SW 7560: HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT (3 credits)

Section
Instructor
E-mail
Days/Time
Office Hours

Phone:
Location:

I. COURSE DOMAIN AND BOUNDARIES

The purpose of this course is to introduce graduate social work student to knowledge and theory related to human behavior as a base for social work practice. Students are introduced to human behavior theory that guide social work assessment particularly at the micro and mezzo levels of social work practice. A strong emphasis is placed on students developing a strong grounding in the knowledge of systems theory and the ecological perspective. Students gain an understanding that people and environments reciprocally affect each other, and adequate assessments of human problems and plans of intervention must consider the reciprocal impact of people and environmental systems. Students critically analyze various human behavior theories with special regard to their: (1) relevance to individuals, families, groups, organizations, institutions, and communities; (2) inclusion of biological, psychological, and spiritual factors affecting human behavior and development; (3) consideration of social, cultural and economic forces affecting human behavior and development; and, (4) consistency with social work values and ethics; especially how they build upon social work’s commitment to social justice.

Life span development from conception to very old age is examined. The course focuses on affective, cognitive and biophysical processes in development; the environmental conditions that support or inhibit individual and family growth; and variations arising from ethnicity, class, cohort, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, and other differences. Students in the class are also introduced to developmental derailments that individuals and families may face. Human problems are viewed within their environmental context. Particular attention is given to the issues and concerns of multicultural, urban populations.

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<th>COMPETENCIES</th>
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<tr>
<td>3 - Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments</td>
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<td>4 - Engage diversity and difference in practice</td>
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<td>5 - Advance human rights and social and economic justice</td>
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<td>6 - Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research</td>
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<td>7 - Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment</td>
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<td>9 - Respond to contexts that shape practice</td>
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II. LEARNING OUTCOMES:
BENCHMARKS: By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Compare, contrast, and evaluate theories of human behavior with an understanding of their implicit value base and their relevance to social work practice (Competency 3)

- Examine family systems theory and family developmental stages calibrated with such variables as family structure, gender, biophysical processes, culture, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social change (Competency 4)

- Discuss the contribution of various theoretical perspectives to the understanding of change and development as they relate to human diversity and the consequences of discrimination and oppression on human behavior in groups, organizations and communities (Competency 5)

- Recognize the role research plays in generating, supporting, and revising theories and concepts of human behavior (Competency 6)

- Discuss the contribution of various theoretical perspectives to the understanding of ecological systems as they relate to human behavior in groups, organizations and communities (Competency 7)

- Examine social systems theory as a way of thinking about the units and levels of interaction (Competency 7)

- Use the system theory and the ecological perspective and other theoretical variables to describe and assess the behavior, functioning and development of individuals and families (Competency 7)

- Apply theory and knowledge of the life course (individual and family) to social work practice (Competency 9)

III. PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Students are expected to demonstrate their progress in basic comprehension, integration, and analyses of the course material through class assignments, i.e., papers, quizzes, exams and discussions.

IV. COURSE TEXTS AND READINGS

The textbooks for this course are:

**Recommended Readings:**


Additional recommended readings will be assigned from professional journal sources and book chapters, as listed in this syllabus.

**V. ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE**

Students are initially introduced to concepts of person-in-environment transactions. The course uses the ecological/social systems perspective as an organizing framework for understanding human behavior. However, students are introduced to a variety of human behavior theories that they are asked to analyze and critique in the first part of the course. In the second part of the course, students study life span development and apply human behavior theory to development. Human diversity is stressed throughout material on life span development. The basic method of classroom instruction will be lecture-discussion. At times there may also be student presentations, use of films or video/audio tapes, and guest speakers.

**VI. ROLE OF THE STUDENT:** The following is a specification of the attendance policy.

Students are expected to attend all class sessions; absences from class and tardiness will affect the student's grade. Five points will be deducted from the student’s grade for a missed class. For each subsequent class
missed, students will lose one letter grade. More than three absences will result in students being asked to withdraw from the class. This course covers a content domain that is extensive, and given the time framework of the course each class moves quickly in discussing information. It is necessary that students attend each class and attend class for the entire time period. Prompt arrival for class is expected; those who arrive late miss important information and disturb others; two points will be deducted for each tardy.

Understanding that some students may encounter a situation that might necessitate missing a class, students should inform the instructor of an absence. Given weather conditions, some students might occasionally arrive late. Considering that possibility, students are permitted one late class arrival before losing attendance points. For every subsequent late arrival, students will lose three points from their grade. This policy is subject to modification should a student experience a life situation that warrants alteration of the policy, such as severe illness, their own or that of an immediate family member, or death in the family. Should any such circumstance occur, request for modification of the attendance policy should be discussed with the instructor. For further details about your role as a student; see the University’s Statement of Obligations of Faculty and to the Instructional Process in the Wayne State University Graduate Bulletin.

Students are expected to be prepared at class time for discussions pertaining to assigned readings. In order to be courteous to classmates, texting during class is not permitted; cell phone use should be restricted to vibrations—no rings. Please limit beeper use to emergencies only.

**Academic Honesty:** All students are expected to submit their own original work. The presentation of another’s words or ideas as your own, without giving credit to the source, is regarded as plagiarism. Plagiarism is the same as lying and stealing. Any work that is submitted in this class and found to contain portions that are plagiarized will receive a ZERO.

**Special Accommodations:**
"If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University."

**VII. GRADING POLICY**

Final grades will be determined in the following manner:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Article Analyses</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>A = 95-100</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>C+ = 77-79.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theory Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>A- = 90-94.9</td>
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<td>C = 73-76.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>B+ = 87-89.9</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>C- = 70-72.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Responsibility</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>B = 83-86.9</td>
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1. **Article Analysis.**
Write summaries and critical reviews of 2 journal articles using theories studied in class in your text.

A. **First article analysis:** Students will write an article analysis on the Carole B. Cox article: Empowering African American Custodial Grandparents (2002). The first article analysis is due: **September 27.** Students are expected to receive a passing grade of 80% on this paper. Those students who do not receive a passing grade will be expected to rewrite the paper within one week in order to receive a passing grade of 80%.

B. **Second article analysis:** Students will be assigned an article and will present the article as a group using the criteria/rubric below. The second article analysis is due: **October 25.** (Note: there is no written component expected; however, student groups should use hand-outs and power-point to present their article to the class. Each presentation will be approximately ½ hour.

Students will provide (1) a copy of the article, (2) a brief summary of the article and the theory used, and (3) how the theory was used in the article, and (4) an evaluative commentary of the article’s use of the theory. A critical analysis on an article differs from a summary of an article. The critique should focus on the article’s use of the theory – How was the theory used? How helpful was the theory in understanding the issue/concept of the article? Why do you think this article was grounded on this theory? The article analysis should be 2-3 pages only with 1 page maximum for the summary of the article and theory used in the article, and 1 page minimum for the evaluative commentary on the article’s use of the theory. Grades for this project will primarily be based on the quality of the evaluative commentary. **All papers must use APA style of referencing.** **Be sure to use headings for each section of the paper!** Papers should include a title and reference page. An article analysis over the 3 page limit for the body of the paper will be deducted four points per page.

2. **Theory Paper.**
Each student will be required to write a 6-8 page paper comparing and contrasting Erikson’s Lifespan theory with Piaget’s Cognitive theory. Students are expected to use the Robbins text (2012) for this paper. The theory paper is due **November 22.**

The paper should:

1. Describe two theories. {Briefly provide definitions of each theory and major theoretical ideas used by each theory or theorist.} 15 points
2. Contrast and compare the principal concepts of each theory. {Show how the major concepts are similar or different.} 15 points
3. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the theories. {Show the strengths of each theory in comparison/contrast.}. Show the weaknesses of each theory in comparison/contrast/} 20 points
4. Compare and contrast the theories’ compatibility with social work values and ethics, and its commitment to economic and social justice. {Discuss and use a citation from the Code of Ethics to demonstrate compatibility with social work values and ethics.} 20 points
5. Assess the theories’ contribution to better understand human behavior. {How do these two theories help you understand human behavior on the micro-macro continuum?} 10 points
6. Assess the theories’ contribution to social work practice. Give specific examples for each theory. 20 points

All late papers will receive a 4-point penalty reduction per calendar day. All papers must use APA style referencing. **Be sure to use headings for each section!** Information for this paper should be taken from your Robbins text. No more than two citations throughout the paper from other textbooks are permitted. Four points per page will be deducted from each paper over the eight page limit.

3. **Final Exam/Papers.**

The final exam will consist of 2 papers (4-5 pages) each discussing how sociocultural factors (gender, SES, ethnicity, and sexual orientation) influence the physical and psychological changes during two different phases of the life cycle. **For one phase,** you may choose infancy, childhood or adolescence. **From the other phase,** you may choose adulthood or late adulthood.

Pages should be numbered. **Be sure to use headings for each section!** The maximum number of pages for both papers together is 10 pages! Four points will be deducted for each page over the limit. Citations from the texts and required articles MUST be integrated and cited throughout the papers. **Please highlight these citations.** No more than two citations throughout the paper may come from other textbooks are permitted. Papers using more than two citations from other texts will be returned not graded. You may use material from as many social work journal articles as desired. A reference page in APA style of referencing must be included. **Papers are due by the beginning of class on November 29.** All late papers will receive a 4-point penalty reduction per calendar day.

Assess the physical and psychological changes an individual is likely to experience in two of the following four phases of the life cycle—childhood, adolescence, middle adulthood and late adulthood. **(One phase must be chosen from childhood or adolescence and the other phase from middle adulthood or late adulthood).** Discuss how sociocultural factors influence these physical and psychological changes. Specific concepts to include when discussing each life stage are:

**CHILDHOOD** (100 points)
- Physical Changes (30 points)
- Psychological Changes (20 points) (psychodynamic, attachment, psychosocial, cognitive)
- Sociocultural Influences (20 points) (gender, social class, ethnicity, mental/physical challenges/disability)

Ecological/systems Model (10 points)
Other theoretical perspective (10 points)

**Integration of at least 2 required article readings (10 points)**

**ADOLESCENCE** (100 points)
- Physical Changes (30 points)
- Psychological Changes (20 points) (psychodynamic, psychosocial, moral, identity)
- Sociocultural Influences (20 points) (gender, social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation)
- Ecological/systems Model (10 points)
Other theoretical perspective (10 points)

**Integration of at least 2 required article readings (10 points)**
MIDDLE ADULTHOOD (100 points)
Physical Changes (20 points)
Psychological Changes (20 points) (psychosocial, moral, Levinson, Sheehy)
Sociocultural Influences (30 points)
(gender, work status, ethnicity, family relationships, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality)
Ecological/systems Model (10 points)
Other theoretical perspective (10 points)
Integration of at least 2 required article readings (10 points)

OLDER ADULTHOOD (100 points)
Physical Changes (20 points)
Psychological Changes (20 points) (psychosocial, disengagement, activity, continuity)
Sociocultural Influences (30 points)
(class, gender, ethnicity, community, religion/spirituality, family status)
Ecological/systems Model (10 points)
Other theoretical perspective (10 points)
Integration of at least 2 required article readings (10 points)

Class responsibility entails regular class attendance, class preparedness and active class participation with consideration for others. When students participate actively in class discussions, learning is enhanced. To be able to participate actively and with relevance to the course subject matter, it is important that you complete reading assignments prior to each class session. It is the student’s responsibility, whether present or absent, to keep abreast of assignments. Honest self-evaluation is a critical component to social work practice. Missing classes and repeated tardiness will affect a student’s grade in the course. You will use the class responsibility form attached to this syllabus to complete the assignment at the end of the course—in class. Any student missing more than 3 classes will be asked to drop the course or could receive a failing grade for the course.

5. Quizzes.
Students will take periodic quizzes (7) throughout the semester over readings and lectures. Quizzes will be given in varied formats (multiple choice, short answer, essay). The six highest quizzes will count towards the final grade, and the lowest quiz will be dropped with exception of the final quiz on the last day of class. Quizzes cannot be made up. If you miss one of the quizzes, that one will count as the grade that you will be able to drop. Quizzes are designed to test the students’ knowledge of the chapter material as well as the class discussions/presentations. It is important to keep up with all reading assignments.

COURSE CALENDAR

Because class time is limited, it may not be possible to cover every single topic in the course outline in class. However, students are expected to complete all required readings. Full bibliographical references for readings are provided in the course bibliography.

