

WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

SW 9220

Theories for Practice and
Research with Groups and Families

3 Credits

Master Syllabus

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:

Corey, G. (2004). Theory and practice of group counseling. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Becvar, D. S. & Becvar, R. J. (2006). Family therapy: A systemic integration, 6th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

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:

Article Analyses =77-29	30%	A = 95-100 A- = 90-94	B- =80-78 C+ =77-76
Theory Analysis Presentation	40%	B+ = 87-89	C =73-76
Personal Model of Practice Presentation	30%	B = 83-86	C- =70-72

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

Payne, M. (2005). The social construction of social work theory. In *Modern social work theory*. (Chapter 1). Chicago, IL: Lyceum.

Payne, M. (2005). Using social work theory in practice. In *Modern social work theory*. (Chapter 2). Chicago, IL: Lyceum.

Brown, B. (1999). Searching for a theory: The journey from explanation to revolution. *Families in Society*, 80(4), 359-366.

Parton, N. (2000). Some thoughts on the relationship between theory and practice in and for social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 30(4), 449-463.

Reid, W. J. (2002). Knowledge for direct social work practice: An analysis of trends. *Social Service Review*, 76(1), 6-33.

Simon, B. L. & Thyer, B. A. (1994). Are theories for practice necessary? *Journal of Social Work Education*, 30(2), 144-152.

Goldstein, H. (1990). The knowledge base of social work practice: Theory, wisdom, analogue, or art. *Families in Society*, 71(1), 32-43.

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

Payne, M. (2005). Assessing social work theories. In *Modern social work theory*. (pp. 286-299). Chicago, IL: Lyceum.

Fischer, J. (1973). A framework for the analysis and comparison of clinical theories of induced change. In J. Fischer, *Interpersonal helping* (pp.110-130). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Robbins. S. P., Chatterjee, P. & Canda, E.R. (1999). Ideology, scientific theory, and social work practice. *Families in Society*, 80(4), 374-384.

Nugent, W. R. (1987). Use and evaluation of theories. *Social Work Research and Abstracts*, 23, 14-19.

Witkin, S. & Gottschalk, S. (1988). Alternative criteria for theory evaluation. *Social Service Review*, 62, 211-214.

Session 4-7 Family Theory and Social Work Practice

Becvar, D. S. & Becvar, R. J. (2006). *Family therapy: A systemic integration*, 6th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. pp.1-274 and 330-380.

Additional readings as assigned by class presenters.

Session 8-11 Small Group Theory and Social Work Practice

Garvin, C.D. & Reed, B. G. (1994). Small group theory and social work practice: Promoting diversity and social justice or recreating inequities? In *Human behavior theory: A diversity framework* (pp.173-201). New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Garvin, C. D. (1981). Contemporary group work: An overview. In *Contemporary group work* (pp. 5-28). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Balgopal, P. R. & Vassil, T. V. (1983). Group work: Historical overview and current status. *Groups in social work: An ecological perspective* (pp.1-18). New York: Macmillan Publishing.

- Balgopal, P. R. & Vassil, T. V. (1983). The ecological framework. *Groups in social work: An ecological perspective* (pp. 19-48). New York: Macmillan Publishing.
- Balgopal, P. R. & Vassil, T. V. (1983). Symbolic interaction and field theory. *Groups in social work: An ecological perspective* (pp. 49-78). New York: Macmillan Publishing.
- Balgopal, P. R. & Vassil, T. V. (1983). The ecology of group work practice. *Groups in social work: An ecological perspective* (pp 79-116). New York: Macmillan Publishing.
- Hilarski, C., Wodarski, J. & Dziegielewski, S. (2002). Introduction—Mezzo and macro perspectives: Group variables in human growth and development. In J. Wodarski & S. Dziegielewski (Eds.), *Human Behavior and the Social Environment* (pp.141-156). NY: Springer Publishing Company, Inc.
- Shulman, L. (1996). Social work with groups: Paradigm shifts for the 1990's. In B. Stempler, M. Glass, & C. Savinelli (Eds.), *Social Group Work Today and Tomorrow: Moving from Theory to Advanced Training and Practice* (pp. 1-18). NY: Haworth Press.
- Corey, G. (2004). *Theory and practice of group counseling*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole. Chapters 6-17.

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

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- Brown, B. (1999). Searching for a theory: The journey from explanation to revolution. *Families in Society*, 80(4), 359-366.
- Cantoni, L.E. & Cantoni, L. J. (1990). Theoretical underpinnings of practice in family service agencies. *Psychological Reports*, 66, 739-753.
- Fawcett, J. & Downs, F. (1992). *The relationship of theory and research*. (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: F.A. Davis Co.
- Goldstein, H. (1990). The knowledge base of social work practice: Theory, wisdom, analogue, or art. *Families in Society*, 71(1), 32-43.
- Imre, R. (1984). The nature of knowledge in social work. *Social Work*, 29, 41-45.
- Lyons, P., Wodarski, J., & Feit, M. D. (1998). Human behavior theory: Emerging trends and issues. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 1(1), 1-22.
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- Payne, M. (2005). *Modern social work theory*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books.
- Reamer, F. (1995). *The philosophical foundations of social work*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Reid, W. J. (2002). Knowledge for direct social work practice: An analysis of trends. *Social Service Review*, 76(1), 6-33.
- Robbins, S. Chatterjee, P. & Canda, E. (2006). *Contemporary human behavior theory: A critical perspective for social work*. NY: Pearson.
- Saleeby, D. (1990). Philosophical disputes in social work: Social justice denied. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 27(2), 29-40.

Simon, B. L. & Thyer, B. A. (1994). Are theories for practice necessary? *Journal of Social Work Education*, 30(2), 144-152.

Shulman, L. (1993). Developing and testing a practice theory: An interactional perspective. *Social Work*, 38(1), 91-97.

Souflee, F.A. (1993). A metatheoretical framework for social work practice. *Social Work*, 38(3), 317-331.

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Turner, F. J. (1996). *Social work treatment: Interlocking theoretical approaches*. New York: The Free Press.

Weick, A. (1987). Reconceptualizing the philosophical perspective of social work. *Social Service Review*, 61, 218-230.

Family Theory and Social Work Practice

Anderson, S. A. (1999). The family as a system. In *Family interaction: A multigenerational developmental perspective* (pp.3-17). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Atwood, N. (2001). Gender bias in families and its clinical implications for women. *Social Work*, 46(1), 23-35.

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Beckett, J. & Coley, S. (1987). Ecological intervention with the elderly: A case example. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 11, 137-157.

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Social Work Practice and Theories
General Topics

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- Cooper, B. (2002). Constructivism in social work: Towards a participative practice viability. *British Journal of Social Work*, 31(5), 721-738.
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