ADVANCED SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH COUPLES, FAMILIES, & GROUPS
Social Work 660
Minnesota State University, Mankato,
Department of Social Work

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

This course provides students with advanced generalist theories, knowledge, values, and skills for evidence-based direct practice with couples, families, and treatment groups. Students develop, analyze, integrate and apply advanced knowledge and skills in the comprehensive assessment and the differential application of treatment approaches and intervention strategies in social work practice at the micro level with couples and families and at the mezzo level with treatment groups. This course presents a framework for comparing, contrasting, and differentially applying these models to direct practice with diverse populations and in a variety of field settings, with particular emphasis on practice in a rural and small community context.

PLACE IN THE MSW CURRICULUM

SOWK 660 Advanced Social Work Practice with Couples, Groups & Families is one of five practice courses in the MSW curriculum. This course is the second advanced practice course taken in the spring of the advanced generalist concentration year. SOWK 660 specifically builds upon the direct practice content taught in SOWK 601 Foundations of Generalist Practice I and SOWK 651 Advanced Social Work Practice with Individuals, the values, ethics and diversity content taught in SOWK 607 Professional Competence I and SOWK 657 Professional Competence II, and the theory content taught in SOWK 603 Human Behavior in the Social Environment I. SOWK 660 is taken concurrently with SOWK 655 Social Welfare Policy Practice and SOWK 665 Advanced Practicum and Seminar I.

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

SOWK 660 Advanced Social Work Practice with Couples, Families & Groups 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,

MSW PROGRAM GOALS

This course supports the achievement of MSW Program goals, specifically: 1) to prepare graduates to become competent and effective advanced generalist social work practitioners with families and groups; and 2) to prepare graduates to apply and promote at an advanced level the values, ethics, theory, and perspectives of the social work profession.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1) Demonstrate the ability to analyze and integrate theories and empirical research knowledge in selecting and using intervention strategies at the micro level with couples and families and at the mezzo level with treatment groups (MSW 1.3, 1.8C, 2.2).

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2) Integrate and demonstrate the differential application of procedures, techniques, and methods of intervention that reflect best practices for direct practice with couples, families, and treatment groups in a variety of practice settings and with diverse populations, with an emphasis on practice in small and rural communities (MSW 1.4, 1.5, 1.8C, 2.4C).

3) Identify and analyze ethical issues related to the selection and application of intervention approaches in advanced generalist social work practice with couples, families and treatment groups, emphasizing issues common to small and rural communities (MSW 1.1, 2.3, 2.4C).

4) Demonstrate the ability to select theories, models, and interventions and then critically evaluate and analyze these approaches as to their effectiveness in given situations. This includes: (a) the adequacy of the research and knowledge base; (b) the range of applicability; and (c) the value and ethical issues, including the student’s own value system (MSW 1.1, 1.4, 1.8C).

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Couple/Family Treatment Model Demonstration/Presentation. Students will work in small groups to research a treatment model for use with couples or family systems. Students will: 1) conduct a review of the literature of the treatment model, including application of the treatment model, and develop an annotated bibliography, 2) select and disseminate a seminal reading and the annotated bibliography for class review and discussion, 3) develop a set of discussion questions, 4) develop a PowerPoint presentation on the model, including a demonstration, and 5) facilitate a class discussion. Student will have approximately 60 minutes.

Couple/Family Case Application Paper (Designated Assessment Assignment L.O. 1.8C & 2.5C). Students will write a 12 - 15 page paper applying the stages of practice to a couple or family that they have selected to interview. This paper should include:

1. A succinct biopsychosocial formulation of the client system with all information relevant to problem formulation.
2. Describe the social support systems and relevant environmental issues, including impact of rural context.
3. Using a framework discussed in the course, identify factors at the personal, familial, cultural, and institutional levels that contribute to the problem.
4. Consider whether or not racism and/or other forms of oppression are important to an understanding of this client/situation and the ways that a social justice perspective informs your thinking. Identify cultural meanings that you and your client do and do not share and indicate ways that these issues have been or could become relevant in your work. Identify relevant ethical issues, including ethical issues pertaining to rural social work practice, and show how you plan to address these.

5. Develop an intervention appropriate for the selected system using evidence-based treatment models, including goals and outcome-based objectives, reflecting best practice in rural community context.

6. Provide a rationale for your choice of goals, objectives and treatment modality(ies).

7. Specify how you would monitor progress and measure achievement of outcome-based objectives.

**Group Simulation Exercise & Demonstration.** Students will work in groups to research a treatment model for use with groups. In this exercise/demonstration student groups will facilitate a treatment group with the remaining students acting as clients. Student groups will be responsible for teaching the class about the selected treatment model as it applies to groups and demonstrating the application of the selected treatment model in a group simulation exercise with the class. Additionally, each group member will have to submit a 3-5 page reflection on their group’s process. Students will have approximately half of the allotted classroom time.

**TEACHING METHODS**

A wide variety of teaching methods are used in this class including the use of lecture, discussion, guest presentations, videotapes, role-plays and other experiential learning activities, computer based technologies, case presentations, individual and group assignments as well as written and verbal journal/logs. This class uses large group, treatment group and individual activities for in class and out of class learning activities to facilitate learning. Students will also be expected to role play, engage in audio and video taping exercises, and present materials in class.