September 6 (Unit 1)
**September 13**  (Unit II)

A. Multidimensional framework for assessing human behavior and social functioning

B. Human behavior theory

Required Readings: Robbins et al., Chapters 1 & 2

*Systems Theory, Ecological Perspective*

Recommended readings:


**September 20**  (Unit III)  

**Quiz #1**

II. Multiple Dimensions of Person

A. The Biological Person

Understanding and assessing the biological dimension for assessing human behavior and social functioning


NOTE:


**September 27**  (Unit IV)  

**First Article Analysis Due**

B. The Psychosocial Person

Understanding and assessing the psychosocial dimension of human behavior and social functioning, *Theories of Empowerment (Lesbian and Gay, Feminist), Conflict Theory; Feminist Theory*


Recommended Readings:

October 4  (Unit V)  

Quiz #2

C. The Psychological Person
Understanding and assessing the psychological dimension of human behavior and social functioning, Theories of Emotion; Theories of Cognition, Psychodynamic Theory, Moral Development, Behaviorism, Social Learning Theory.


October 11 (Unit VI)
D. The Cultural Person
Understanding and assessing the cultural dimension of human behavior and social functioning, Theories of Assimilation, Acculturation, Bicultural Socialization, Symbolic Interaction, Social Construction


October 18  (Unit VII)  

Quiz #3

E. The Spiritual Person
Understanding and assessing the spiritual dimension of human behavior and social functioning, Transpersonal Theory and Application of Theories

Required Readings: Robbins et al., Chapter 12 & 13; Dunbar, Mueller, Medina, & Wolf (1998). Psychological and spiritual growth in women living with HIV (pp.144-154).

**October 25 (Unit VIII)**  
**Second Article Analysis Due**  
F. Life Span Theories; The Person in a Family System;  

Required Readings: Robbins Chapter 7, Hutchinson Chapter 10.  
The family as a system. In Anderson, *Family Interaction: A Multigenerational Developmental Perspective* (pp.3-17). *Family Systems*  

**NOTE:** Anderson article is located at the Wayne State Library web site.  

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**November 1 (Unit IX)**  
**Quiz #4**  

III. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE LIFE CYCLE  
A. Life Course Perspective  
   Setting the Stage; A Multidimensional Approach  

**Required Readings** Hutchinson (Changing Life Course) Chapter 1:  

B. Theoretical Perspectives on Human Behavior; The Biological Person  

**Required Readings** Hutchinson, Chapter 2 & Chapter 3  


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**November 8 (Unit X)**  
**Quiz #5**  

A. The Psychological Person  

**Required Readings** Hutchinson, Chapter 4; Jackson (1999). The effects of nonresident father involvement on single black mothers and their young children, (pp. 156-166).  


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**November 15 (Unit XI)**  
**Theory Paper Due**  

B. The Psychosocial Person; Culture
Required Readings: Hutchison, Chapters 5 & 8

C. The Spiritual Person


Scherzer et al., article is located at the Wayne State University Library web site.

November 22 (Unit XII) Quiz #6

A. The Physical Person

Required Readings: Hutchison, Chapter 7; Richman, Rosenfield & Bowen (1998). Social support for adolescents at risk of school failure, (pp. 309-323); Fraser (1996). Aggressive behavior in childhood and early adolescence: An ecological-developmental perspective on youth violence (pp. 347-361);


November 29 (Unit XIII) Final Exam Due

A. Social Structures and Social Institutions; Small Groups


**NOTE:**
Thomas et al., article is located at Wayne State University Library web site.

**December 6 (Unit XIV) Quiz #7**

B. Formal Organizations; Communities; Social Movements


Kolb article is located at Wayne State University Library web site.

**ARTICLES FOR ANALYSIS**

**Theory Articles**

**Empowerment Theories (feminist theory, Gay & Lesbian empowerment theories)**


**Systems Theories (ecological perspective, dynamic systems theory)**


**Conflict Theories (class conflict)**


**Human Development/Life Span Theories**


**Social Learning Theory/Exchange Theory**


**Cognitive Development Theory/Moral Development**


**Transpersonal Theory**


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**Bibliography**

**Evidence Based Practice**


Books on Ethics, Critical Thinking, Controversial Issues, and the Profession


Generalist Texts:


Human Behavior and the Social Environment


Direct Practice


Research and Evaluation
