HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT II
SOCIAL WORK 613
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Department of Social Work

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

The social work profession draws from many theoretical perspectives to develop knowledge and skills for responding to the challenges faced by client systems of all sizes and across the lifespan. SOWK 613 Human Behavior in the Social Environment II (HBSE II), maintains the focus on systems theories, the strengths perspective, and empowerment theory developed in SOWK 603 (HBSE I) while expanding the vision to include mezzo and macro-level theories explaining the behavior of larger systems, such as social capital. The HBSE sequence provides the graduate students with basic concepts of human development across the lifespan, plus theories applied to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, while simultaneously examining the social forces that affect the relationships between people and their environments.

SOWK 613 HBSE II, will build on the overview of human development reviewed in SOWK 603, but broaden the focus to social behavior within the context of mezzo level theories of groups and macro level theories of organizations and communities. Students will critically analyze theories of human behavior focused on the implications for evidence-based generalist social work practice with task groups, organizations and communities, especially in rural areas and small communities. Macro level theories will be examined in relation to human diversity, populations-at-risk, and social and economic justice. Students will also examine the value base of the social work profession in relation to the theories of organization and community behavior that guide advanced generalist social work practice.

PLACE IN THE MSW CURRICULUM

SOWK 613 HBSE II is the second course in the HBSE sequence and is taken during the second semester of the foundation year in conjunction with SOWK 611 Foundations of Generalist Practice II and SOWK 615 Foundation Practicum & Seminar. This course focuses on the general systems theories and other theoretical understandings of groups, organizations and communities. HBSE II provides the theory base for the Practice II course’s focus on macro level advanced generalist social work practice with task groups, organizations, and communities. It is taken with SOWK 615 Foundation Practicum & Seminar I in order to enable students to critically analyze the theories presented in this course in relationship to their agency settings.

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

HBSE II 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.
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

1) Examine mezzo and macro theories related to group, organization and community behavior and systems, especially in relation to human diversity, populations-at-risk, and social and economic justice, which guide evidence-based macro practice (MSW 1.4, 1.6, 2.2, 3.1).

2) Critically analyze task group dynamics including patterns of communications, norms, roles, cohesion, status & power, leadership, and group goals and stages of development (MSW 1.1, 2.2).

3) Compare and contrast theories of human service organizations, with particular emphasis on service delivery in rural and small communities (MSW 1.1, 1.6, 2.2).

4) Critically analyze the theories of community behavior and development, with particular emphasis on rural and small communities (MSW 1.1, 2.2).

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

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS


Lesser, J. G., & Pope, D. S. (2007). *Human behavior and the social environment: Theory and practice*. Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn-Bacon. (*Note: This text was used in SOWK 603.*)

REQUIRED ARTICLES

A collection of readings will be available online on the D2L course site for the weeks they are assigned on the syllabus. These readings will cover issues in areas of human behavior and the social environment at the mezzo and macro levels.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

A bibliography of additional recommended readings is attached to the end of this syllabus. These readings will cover issues in areas of human behavior and the social environment at the mezzo and macro levels. They may also be useful in the completion of some course assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Participation (10 pts)**
Attending class sessions prepared for discussion and participation in course activities both in class and online is an important part of your taking an active role in your learning. Throughout the semester you will be asked to participate in online postings and discussions. These learning experiences as well as active participation in class is part of your overall course grade. Attendance will be counted as part of the course grade as will participation in each of the online discussions.

**Organizational Theories Paper (25 points).**
Students will research and write a 10 to 12 page paper critically comparing and contrasting three organizational theories and applying the theories to their practicum agency and social work practice.

**Task Group Analysis (25 pts)**
Student will critically analyze a task group connected to their practicum setting and write a paper summarizing their analysis. Working with your field instructor/practicum supervisor, you should identify a task group that is active in the agency. You will then spend time observing at least two meetings of this task group. The analysis will examine task group dynamics including patterns of communications, norms, roles, cohesion, status and power, leadership, group goals, and stages of development.

**Social Service Organization or Community Leader Interview (20 points).** Student will locate and interview a social or human services leader in their community. This person may be an executive director of a private non-profit organization or social service agency or a community or elected leader such as a mayor, county commissioner, or other public official. The purpose of this is to learn about how this leader thinks about leadership in his/her organization/community. What is their person leadership model? Students will interview this person by visiting with them at least one time in person with possible other follow-up conducted via telephone or email. The students will then also reflect upon how this person’s model compares with other literature on leadership in organizations. An 8-10 page paper will be completed and turned in on this project.

**Reflection Essay on Better Together (Putnam & Felstein, 2003) (20 points).** During the course of the semester, students will read the book *Better together: Restoring the American community* (Putnam & Felstein, 2003). The book documents the wide-ranging community initiatives that have
been done throughout the U.S. to develop and through the development of social capital. “Social capital may be defined as those resources inherent in social relations which facilitate collective action. (Garson, 2006.)” When student are done reading and discussing the book, they will write a set of essays (approx. 8-10 pages) reflecting upon the ways that the communities have worked to develop social capital and how these concepts can be used in social work practice at the community-level.

