

**NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**  
**SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM**  
**SWK-303: HUMAN BEHAVIOR & THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT I**  
**Spring, 2009**

**Professor: Jane Peller**

**Office: CLS 3078**

**Office hours:** Monday 8-9:00, Tuesday 12:30-2, Wednesday 3-4:00 and by appointment. The best way to contact me is by email at [j-peller@neiu.edu](mailto:j-peller@neiu.edu). All emails are responded to within the day unless otherwise posted.

**Phone:** 442-4763

**PRE-REQUISITES**

English 101

**Liberal Arts:** Social Work 200; Sociology 100; Psychology 100 and 110; Economics 215; Political Science 216; Anthropology 212; Biology 100

**Social Work Foundation:** SWK-200 Introduction to Social Work

**Co-requisite:** SWK-304: Social Work Practice I

**REQUIRED MATERIALS**

- **TEXT BOOK:** Lesser, Joan Granucci and Donna Saia Pope, Human Behavior and the Social Environment: Theory and Practice, Pearson Press, 2007
- **BLACKBOARD:** all lectures are posted in powerpoint form on blackboard as well as tutorials, learning objects and articles
- **ON-LINE DISCUSSIONS:** required on-line discussions through our course blackboard site.
- Access to New York Times newspaper

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

**Readings on reserve in the library which you will need to read for class:**

- Robbins, Chatterjee, Canda, Contemporary Human Behavioral Theory, Allyn and Bacon, 2004
- Longres, John. Human Behavior and the Social Environment. Illinois: Peacock Publishers. 1995
- Schriver, Joe. Human Behavior and the Social Environment. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1998
- Anderson, Joseph, Diversity Perspectives for Social Work Practice. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2003.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is the first of a two-part required sequence by the Council of Social Work Education. SWK-303 is designed to enhance students' critical thinking skills about how people understand themselves, how they create meaning in their lives, how they change, and how our perspective influences of our understanding of the client-systems. The generalist practice model which is based upon the conceptual frameworks of the ecological systems approach, the strengths perspective, the biopsychosocialspiritual frameworks, post modernist philosophy and international perspective are used to understand the central principle of this course: empowerment-- verses oppression and alienation. The empowerment themes of: client capacity, resiliency, opportunities, context, constitution and construction will be weaved into discussions about the human condition. With these frameworks the student develops an understanding of the complex global interrelationships between political, social, cultural, economic, environmental and spiritual systems, and individual's functioning. As a writing intensive course students develop the fundamentals of professional writing skills used in the social work field.

## **COURSE OUTCOMES**

At the completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

### examine:

1. the principles and concepts underpinning the generalist model as it applies to understanding the human condition
2. the interrelationship of the biopsychosocialspiritual domains in understanding individual functioning
3. the process by which one's own attitudes and biases shape interactions with others forming a stance that values global equality
4. how one's perspective of human rights and social justice has been modified, changed, or enhanced
5. one's perspective on individual functioning by applying theories of identity development
6. the integration of an international perspective to form a state of critical consciousness in understanding how others' form a construction of self
7. the global and international concerns which foster and/or suppress the interrelationship and empowerment of individuals, families, groups, and communities.
8. the processes by which social systems foster or suppress human rights and social justice which impact upon the development and functioning of people locally and globally
9. the interrelationship between the individual's development of self with the larger political, economic, and environmental systems
10. how risk and protection factors impact various responses to trauma.

### demonstrate:

11. level 2 proficiency in Core Social Work Professional Identity (see attachment)

## **COURSE CONTENT AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION**

This course has multiple methods of instruction: lecture, experiential exercises, small and large group discussions, out-of-class projects and active participation on-line through the class Blackboard site. As a writing intensive course students also develop the fundamentals of professional writing skills necessary for employment in the social work field.

