

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH FAMILIES

Course Description

This third-semester practice emphasis course focuses on comparative approaches to social work treatment of families. Emphasis will be on furthering knowledge of the major models of family therapy and their applicability to social work practice. Models selected for study will be examined in relation to underlying theory, goals of therapy, methods and techniques, empirical status and differential application. Attention will be given to models which view the family as a system. The family's organization, assessment and hypothesis formulation and development of interventive strategies, developmental stages, gender issues, cultural and racial issues and the larger contexts of setting and society will be developed. Some attention is given to issues in treatment of special populations and to ethical issues. An experiential component emphasizes skills in application of theory and methods.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course students should be able to:

1. Identify and explain the significance of contextual frameworks that inform practice with families.
2. Specify and differentiate major systems concepts underlying family practice.
3. Conduct systemically-focused therapeutic assessments of family functioning.
4. Formulate clinically useful hypotheses and relevant intervention strategies.
5. Conduct focused therapeutic conversations with families.
6. Formulate and implement session tasks appropriate to established treatment goals.
7. Read feedback from the family and adjust interventions as indicated.
8. Recognize relevant interactional sequences and their implication for treatment.
9. Intervene in ways that are responsive to the family's developmental status and needs.
10. Interact and intervene with families in gender-sensitive ways.
11. Recognize and respond to significant racial and cultural issues relevant to the family's functioning.
12. Contrast major models of family therapy in relation to underlying theory, treatment goals, methods/techniques, empirical status and differential applications.
13. Make selective application of different models to given family situations and clinical needs.
14. Distinguish appropriate practice implications derivable from the research on family treatment.
15. Identify significant ethical issues in social work practice with families.
16. Specify the needs of special populations and their implications for family practice.

The major emphasis of this course is on development of knowledge about comparative models of family therapy with emphasis upon the systemic models. The instructional format for the didactic portion of family treatment will combine the following: 1) lectures, 2) discussion of readings and practice experiences, 3) case presentation and analysis and 4) tapes/films of different approaches to family treatment. Some changes in the projected course-schedule may be necessary to accommodate specific developments in class.

In keeping with course objectives and to assure a common frame of reference for discussion, students will be expected to complete required readings related to designated topic areas. The family therapy literature is vast so readings at best can only be selective. Designating readings as required is in no way intended to restrict what students read and, in fact, you are strongly encouraged to extend your reading in areas of special interest. A supplementary bibliography will be available for this purpose.

Written assignments should be of professional quality and meet minimal standards with regard to substance, clarity and general editorial condition. Work submitted in poor editorial condition will be lowered one-half grade level. Students whose writing skills are deficient should take the initiative to obtain the kind of assistance necessary to meet the requirements for graduate-level written work. Plagiarism is not acceptable and results in a failing grade for the course.

Written assignments are expected to be submitted on time. Late submissions without prior arrangements with the instructor will have grades lowered one full-letter grade. The instructor, on occasion, will consider a grade of Incomplete. University policy requires that the student provide the instructor with a satisfactory reason for an I grade (serious illness or family crisis) and have completed satisfactorily at least three-quarters of the course requirements at a passing level. Requests for incompletes should be submitted to the instructor in writing at the earliest possible time.

The instructional process for the experiential component will combine: 1) mini-lectures, 2) live demonstrations and skill practice sessions, 3) videotaped simulated family treatment sessions, 4) peer/instructor observation, feedback and 5) completion of written exercises and analysis forms and 6) class analysis of practice experiences.

At the beginning of the course, one or more family units will be formed to provide the focal point for skill practice activity during the semester. These simulated families will be treated for a duration of from 2 to 6 sessions. Treatment sessions will be videotaped in class. Students not serving as family members will be divided into treatment teams or observer teams. Treatment will be provided by therapists rotating from the respective treatment teams. (Class size, however, may make it impossible for all students to obtain experience as a therapist.) Written guidelines for the experiential process including roles of family members, therapists and treatment team members are provided in the course reader.

If class enrollment is greater or less than twenty, design of the experiential process may need to be modified to accommodate class size.