**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: online course materials, online chats or discussion, in-class discussions or exercises, educational videos, guest speakers, and lectures.

**EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING**

A total of 100 points can be earned in this course as noted above. Points will be accumulated through successful completion of the tests and assignments as described above and are allocated as follows: 1) Participation (10 pts, 10%); 2) Task-Group Analysis (25 pts, 20%), 3) Organization Leader Interview (20 pts, 20%), 4) Essays on Better Together (20 pts, 20%), and 5) Organizational Theories Paper (25 pts, 25%). Students will be evaluated in accordance with the following system of letter grades used at Minnesota State Mankato for graduate-level courses: A, B, C, D, and F.

- 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” (I) 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

Minnesota State University, Mankato, SOWK 613, 2009-2010
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. To read the entire *University Access for Students with Disabilities Policy* go to [http://www.mnsu.edu/acadaf/policies/AccessforStudentswithDisabilities.pdf](http://www.mnsu.edu/acadaf/policies/AccessforStudentswithDisabilities.pdf).

**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**

Students are expected to comply with the stylistic guidelines of the American Psychological Association, sixth edition. The APA manual is available at the MSU Memorial Library (reference section, ready reference section, reserve collection, general collection and reference desk): call number BF76.7 .P83 2010. The reference for the APA manual is:


An on-line overview of the editorial style is at: [http://www.apastyle.org/](http://www.apastyle.org/)

**Distraction and Technology Use Policy**

Students are expected to comply with the Department’s *Distraction and Technology Use Policy* stipulated in the MSW Program *Graduate Student Handbook*. Violations of this policy will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Students who are late for class or leave class early may have a reduction of participation points and/or may be recorded as absent (or partially absent). Students using electronic devises for non-educational purposes will be asked to turn off the equipment. In the case of repeated offences, students will be asked to leave the classroom and will be recorded as absent.
SOWK 613 COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1
Topic: Overview of the Course; Mezzo and Macro-level Theories Overview
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings:
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 1: Introduction to Human Behavior in the Macro Social Environment.
Putnam & Feldstein, Introduction
Video: Unnatural Causes –When the Bough Breaks (Role of racism on health).

Week 2
Topic: Community Theories
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings:
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 8: Communities in the Macro Social Environment: Theories and Concepts
Lesser & Pope, Chapter 7: Communities and Organizations (community content)
Video: Forgotten Americans: Life in the Colonias

Week 3
Topic: The Neighborhood as a Community & Theory
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings:
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 10: Neighborhood Empowerment
Saguaro Seminar: *Social Capital Primer, online at [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/primer.htm](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/primer.htm)

Week 4
Topic: Organization Theories
Delivery Method: On-Line
Required Readings:
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 4: Knowledge and Theories about Organizations
Lesser & Pope, Chapter 7: Communities and Organizations (organizations content)

Week 5
Topic: Understanding Social Services Organizations: Settings and Environmental Context
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings:
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 5: Social Service Organizational Settings, Goals, and Environmental Contexts

Week 6
Topic: Social Service Organizations: Leadership
Delivery Method: On-line
Required Readings:
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 7: Human Behavior, Management, and Empowerment in Organizations.

Week 7
Topic: Understanding Social Services Organizations: Structure and Dynamics
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings:
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 6: Organizational Structure and Dynamics

Week 8
Topic: Group Theories
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 2: Human Behavior in Groups: Theories and Dynamics.
Lesser & Pope, Chapter 6: Group-Work Practice

Spring Break

Week 9
Topic: Understanding Groups: Types and Purposes
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 3: Types of Groups in the Macro Social Environment

**Week 10**
Topic: Diversity, Social Justice & Empowerment: Theories of Disability and Application to Macro Social Work Practice
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 11: Diversity, Populations-at-risk, and Human Behavior in the Macro Social Environment
One of the following articles will be assigned to each student.

**Week 11**
Topic: Diversity, Social Justice & Empowerment: Theories of Poverty and Application to Macro Social Work Practice
Delivery Method: On-line
Required Readings:
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 12: Social Justice and the Global Community

**Week 12**
Topic: Task Groups; Presentation/Discussion of Task Group Analysis assignment
Delivery Method: In-class
Week 13
Topic: Diversity, Social Justice & Empowerment: Rural Community Context and Application to Macro Social Work Practice
Delivery Method: To Be Determined
Required Readings

Internet Sources:

Week 14
Topic: Global Communities & International Developmental Theories
Delivery Method: To Be Determined
Required Readings:
Kirst-Ashman, Chapter 12: Social Justice and the Global Community

Week 15
Topic: Application of Macro Theory to Practice; Discussion of social capitaol theory and *Better Together* (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003) and application to social work practice.
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings:

Week 16 – Finals Week
SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY


