I. COURSE DOMAIN AND BOUNDARIES

The purpose of this course is to develop students' abilities to demonstrate knowledge of various theories, models and perspectives that currently guide clinical social work practice with families and groups. It includes a study of the historical context and philosophical underpinnings of practice theories with families and groups. Students will analyze criteria from which practice theories with families and groups can be evaluated and develop their own practice theory for working with families or groups.

Students will critically analyze practice theories related to families and groups with regard to: (1) historical origin; (2) assumptions about human actors, environments, and their interactions; (3) assumptions about human nature (ontology), (4) how knowledge is generated (epistemology); (5) methodological issues and evidence of empirical support; (6) consistency with social work values and ethics; especially how they build upon social work’s commitment to social justice and their applicability to diverse populations; and (7) requisite knowledge and skills of the practitioners.

II. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will demonstrate advanced knowledge and skill in their understanding and articulation of the following:

1. Various theoretical approaches and models of practice by describing each in regard to: (1) historical origin; (2) assumptions about human actors, environments, and their interactions; (3) assumptions about human nature, (4) how knowledge is generated; (5) methodological issues and evidence of empirical support; (6) consistency with social work values and ethics; especially how they build upon social work’s commitment to social justice and their applicability to diverse populations; and (7) requisite knowledge and skills of the practitioners.
2. Develop, expand, and defend stated criteria for evaluation of practice theories and models related to families and groups.

3. Use criteria to critically examine and evaluate practice theories and models related to families and groups.

4. Analyze similarities and differences between social work practice theories related to families and groups.

5. Develop a beginning social work practice theory or model related to families or groups.

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, presentations, exams and discussions.

IV. COURSE TEXTS AND READINGS

The textbooks for this course are:


Readings-Coursepack: Students are required to complete additional readings.

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE

Students are introduced to a variety of social work theories related to families and groups that they are asked to analyze and critique. Student will be asked to develop criteria for practice evaluation. Additionally, students will be asked to begin to develop their own practice model for working with families and groups. The basic method of classroom instruction will be lecture-discussion. However, student presentations and the use of films or video/audio tapes, and guest speakers will also be used.

VI. ROLE OF THE STUDENT

Students are expected to attend all class sessions; absences from class may affect the student's grade, particularly excessive absences and tardiness. More than two absences will result in students being asked to withdraw from the class. Students are expected to arrive for class on time and stay until the end of the class session. Students are expected to be prepared at class time for discussions
pertaining to assigned readings. In order to be courteous to classmates, cell phones use should be restricted to vibrations—no rings. Please limit beeper use to emergencies only. For further details, see the University Statement of Obligations of Students and Faculty Members of the teaching-learning process.

VII. GRADING POLICY

Final grades will be determined in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article Analyses</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>80-78</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theory Analysis Presentation</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>80-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Model of Practice Presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>94-98</td>
<td>91-93</td>
<td>89-90</td>
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1. **Article Analyses**

Write summaries and critical reviews of 5 articles from social work journals that use a practice theory or model related to families or groups. For each article, provide (1) a full bibliographic reference and a copy of the article; (2) a brief summary of the article and theory used; (3) an assessment of the extent, nature, and use or application of the theory; and (4) an evaluative commentary the article’s use of the theory. A critical analysis of an article differs from a summary of an article. Summaries and critiques can be submitted at any time throughout the semester.

2. **Theory Analysis Presentation**

Each student will be required to choose one practice theory related to families or groups to discuss in a class presentation. Each student will be required to distribute a handout to classmates including a reference list. One week prior to the presentation, students will identify 2 key readings related to their theory presentation for students to complete. Students will notify instructor if they are choosing to present an analysis of a group or family theory. Note: Students choosing to present on a group theory will be required to complete their personal model of practice presentation on a family theory. Students choosing to present on a family theory will be required to complete their personal model of practice presentation on a group theory.

The presentation will focus on the following:

1. Describe the theory’s historical origins and evolutionary development.
2. Key concepts of the theory; central propositions.
3. Assumptions about the nature and origin of human problems.
4. Assumptions about what leads to change on all system levels.
5. How has the theory been used in the social work profession?
6. Major contributions to social work; how can it inform social work knowledge?
7. Ethical issues and consistency with social work values and ethics.
8. Application to diverse populations.
9. Requisite skills for practitioners.
10. Empirical base and the interventions that derive from it.
11. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the theory.

4. **Personal Model of Practice Presentation**

Prepare a 30-minute PowerPoint presentation proposing your own family or group model of practice with a specific population and/or problem including its underlying theoretical base. The model should include a brief conceptualization of the targeted problem(s), a description of the intervention principles, specific intervention components, and ideas on how to empirically validate the effectiveness of the model. Presentations are expected to substantially integrate course content and reflect considerable familiarity with practice theory, contemporary practice methods, a specialized area of practice and research. Please turn in a hard copy of your PowerPoint “slides.”

**VIII. COURSE CONTENT**

**Session 1**

Course Overview and Expectations: Discussion of Readings and Assignments

**Session 2**

Historical and philosophical foundations of social work practice theory


Session 3 Criteria for evaluating theories of change in families and groups


Session 4-7 Family Theory and Social Work Practice


Additional readings as assigned by class presenters.

Session 8-11 Small Group Theory and Social Work Practice


Additional readings as assigned by class presenters.

Session 12 Developing personal models of practice for work with families and groups

Session 13 Developing personal models of practice for work with families and groups

Session 14 Developing personal models of practice for work with families and groups

IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Theory Development and Evaluation


Family Theory and Social Work Practice


**Group Theory and Social Work Practice**


Social Work Practice and Theories
General Topics