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Major assignments and requirements:

1. Family assessment and treatment plan- (40% total with Parts A and B each 20%)

Students will be expected to complete an in-depth, written assessment and intervention plan of a family. The family chosen for this assignment will be selected from among a list of films depicting family life in different contexts. The films are Avalon, Boyz N the Hood, the Color Purple, Dad, Rambling Rose, Fried Green Tomatoes. (You may choose the film; you will use the same film for both assignments.)

a. Part One: Due November 1, 1993

Following a description of the family context and brief profile of each family member, proceed to discuss the following: (1) prominent structural features of the family including hierarchies, boundaries, coalitions, roles; (2) major developmental themes/crises; (3) significant interactional sequences including an analysis of family functioning i.e. communication patterns; degree of cohesion, bonding and differentiation and adaptability; quality of interaction; function of symptoms; (4) cultural dimensions and context; (5) gender issues of significance; (6) larger system constraints and resources and (7) overall summary of major dysfunctional features along with family strengths and resources.

Length: 6-8 pages double spaced typed with footnotes referenced to course readings.

Part Two: Due November 29, 1993

For the purposes of this assignment, assume that the family being assessed actually presented at a family serving agency and that you were the professional assigned to the case. Complete the following in a manner that demonstrates your sensitivity to issues of class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation:

- a. briefly discuss the dynamics of this family unit demonstrating your knowledge of family theory
- b. select three schools of family therapy and describe the approach and treatment interventions which each would take in the treatment of this family
- c. develop your own detailed treatment plan that addresses the following: (1) presenting problem(s); (2) hypothesis about the problem(s); (3) therapeutic goals; (4) strategies for achieving these goals. The paper should give rationale for your points of view and assertions, goals and strategies selected. Specify problems, goals, and treatment strategies in behavioral terms, i.e. indicate contract for services and indicate initial homework assignment.

Length: 8-10 pages double-spaced typed with footnotes referenced to course readings.

2. Self-Awareness Reaction Paper Due December 13, 1993 (25%)

Assigned Text: "How Can I Help?" Dass and Gorman; "Becoming a Family Therapist" by Kramer.

Discussion of the process of self-awareness evolving for you using the quotes and the assigned texts as the conceptual framework to discuss issues of personal and professional growth.

"We can seek to identify certain basic inner obstacles to the expression of our caring instincts-- Opening to our pain, exploring the roots of our suffering, at best with guidance or support, can always increase our opportunity for well-being. But this process also can be of immeasurable value in our efforts to be of service to others. As our understanding of our own suffering deepens, we become available at deeper levels to those we would care for. We are less likely to project suffering that does not exist or deny that which does. We're much more sensitive and alert to the nuances of human pain";

"I saw that healing comes with owning our wounds as the first step in moving beyond them";

"By being compassionate with ourselves in the process, we can turn burdensome situations into situations for growth" (Dass & Gorman, 1985).

An area of professional enhancement which continually challenges people in the "helping" profession is to understand one's own values and the levels of one's own comfort as they impact upon the "helping process", particularly in the face of client or agency values that conflict with one's personal belief systems. The purpose of this assignment is to have the student conduct a critical and thoughtful self-analysis as a member of a family and as a member of the Social Work profession assisting families. As you reflect upon the role(s) that you play(ed) in your family of origin, the role of the family therapist, the "goodness of fit" between a particular family therapy modality and your personal style, belief systems and professional objectives, discuss the self-awareness required as you evolve your professional practice as one of the "Masters" of family therapy. The paper should be at least 8-10 pages (1.5 spaced) and leave 1/4 inch space minimum in the margins for my comments.

Content areas to be covered:

1. Personal Awareness: (Maintain your level of personal safety with disclosure--I am looking for your critical assessment of what will impact upon your role as a worker and what contributes to your helping prison.)
 - a. Individual Dimensions: the role(s) that you play(ed) in your family; your feelings of hope, loss, trust, stress; how do you get your needs met; the ways that you have learned to cope; your process of developing your identity. give a general statement about the other members in your family (the people who raised you) who had an

influence on your development. An area of professional enhancement which continually challenges people in the "helping" professions is to understand one's own values and the levels of one's own comfort as they impact upon the "helping process", particularly in the face of client or agency values that conflict with one's personal belief systems.

b. **Family Characteristics:** discuss (1) family themes in your family of origin; (2) family beliefs and myths; (3) family value systems and the impact of these family characteristics made upon you as a person and as a professional helping person. How has growing up in your family affected the way that you live your life and make the professional choices that you have made? What is the process of communication of feelings in your family and what is your understanding of your place in your family? Identify the healthy and unhealthy aspects of your behavior and relationships with others in your family (again keeping in mind that the purpose is to assess how these dynamics might they impact upon your role as a social worker conducting family therapy).

2. Use Kramer's "Becoming a Therapist" and Dass and Gorman's "How Can I Help?" as a basis for a discussion to critically assess your strengths and your areas of professional development as a worker. Discuss how your family life impacts and affects that type of social work that you "do" and offer to clients. What aspects of your "helping person behavior" do you feel positive about and what aspects would you like to change or strengthen as a family practitioner? What value systems/ areas of prejudice and bias/ personal "wounds" and your "stuff" are being challenged by conducting social work with families? Articulate the conflict/ the level of uncomfortableness within you. Is this a new "wound" being pushed or an old "wound" being pushed again, and again? How do you (or do you) deal with this feeling inside of you? How do you acknowledge your reactivity to pain? What is the fall out of reactivity for you and how does it color your work as a professional helping person? What self-awareness have you gained from acknowledgement of these wounds and the reactivity surrounding these issues?

What is your "helping prison"? How does the excess baggage that is carried into the working relationship end up confining you? What can you do to become free from the "helping prison" and free from the attachment of being a "helper" to allow creativity in your relationships with people? What are the risks of the role that you assume and how does that keep you in the helping prison?

(This is a very key awareness to have as a professional family therapist, therefore demonstrate introspection as well as having read the assigned texts).

3. Now that you have reflected upon your personal and family issues and your assessment of the impact of these issues upon your helping person behavior, discuss the family treatment modality(s) that "feels like a good fit" to who you are as a person and as a professional. Provide a brief overview of the modality(s); and discuss why this method(s) of working with family attracts you. Hypothesize about the connection between your discussion in areas 1 and 2 and your choice of this modality(s). Discuss how you will use this modality to help you to remain open to issues of race,

gender, class, and sexual orientation within family structures. Discuss how this modality will help you to stay "open to" and "out there" with your issues of the "helping prison".

4. Discuss what are steps to be taken to help minimize the reactivity, to acknowledge how your own ego colors the working relations with others, how you will become more gentle with yourself. Devise an one year plan to strategize the accomplishment of personal and professional development taking into account issues addressed in areas 2 and 3.

This paper is for you--an opportunity to integrate what the past semester (maybe even past three years) has been about for you. The paper length: at least 6-8 pages (1.5 spaced). Please leave 1/2 inch space minimum in the margins for my comments.

3. Class attendance and participation (25%):

Evaluation of class participation will take into account the manner and extent to which the student 1) attends regularly and on-time, 2) shares own experiences, viewpoints and reactions, 3) raises relevant questions and issues, 4) participates in analysis of practices under discussion, 5) gives performance feedback to others, 6) uses feedback constructively, 7) completes written exercises and 8) evaluates own performance in an objective and discriminating way. Please note earlier remarks about non-attendance and patterns of lateness. You will complete a self-evaluation due on the last day of class-December 12.

Evaluation and Grading: Students will be graded using the following scale:

A+ 9	B+ 6	C+ 3
A 8	B 5	C 2
A- 7	B- 4	C- 1

Course Evaluation and Instructor Evaluation: Class members are encouraged to participate in the evaluation of the course in an on-going basis as well at the mid-term and the end of the semester. Formal evaluation instruments will be distributed for each student's use in evaluating the course and instructor. Responses on these evaluations will be tabulated and analyzed for use in improving subsequent offerings of the course. Students are encouraged to share reactions informally through direct personal feedback to the instructor.

Reading Assignments:

Texts:

1. Nichols, Michael & Schwartz, Richard. 2nd Ed. (1991)
Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods New York: Allyn and Bacon.
2. Doss, Ram & Gorman, Paul. (1991)
How Can I Help? New York: Knopf.

