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### SW 300.01: Human Behavior and Social Environment

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**Social Work 300**  
**Human Behavior and the Social Environment**  
**Fall 2008**  
**Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:10-4:00 pm**  
**LA 205**

**Instructor: Danielle F. Wozniak**  
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**Prerequisites**

Enrollment in SW 300 is concurrent with enrollment in the first advanced social work practice course, SW 350. SW 300 concentrates on the first stage of the problem-solving process, assessment. Thus, SW 300 provides an integrated foundation knowledge base for assessment designed to complement the planning and intervention emphases of SW 350 and SW 360. Social work majors enrolling in SW 300 must have completed at least six of the eight extra-departmental requirements established by the School of Social Work and must have already completed or be concurrently enrolled in Psychology 240 (Child and Adolescent Development) and /or Psychology 245 9 (Adult Development and Aging). Students must have been officially accepted into the social work major and 300 level courses by the School of Social Work.

**Course Overview**

*Human Behavior and the Social Environment* focuses on the development of human behavior within a biological, social, psychological, cultural, and spiritual context. The dynamics of human behavior will be explored through a systematic view of human development over the life span from social systems, ecological and strengths perspectives. The course will also assist students in organizing already acquired knowledge regarding human development from other disciplines, integrating this knowledge into an overall, organized perspective. A systems view of human behavior will be taken, allowing students to focus on individuals, families, groups, organizations, community and society. Students will be exposed to practice applications of material presented, with particular attention to assessment phase of social work practice. Emphasis will be placed on ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability and other forms of diversity.

**Course Content**

The course will help the student preparing for multi-level generalist social work practice develop an understanding of the individual in interaction with his/her social environment and as a continuously developing product of biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual influences. Exposure to the ecological perspective on social work practice will give students the ability to integrate knowledge of individuals and families within their environments into all aspects of the social work process, including assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation. Students will develop a knowledge base which will allow them to choose practice strategies appropriate to the situation, whether they are at the individual, family, group, organization, community, or societal level.

Increased familiarity with human behavior-relevant theory and knowledge will broaden student perspective, a process imperative since social workers repeatedly deal with situations requiring understanding of multi-system interactions. Employment of the organizing framework developed in the course will assist students in improving their ability to analyze and reach insights about individual, behavioral and systems dynamics. This provides critical foundation for the selection of appropriate social work practice strategies.

### **Relation to Other Courses**

SW 300 provides a foundation for the junior level practice courses and builds upon the extra departmental courses required by the School of Social Work.

### **Program Objectives that Relate to the Course**

**PO 1** Apply critical thinking skills within the context of professional social work practice

**PO 2** Understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards and principles, and practice accordingly

**PO 3** Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and apply strategies of advocacy and social change that advance social and economic justice

**PO 4** Practice without discrimination and with respect, knowledge and skills related to client's age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation

**PO 5** Demonstrate understanding of the history of the social work profession and its contemporary structures and issues

**PO 6** Apply the knowledge and skills of generalist social work practice with systems of all sizes, while exhibiting effective practice in a range of professional social work roles

**PO 7** Use theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand and apply to practice individual development and behavior across the lifespan and the interaction among individuals and families, groups, organizations, and communities

**PO 8** Demonstrate the ability to analyze, formulate, and influence social policies, including understanding the connections between social problems and social policies

**PO 9** Demonstrate basic research skills of ethical collection and analysis of data, evaluation of research studies, application of research findings to practice, and evaluation of one's own practice interventions

**PO 10** Use communication skills differently across client populations, colleagues, organizational settings, and communities

**PO 11** Use supervision and consultation to promote effective social work practice

**PO 12** Demonstrate appropriate professional, ethical conduct within practice settings and contribute to positive organizational maintenance, development and change

**PO 13** Practice the skills of the generalist social worker in rural settings and underserved areas of the Rocky Mountain West.

### **Course Objectives**

The student will meet the following course objectives

**CO 1** Demonstrate an understanding of the individual as a social, psychological, biological, cultural, and spiritual being, incorporating both an appreciation of individuality and of the impact of environmental influences.