### **UNIT I - A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND HBSE**

#### **Weeks: 1-2**

**Content:** This unit of the course presents a fundamental idea which is that truth is a constructed experience and relative to power and cultural context. Students begin to develop critical thinking skills in analyzing this idea by trying to answer the questions of: how do we know what 'truth' is versus the meaning we place upon an event? How can we be sure what is right? And, what difference does that make in our personal and professional lives? The idea is for students to begin to develop a framework for how to approach the many diverse theories and models of human behavior and social systems presented in this course. By lecture, small group activities and completion of the paper 'One's Perspective of Self' student demonstrate skills in critical analysis relative to professional and personal self.

### **UNIT II - WHAT IS HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND IT**

#### **Weeks: 2-5**

**Content:** The objective of this unit is to have students develop a mind-set towards people that integrates the assumptions within our generalist perspective of social work practice. We will review the central principals, frameworks and themes that are inherent in the ecological-system perspective, the biopsychosocial framework, and the strengths perspective and post-modern philosophy. The central themes of resiliency, competency, possibilities, constitution, context and opportunities will be

presented. The basic question to be addressed here is: how can we develop a mind-set on human behavior that is open and developing of acceptance, equality and fairness? What are strengths and how can I have a collaborative mind-set in order to enhance mine and other's strengths? How can you see strengths in the midst of adversity and trauma? How does this make a difference to you and others? Students demonstrate their understanding of this unit with the completion of the paper entitled 'Understanding and Developing Resiliency'.

### **Unit III - THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE**

**Weeks: 5-8**

**Content:** The objective of this section is for students in developing a perspective of how to understand the intra-personal experiences of individual. This includes a critical examination of the major social theories of our time, their assumptions about people and change, and the functioning of one's "well-being." The theories to be included are: behavioral, structural-functionalism, symbolic interaction, Marxism, developmental theories, DSM framework, ego psychology and the biopsychosocial framework. Through the eyes of our critical perspective there will be class discussion on how these theories help us to understand human functioning and the implications of this for practice. Special emphasis will be given to intra-personal experiences of people of color and ethnic, age, gender and sexual orientation. The central question here is: how do these or other theories help to understand a person's experience of themselves in the world? How can we help facilitate and collaborate with consumers to understand their strengths and resilience? Students apply their knowledge of these theories in the 'Application of Generalist Model' paper.

### **UNIT IV: BECOMING CULTURALLY COMPETENT**

**WEEKS: 9-11**

**Content:** The objective of this section is for students to understand and incorporate a stance of cultural competency. In class through experiential exercises and small group discussions students learn how to acknowledge and value diversity, or what we term 'multifaceted content'. Students will examine the experiences of the major ethnic groups in Chicago: African-Americans, Hispanic, Asian, gay/lesbian and ethnic white immigrants. The basic question here is how do people create meaning of themselves? How do people develop a sense of belonging that is positive and facilitates self-growth? How do stories and narratives in one's culture and group affiliation influence us and the lives of our clients? Student's demonstrate their knowledge through a group presentation to the class.

### **UNIT V -DEVELOPING A SENSE OF BELONGING AND EMPOWERMENT**

**Weeks: 11-15**

**Content:** The objective of this section is for students to develop an understanding of the role of power in people's experience of self and with one's experience of oppression/alienation versus empowerment. Content includes: definition and scope of power especially in supporting justice; the role of belonging to community and family groups in forming ones' sense of empowerment. The central question here is: How can we develop an understanding of peoples' experience of oppression and discrimination on an individual and group basis? What stories are told about how to deal with oppression and discrimination in different cultural groups? How do organizations and families support liberation from oppression? What role does resiliency play in coping with social injustice? Students complete the paper 'Developing a Sense of Belongingness' in which they demonstrate critical analysis of how one's connection to where one lives hinders or promotes oppression versus empowerment.

### **STUDENT CONDUCT AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- **ATTENDANCE:** Regular and on-time attendance: You are granted 3 unexcused absences for the term. After the third absence, or lateness one point will be deducted. Each subsequent absence or lateness will be an additional point.