Recommended:

1. McGoldrick, M., Anderson, C. and Walsh, F. (1991)
Women in Families: A Framework for Family Therapy New York: Norton.
2. Locke, Don. (1992) Multicultural Aspects of Counseling, Volume I
Newbury Park: Sage.
3. S634 Social Work with Families Reader--Iverson

Course Schedule and Assignments: (* connotes the reader)

Session #1-8/30: Course overview and discussion of expectations
Organization and Demonstration of Experiential Process

No class on 9/6

Session #2-9/13: *"Always remember, Loretta, the family can never be replaced":*
Johnny Cammieri to Loretta Casterini in the movie "Moonstruck"

Introduction to social work with families

Assignment: Complete an initial family assessment for group discussion: three pages maximum

Session #3-9/20: *What it takes to work with families*

Readings:

Doss & Gorman--the entire book

Nichols: pp 1-76 and 77-131

Carter: "Success in Family Therapy"*

Kramer: "Becoming a Family Therapist" *

"Developing An Integrated Professional Identity"*

Session #4- 9/27: *Understanding the lenses we wear while observing and "re-visioning" family dynamics*

Readings:

Carter, "Gender Sensitive Therapy"*

Goldner, "Feminism and Family Therapy"*

Pinderhughes, "Minority Women: A Nodal Position"*

Braverman, "The Depressed Woman in Context"*

McGoldrick, "Ethnicity and Family Therapy"*

Landau, "Therapy with Families in Cultural Transition"*

Locke, Multicultural Aspects of Counseling

Session #5-10/4: *Examining families from an empowerment/strengths perspective*

Healthy Families

Readings:

Solomon, "How De We Really Empower Families? New Strategies for Social Work Practitioners"

Family as a System/Family Organization and Structure ; Healthy Families

Readings:

Nichols, pp. 195-224

Minuchin, "A Family Model"

Oimmarusti and Lappin, "Beginning Family Therapy"

Tomm, "Inventive Interviewing: Part II Reflexive Questioning"

Bishop, "Questions that Might Be Used in Assessing A Family"

Family Life Cycle Tables 3.2, 3.3, 3.4*

Session #6-10/11: Group Assignments/Instructions to be given

Session #7-10/18: Stressed Family Systems: Issues of Boundaries, Structure and Communication

Readings:

Johnston & Campbell, "Divorce Transition Impasse"

Hetherington, "Family Relations Six Years After Divorce"

Carter and McGoldrick, "Remarried Family Formation: A Development Outline"

Wegscheider, "No One Escapes from a Chemically Dependent Family:

Bepko, "Alcoholism as Oppression: The Dilemma of the Woman Alcoholic"

Barrett, Sykes, Byrnes, "A Systemic Model for Treatment of Intrafamily Child Sexual Abuse"

Hoke, Sykes, Winn, "Systemic/Strategic Interventions: Targeting Denial in Incestuous Family"

Session #8- 10/25 and Session #9- 11/1: Assessment, Hypothesis-building and Strategies

Readings:

Umbarger "Opening Moves"

Nichols, pp. 134-182

Umbarger, "Classic Interventions: Structure, Staging, Sequence"

Andolphi, "Tasks"

*****Family Assessment Due on 11/1/93*****

Session #10- 11/8 Structural and Strategic Family Therapy

Readings:

Nichols, pp. 407-445, 445-479;

Peirce and Sprenkle, "Key Concepts and Clinical Skills: Strategic and Systemic Family Therapies"

Selvini, et. al. "Hypothesizing, Circularity, Neutrality: Three Guidelines for Conductor of the Session"

Session #11- 11/15 *Experiential Family Therapy; Bowenian Family Therapy*

Readings:

Nichols, pp. 276-306; pp. 363-405

Session #12- 11/22 *"The new kids on the block": Solution-Focused Interaction of Brief Therapy; Self-in-Relations Therapy*

Session #13- 11/29 *How the "Isms" impact upon Social Work with families*

Readings:

Pinderhughes, "Afro-American Families and the Victim System"*

Pinderhughes, "Minority Women: A Nodal Position in the Functioning of the Social System"*

Goldner "Feminism and Family Therapy"*

Roth and Murphy, "Therapeutic Work with Lesbian Clients"*

McWhirter and Mattison "Psychotherapy for Gay Male Couples"*

*****Family Treatment Assignment Due*****

Session #14- 12/6 *Agency and Larger Systems; Ethical Issues*

Readings:

Hansen and L'Abate, "Professional Conflicts in Systems Theory"*

Carl and Jurkovic, "Agency Triangles"*

Anderson, "Social Networks"

Session #15- 12/13 *Wrap-Up and Course Evaluation*

*****Self Evaluation of Participation Due*****

*****Self Awareness Paper Due*****

Instructor Information:

Marie L. Watkins, CSW, ACSW

Office Hours: Mondays 12:00-1:00 / or appointments can be made for other times

Telephone Number: home: 834-0621 --please not after 9:30 p.m.!!