Additional assigned readings, as well as course requirement guidelines, supplemental resources, exercises, and research articles will be available via Desire2Learn (D2L) which can be accessed on the Internet.

**STUDENT EVALUATION**

A total of 450 points can be earned in this course. Points will be accumulated through the: 1) Couple/Family Treatment Model Presentation (140 points); 2) Couple/Family Case Application Paper (160 points); 3) Group Simulation Exercise and Demonstration (100 points), Class Participation (50 points).

Students will be evaluated in accordance with the following system of letter grades: 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

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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**

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 source to help with using APA is located at: [http://www.apastyle.org/](http://www.apastyle.org/)

**SOWK 660 COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**  
Topic: Introduction to course, review of syllabus, and group project assignments  
Delivery Method: In-class

**Week 2**  
Topic: Historical context of couples and families, Cultural and ethical implications with couples and families  
Delivery Method: In-class  
Required Readings  
Glick et al., Chapter 1: The field of marital and family therapy  
Chapter 2: Family life in historical and sociological perspective  
Chapter 17: Treatment as it is influenced by issues of ethnicity, race, gender, and class  
Ragg, Chapter 1: Thinking family: Theories and frameworks  
Chapter 3: Cultural influences on family functions

**Week 3**  
Topic: Cultural and ethical implications with couples and families, Functional and Dysfunctional Couples and Families  
Delivery Method: In-class  
Required Readings  
Glick et al., Chapter 18: Treatment as it is influenced by issues specific to African American families  
Chapter 23: Lesbian and gay couples  
Chapter 31: Ethical and professional issues in family therapy  
Chapter 3: Understanding the functional family  
Ragg, Chapter 2: The four parenting functions  

**Week 4**  
Topic: Functional and Dysfunctional Couples and Families  
Delivery Method: In-class  
Required Readings  
Glick et al., Chapter 4: Understanding the functional family: Alternative family forms  
Chapter 5: Problems and dysfunction from a family systems perspective

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Chapter 19: Dysfunctional couples and couples therapy
Chapter 20: Sex, marriage, and marital and sex therapy
Chapter 21: Separation and divorce

Week 5
Topic: Functional and Dysfunctional Couples and Families, Couple and Family Assessment/Evaluation
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Glick et al., Chapter 22: The couple and reproductive issues
Chapter 6: The process of evaluation
Chapter 7: The content of evaluation
Chapter 8: Formulating an understanding of the family problem areas
Chapter 9: Tools for evaluation, including rating scales and tests

Week 6
Topic: Couple and Family Assessment/Evaluation
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Glick et al., Chapter 27: Indications for and the sequence of family therapy evaluation and treatment
Chapter 28: Controversies, relative contraindications, and the use and misuse of marital and family therapy
Chapter 29: Results: The outcome of family therapy
Ragg, Chapter 4: Exploration and data collection with families
Chapter 5: Structuring the family exploration
Chapter 6: Moving from assessment to treatment

Week 7
Topic: Couple and Family Treatment
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Glick et al., Chapter 11: Goals
Chapter 12: Family treatment: Strategies and techniques
Chapter 13: The course of family treatment
Ragg, Chapter 7: Preliminary engagement with family members
Chapter 8: Interactive engagement with family members
Chapter 9: Positioning families for change

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Week 8
Topic: Couple and Family Treatment
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Glick et al., Chapter 14: Promoting change in family treatment: Issues of alliance and resistance
Chapter 15: Family therapy: General considerations
Ragg, Chapter 10: Direct change strategies for influencing family action systems
Chapter 11: Direct change strategies for influencing family processing systems
Chapter 12: Influencing family members through indirect strategies of change
Chapter 13: Challenges and promises

Week 9
Spring Break

Week 10
Topic: Groups and Group Processes
Delivery Method: On-line Discussion

Week 11
Topic: Introduction to group work and group process
Method: In-class
Required Readings
Corey, Chapter 1: Introduction to group work
Chapter 2: Group leadership
Chapter 3: Ethical and professional issues in group practice

Week 12
Topic: Group Formation and Development, Integration and Application
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Corey, Chapter 4: Early stages in the development of a group
Chapter 5: Later stages in the development of a group
Chapter 17: Comparisons, contrasts, and integration
Chapter 18: The evolution of a group: An integrative perspective

Week 13
Topic: Group Theories and Models
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Corey, Chapter 6: The psychoanalytic approach to groups
Chapter 7: Adlerian group counseling
Chapter 8: Psychodrama in groups

Week 14
Topic: Group Theories and Models
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Corey, Chapter 9: The existential approach to groups
Chapter 10: The person-centered approach to groups
Chapter 11: Gestalt therapy in groups

Week 15
Topic: Group Theories and Models
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Corey, Chapter 12: Transactional analysis in groups
Chapter 13: Cognitive behavioral approaches in groups
Chapter 14: Rational emotive behavior therapy in groups

Week 16
Topic: Group Theories and Models
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Corey, Chapter 15: Reality therapy in groups
Chapter 16: Solution-focused brief therapy in groups

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS


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