**CO 2** Develop assessment skills for use in understanding the interaction of the individual and the social environment including client strengths and needs

**CO 3** Understand the individual as both a unique system and as a component part of various social systems

**CO 4** Understand a variety of theories and perspectives on human behavior

**CO 5** Understand social, biological, psychological, spiritual and cultural aspects of human behavior that occur during various life stages and in different environmental contexts

**CO 6** Explore patterns of functioning, life styles, and value systems which differ from one's own as well as the impact of one's experiences on understanding human behavior.

**CO 7** Demonstrate understanding of diversity, including ethnicity, culture, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, ideology, and socio-economic status with particular emphasis on the effects of discrimination on populations at risk

**CO 8** Analyze issues relating to social and economic justice and their relevance for understanding human behavior

### **Required Reading**

Elizabeth D. Hutchison, *Dimensions of Human Behavior: Person and Environment*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Sage Publications, 2008.

Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis and Michele Foster, *Unrelated Kin: Race and Gender in women's Personal Narratives*. 1996.

Articles and other materials on reserve at Mansfield Library

Web sites as assigned

### **Class Attendance and Participation**

Students are expected to attend class regularly, to complete assigned reading prior to class, and to be prepared to participate actively in class discussions and activities. Poor attendance and failure to participate in discussions will lower students' overall grades. Attendance will be taken.

### **Late Assignments**

Late assignments are unacceptable. For each class period an assignment is late, half a letter grade will be deducted from the grade for that assignment. Students with unavoidable circumstances which result in late papers must speak to the instructor.

### **Student Discussant and Work Groups**

Every week we will have one or two student discussants to summarize the chapter and to call our attention to some interesting or critical components of each chapter. Discussants are encouraged to relate these aspects of the chapter to their own experiences, interests, or questions. Discussants may work individually or in pairs.

We will also assigning work groups to prepare and present group findings on various topics.

### **Course Assignments**

**(1) Essay #1 on Perspectives (due September 25)**

Students are to write a 4-5 page (double spaced) essay on the concept of “perspectives” on human behavior. Based on assigned readings in the text, classroom content, and student reflection, the essays are to address:

- What is a professional perspective?
- Why are certain perspectives important to take on clients?
- Which perspectives discussed in class are most important to understanding clients?
- All perspectives have strengths and weaknesses; all perspectives are premised on certain assumptions or beliefs about the social and material world around us. In your essay be sure to address how we work with theoretical limitations, flaws and strengths.
- How can you acquire the ability to competently use these perspectives?

**(2) Essay #2 Social Assessment (due November 6)**

Students are to write a social assessment of the main character in the film *LadyBird, LadyBird*. A format will be provided, and social assessments will be covered in class. Students are to demonstrate the ability to take multidimensional, integrative, social systems, ecosystems, and strengths perspectives on their “client.” They are also to show their ability to assess a client and make recommendations on interventions, as well as to critique the perspectives of key social workers and key social service agencies.

**(3) Essay #3 Life History Interview (due November 25)**

Building on classroom discussion on person and environment and using interview tools provided by the instructor students will each conduct a life history interview with a person of their selection. Students will be given orientation and guidance on selecting their participant and conducting their interview. The information from your interview should be summarized and must include your reflections. I will be looking for your ability to synthesize the material we have covered in class relative to the information gleaned in your interview.

**(4) Midterm Examination 1 (October 9)**

The format of this exam will be discussed in class.

**(5) Final Examination 2 (December 10)**

The format of this exam will be discussed in class.

**Grading**

Essay on perspectives	100 points
Social assessment	200 points
Life History Interview	200 points
Exam 1	100 points
Exam 2	100 points
Attendance/ participation	100 points

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800 points

- A 720-800 points
- B 640-719 points
- C 560-639 points
- D 480-559 points
- F 0-479 points

### **Week 1 August 26 and 28: Introduction Person, Time, Environment and Critical Thinking**

**Read:** Chapter 1 Aspects of Human Behavior- Hutchison

**Assignments:** Following the guidelines in Active Learning #1 (p 35) write your own multi-dimensional story. Answer the questions raised in this assignment and be prepared to discuss in class.

