work will be provided to students well in advanced of the assignment due date.

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Students will be evaluated in accordance with the following system of letter grades, as described by the standards of College of Graduate Studies and Research.

A – 90% to 100% of possible points represents work of definitely superior quality
B – 80% to 89% of possible points represents a level of performance that is above average
C – 70% to 79% of possible points represents a below-average performance
D – 60% to 69% of possible points represents unacceptable performance
F – 59% or below represents unacceptable performance

A grade of “incomplete” will only be awarded under rare circumstances. Students must meet with the instructor to request an “incomplete” as soon as possible in the semester, but at least two weeks before the last day of the semester. The request must include a plan with a timeline for completing and having evaluated all coursework prior to the first day of the subsequent semester.

COURSE, DEPARTMENT, AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

NOTE: For complete policies please refer to the MSW Student Handbook as well as the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, College of Graduate Studies and Research, and Minnesota State University, Mankato Policy documents for Graduate Students.

STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The University and Department of Social Work is committed to providing equal education and employment opportunities to all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, veteran’s status, National origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, physical and mental disabilities, creed, status due to receipt of public assistance, or any other groups against which discrimination is prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Minnesota Statute Chapter 363, and other applicable state or federal laws or State University System policy. Complaints of discrimination are filed with the Office of Affirmative Action located at 112 Armstrong Hall.

ACCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

In accordance with University Policy, the Department of Social Work is committed to ensuring equal educational opportunity and full participation for qualified persons with disabilities as is legally required under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 including section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. All students with a disability may request accommodation through the Office of Disability Services. Visit the Office of Disabilities Services at 132 Memorial Library or call 507-389-2825 (V/TTY). Student disability accommodations will be made by faculty based upon the advisement of the Office of Disability Services.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES POLICY AND ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Students are expected to comply with the Student Responsibility Policy and Academic Honesty Policy stipulated in the MSW Program Graduate Student Handbook.

APA STYLE WRITING POLICY

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Students are expected to comply with the stylistic guidelines of the American Psychological Association, fifth edition. The APA manual is available at the MSU Memorial Library reference desk, call number BF 76.7.P83 2001). The reference for the APA manual is:


An on-line sources to help with using APA is located at: http://www.apastyle.org/

**SOWK 603 COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**
Topic: Introduction & Background: Importance of understanding human development, behavior, and systems transactions
Delivery Method: In Person
Required Readings
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 1: An Integrating Framework
Payne, Ch. 1: The Construction of Social Work Theory
Payne, Ch. 7: Systems and Ecological Perspectives

**Week 2**
Topic: Conceptual Issues: Frameworks and Theories of Human Behavior and Development; Neurobiological Underpinnings
Delivery Method: In Person;
Film: Secret Life of the Brain
Required Readings
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 2: Neurobiological Underpinnings

**Week 3**
Topic: Theories of Individual Development
Delivery Method: In Person
Required Readings
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 3: Theories of Development
Payne, Ch. 13: Anti-discrimination and Cultural and Ethnic Sensitivity

**Week 4**
Topic: Sociocultural Contexts: Identity and Spiritual Development
Delivery Method: Online
Required Readings

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Lesser & Pope, Ch. 4: Identity Development
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 8: Spiritual Development
Payne, Ch. 9: Humanism, Existentialism and Spirituality

**Week 5**
Topic: Sociocultural Contexts: Family and Community; Family Systems; Family Life-Cycle Model
Delivery Method: In Person
Required Readings
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 5: Family in Society
Payne, Ch. 10: Social and Community Development

**Week 6**
Topic: Review and Discussion of Theories/Theoretical Frameworks Presentations by Students
Delivery Method: In Person
Required Readings: None

**Week 7**
Topic: Human Life Cycle: Infancy to Early Childhood
Delivery Method: In-Person
Required Readings
Lesser & Pope: Ch. 9: Infancy
Lesser & Pope: Ch. 10: Early Childhood

**Week 8**
Topic: Human Life Cycle: Middle Childhood Online Discussion
Delivery Method: Online
Required Readings
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 11: Middle Childhood

**Week 9**
Topic: Human Life Cycle: Adolescence Lecture and Discussion
Delivery Method: In Person
Required Readings
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 12: Adolescence

**Week 10**
Topic: Human Life Cycle: Early & Middle Adulthood  
Delivery Method: Online  
Required Readings  
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 13: Early Adulthood and Chapter 14: Middle Adulthood  

**Week 11**
Topic: Human Life Cycle: Later Adulthood  
Delivery Method: In Person  
Required Readings  
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 15: Older Adulthood  

**Week 12**
Topic: Complications in Development: Trauma  
Delivery Method: In Person  
Required Readings  
Lesser & Pope, Ch.16: Trauma and Development  

**Week 13**
Topic: Complications in Development: Illness and Disability  
Delivery Method: Online  
Required Readings  
Lesser & Pope, Ch. 17: Chronic Illness and Disability  

**Week 14**
Topic: Wrap-Up the Semester; Evaluation of Teaching & Learning  
Delivery Method: In Person  
Required Readings:  
Payne, Ch. 3: Issues in Social Work Practice Theory
Week 15
Topic: Human Life Cycle: Later Adulthood
Delivery Method: In Person
Required Readings: No additional readings

Week 16 – Finals

SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY


