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.

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).

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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).

**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.

**SOWK 613 COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**  
Topic: Overview of the Course; Mezzo and Macro-level Theories Overview

**Week 2**  
Topic: Community Theories

**Week 3**  
Topic: The Neighborhood as a Community & Theory

**Week 4**  
Topic: Organization Theories

**Week 5**  
Topic: Understanding Social Services Organizations: Settings and Environmental Context

**Week 6**  
Topic: Social Service Organizations: Leadership

**Week 7**  
Topic: Understanding Social Services Organizations: Structure and Dynamics

**Week 8**  
Topic: Group Theories

**Week 9**  
Topic: Understanding Groups: Types and Purposes

**Week 10**  
Topic: Diversity, Social Justice & Empowerment: Theories of Disability and Application to Macro Social Work Practice

**Week 11**  
Topic: Diversity, Social Justice & Empowerment: Theories of Poverty and Application to Macro Social Work Practice

**Week 12**  
Topic: Task Groups; Presentation/Discussion of Task Group Analysis assignment
**Week 13**  
Topic: Diversity, Social Justice & Empowerment: Rural Community Context and Application to

**Week 14**  
Topic: Global Communities & International Developmental Theories

**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.

**Week 16 – Finals Week**