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter.

Divide into groups for next week's assignment

### **Week 2 September 2 and 4: Theoretical Perspectives for Social Work Practice**

**Read:** Chapter 2 Theoretical Perspectives on Human Behavior-Hutchison

**Assignments:** Within your groups prepare and present the "big ideas" of each theory, then discuss the merits and limitations of each perspective. (Play Wozniak's game, "Upon what assumptions are these premises based" with each perspective). You may apply these ideas to the Clark family and/or to another situation or family you may have worked with or your own.

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

### **Week 3 September 9 and 11: Overview of Human Diversity**

**Read:** Chapter 8 Hutchison

Chapter 1 "From a Lineage of Southern Women: She has Left us Empty and Full of Her"  
and Chapter 2 "You Don't Just Live For Yourself: Stories from a Chinese Woman in Atlanta" in Etter-Lewis

**Assignments:** Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

### **Week 4 September 16 and 18: Biological Development**

**Read:** Chapter 3 - Hutchison

Chapter 6 "I Have a Frog in My Stomach" in Etter-Lewis

**Assignments:** Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

**Week 5 September 23 and 25: Psychological Development**

**Read:** Chapter 4-Hutchison

**Assignments:** Essay #1 due on the 25<sup>th</sup>

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

**Week 6 September 30 and October 2: Social/Cultural Development**

**Read:** Chapter 5- Hutchison The Psychosocial Person

Chapter 7- "Tryin' to Make Ends Meet"- Etter-Lewis

**Assignments:** Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

**Week 7 October 7 and 9: Moral and Spiritual Development**

**Read:** Chapter 6- Hutchison

**Assignments:** Expect Midterm Exam

Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

**Week 8 October 14 and 16 Multiple Dimensions of the Psychosocial Environment**

**Read:** Chapter 7 The Physical Environment and Chapter 13 Communities

**Assignments:** Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

**Week 9 October 21 and 23 Social Institutions**

**Read:** Chapter 9 Social Institutions and Social Structure

**Assignment:** Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

**Week 10 October 28 and 30 Family As a Social System**

**Read:** Chapter 10 Families

**Assignment:** Watch and discuss film *Lady Bird, Lady Bird*

**Week 11 November 6 Family As a Social System continued**

**Read:** Chapter 3 "More than a Mother" Etter-Lewis

**Assignment:** finish discussion of Chapter 10

Essay #2 due on November 6<sup>th</sup>

**Week12 November 13 Groups**

**Read:** Chapter 11 Small Groups

**Assignments:** Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

**Week 13 November 18 and November 20 Groups and Organizations**

**Read:** Chapter 12

**Assignments:** Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

**Week 14 November 25 Communities**

**Read:** Chapter 13

**Assignments:** Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

**Week 15 December 2 and 4 Social Movements and Influences**

**Read:** Chapter 14- Hutchison

Chapter 4-“I Know Who I Am: The Collaborative Life History of a Shoshone Indian Woman”- Etter-Lewis

**Assignment:** Essay #3 Life History Due

Prepare Class Discussion Sheet

Please be able to define and discuss the key terms at the end of the chapter

**Final Exam** December 10, 2008 3:20-5:20

**Web Sites**

1. [www.dphhs.mt.gov/aboutus/divisions/childfamilyservices/index.shtml](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/aboutus/divisions/childfamilyservices/index.shtml)
2. [www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov)
3. [www.collegedinkingprevent.gov](http://www.collegedinkingprevent.gov)
4. [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
5. [www.aaets.org](http://www.aaets.org)
6. [www.hmhb-mt.org/kidscent.htm](http://www.hmhb-mt.org/kidscent.htm)
7. [www.uncp.edu/home/marson/rural/nasw\\_rural\\_policy\\_statement.html](http://www.uncp.edu/home/marson/rural/nasw_rural_policy_statement.html)
8. [www.spahs.umt.edu/sw/alumnipractitioner/gswi/centuryinreview.pdf](http://www.spahs.umt.edu/sw/alumnipractitioner/gswi/centuryinreview.pdf)