- **PLAGIARISM:** Any form of plagiarism is not acceptable. If a paper, or presentation is plagiarized, including turning in work that someone else has completed for you, it will be regarded as an ethics violation. It is the instructors right to decide the consequences of the plagiarized action. These consequences could include, but not be limited to: failing the class, referral to the Dean of Students for University Academic involvement, review by Social Work Faculty for appropriateness of retaining student as a Social Work major. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics* is available online at: [www.naswdc.org](http://www.naswdc.org) to review ethical conduct expected in this profession
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** All assignments are to be submitted on the due date unless prearranged with the instructor. Your written work is expected to show thoroughness, accuracy, clarity, and professionalism. Such writing generally requires first writing, then reviewing/proofreading (by a trusted resource or the writing lab), editing, and then rewriting. All papers (unless otherwise indicated by instructor) should be consistent with the Writing with Style: APA Style for Social Work. Papers should be typed using standard fonts. Please number your pages and use a header indicating your name and the paper's title. All papers MUST be stapled together with the appropriate rubric. Grammar, spelling, syntax, and organization are important and will be evaluated. You are highly encouraged to seek assistance on your papers from the NEIU Writing Lab at (773) 442-5480 which is located at CLS 2046 and with the CAW (Center for Academic Writing) located on the fourth floor of the library. Re-writes: You are encouraged to re-write your papers for as many times as you would like. You must include the old rubric and attach as new rubric on top. You are not required to rewrite your papers but are encouraged to make your papers top quality.
- **CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Participation is more than class attendance. It requires active and appropriate interaction in class activities. Preparation for class includes reading the assigned readings PRIOR to class, summarizing the content and being prepared to discuss it, listing questions or reactions to the material, and making connections between concepts in current reading and earlier readings.
- **SPECIAL NEEDS:** Students with special needs should notify the instructor immediately so that available accommodations can be made. Any student needing to arrange reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Northeastern Illinois University's Disability Services Program at (773) 442-5496

**SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS (see full description on Blackboard site):**

- **Development of One's Perspective of Self (40 points—20% of total grade)**

This is a 4-6 page paper in which the student identifies both pivotal point and social focuses that confirmed their commitment to be a social worker. The goal of this paper is to identity one's own ideas about how people change, the process of helping others and the role of a social worker in that relationship.

- **Understanding the Development Of Resiliency Analysis (30 points—15% of total grade)**

This is a 6-8 page paper in which the student analyzes their understanding of how patterns of resiliency develop in people. In order to accomplish this task the student will use themselves as the subject in which he/she will compare and contrast several sources of evidence to substantiate their hypotheses about their own resiliency becoming an effective professional social worker.

- **Application of the Generalist Model Of Practice Case Study (30 points—15% of total grade)**

This is a 5-6 page paper in which the student develops basic skill in the components of writing a professional case assessment that is used in the social service agencies.

- **Practice Applications Presentation (30 points—15% of total grade)**

This is a group presentation in which the student group explores practice considerations with an assigned ethnic group. Students are required to include a powerpoint presentation.

- **Developing A Sense Of Belongingness In Communities (40 points—20% of total grade)**

This is a 6-8 page paper in which the students learn about the importance and impact of a client's connection to a geographical community in which they live. Students explore the components of their community as well as the impact of social justice issues on community membership.

- **On-Line Discussion Participation (20 points—10% of total grade)**

This is a ungraded required assignment in which the student participates in the discussion board in the Blackboard site. Students are free to choose the type of participation but will not be graded. Students receive points for each discussion board 'notation' up to 20 points.

- **Reflections on Your Professional Identity Development (Ungraded)**

Throughout the term at key learning moments students are asked in class to write short reflections identifying pivotal points of learning leading to core competencies outlined by CSWE. Students are asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 their sense of achievement and then write a reflection. The exercise last no longer than 15 minutes. Students are given feedback from the instructor by the next class session or by email.

**Grading Criteria:**

Given that this class is the first course in the foundation curriculum for social work majors, students are expected to demonstrate competency for continuing. Students are expected to rewrite all required written assignments until they have mastered the foundation concepts.

195-200 = A

180-194 = B

170-179 = C

160-169 = D