I. COURSE RATIONALE

Social work professionals need to understand human behavior at multiple social system levels, including individual and family levels. Therefore, this Human Behavior in the Social Environment course provides Bachelor’s level students with basic concepts, theories, and empirical findings about human behavior in individuals and families taking into account biological, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of human behavior and experience. This course, one of the first foundation undergraduate social work courses taken at the junior level, serves as a foundation for generalist social work practice. Providing core information on human behavior is useful and applicable to knowledge-guided efforts in practice courses, the human behavior course on groups, communities and organizations, and the practicum.

Theoretical perspectives on well-being, strengths, resiliency, empowerment, dysfunction, oppression, and developmental processes are analyzed critically, especially concerning applicability to a social work practice that supports client strengths, appreciates diversity, and promotes social justice. The course includes examination of crises, transformational events, and expectable changes in individual and family development. The number and range of theories presented are limited so that they provide contrast while allowing sufficient depth of learning on each one.

II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

By the conclusion of SW 530, Bachelor’s level students will demonstrate an ability to:

A. Analyze the transaction between individuals and the contextual social and natural environment within a holistic and empirically supported conceptual framework. (Reflects BSW Objective 7)

B. Identify and understand interactions between physical-biological, psychological, socio-cultural and spiritual aspects of human behavior, experience, development, and interaction with the environment. (Reflects BSW Objective 7)

C. Assess the harmful impacts of discrimination and oppression on people and empowering, liberating responses to them. (Reflects BSW Objective 4)

D. Identify implications of human behavior theories for utilization of strengths and resources that promote individual and collective well being as well as social justice in accordance
with social work values and ethics. (Reflects BSW Objective 2 and 4)

E. Analyze critically professional literature concerning human behavior, with special consideration of the themes of client strengths, empowerment and justice, diversity, and critical reflection, as applied to social work practice in various settings. (Reflects BSW Objective 3, 4, and 7)

F. Understand, compare, and evaluate critically several selected theoretical perspectives that are relevant to human behavior in contemporary society, such as behaviorist, biological, behavioral, social learning, cognitive, psychodynamic, interactionist, humanistic, transpersonal, feminist, constructionist, family systems, Marxian, social functionalist, ecological, and deep ecology. (Reflects BSW Objective 1)

G. Understand, compare, and evaluate critically several selected theoretical perspectives on developmental processes for individuals and families that are relevant to contemporary society, such as the work of Erikson, Gould, Levinson, Piaget, Gilligan, Carter and McGoldrick, E. James Anthony, Sybil and Steve Wolin, Marx, Germain, Bertalanffy, Parsons, Wilber, and Grof. The selected developmental perspectives will be related to the theories chosen in relation to outcome F. (Reflects BSW Objective 1)

H. Determine the practice implications of human behavior theories for culturally competent assessment and helping of people in various settings. (Reflects BSW Objective 3)

III. RELATION TO CURRICULUM MISSION AND THEMES

The mission and themes of the school are infused throughout course outcomes and content areas.

1. Practice-centered mission. This course sets a foundation of theory for social work practice. Each selected theory is examined for its utility for practice with individuals and families. It is critiqued regarding its consistency with social work values, purposes, and settings for practice. Practical implications of choosing and combining theories for practice are discussed.

2. Strengths perspective. Theories are critiqued regarding the extent to which they are excessively problem and pathology focused. Theories selected for detailed presentation include significant attention to human strengths and resources and ways these can be mobilized in practice.

3. Diversity. Theories are critiqued regarding the extent to which they take into account human diversity of all kinds in their formulation, research support, and application to practice. Theories selected for detailed presentation address contemporary issues of human diversity. (See section IV. 5.)

4. Social Justice. Theories are critiqued for the extent to which they perpetuate patterns of personal and collective oppression and discrimination. Theories that emphasized empowerment
and social justice are selected for detailed presentation.

5. **Critical Perspective.** Theories are compared and contrasted in terms of their advantages and limitations regarding empirical support; methodological, philosophical, and conceptual clarity; and relevance to the profession. Theories are also considered as alternative paradigms for understanding person and environment in order to support creative and innovative approaches to practice.

**IV. COURSE CONTENT**

The course is organized and presented around the following core content areas.

1. **Human behavior within a holistic bio-psycho-social-spiritual conceptual framework.** A holistic and systemic way of conceptualizing human behavior is presented as an overarching framework. This provides an understanding of the ways in which individuals connect with one another and families within their social environment.

2. **Characteristics, structures, and dynamic functioning of individuals and families.** A range of several theories dealing with individual and family development and functioning will be presented, critically evaluated, and compared as relevant to social work practice. The instructor selects this range of theories such that individual and family functioning are addressed. For example, theories concerning person, family and environment transaction may include behaviorist, social learning, cognitive, psychodynamic, life span, interactionist, humanistic, transpersonal, feminist, constructionist, and family systems theories. This includes consideration of expectable stage-related developmental tasks and challenges, crises, and factors promoting resilience. This content will complement smaller scale applied theories of social work practice pertaining to individuals and families to be presented in the practice sequence. The number and range of theories is limited to provide contrast as well as depth of learning for each theory.

3. **Assessment of Human Well Being.** Various standards for assessing individual and family well being and dysfunction are considered. This includes examining personal and environmental strengths and resources that facilitate creativity, adaptation, and effective coping with distress and conflict. An introduction is provided to the implications of theories and diagnostic models (such as DSM and PIE) pertaining to assessment of mental disorder and family dysfunction. These are compared and critiqued in terms of their applicability to an empowering, strengths-oriented practice. Assessment content will be related to the theories selected in content area number 2.

4. **Importance of human diversity and the impact of discrimination and oppression.** Diversity of human behavior and experience in the context of the socio-cultural and natural environment is considered in all content areas of the course. This may include diversity issues relevant to gender, social class, ethnicity and culture, age, sexual orientation, family structure, religious and spiritual perspective, and physical or mental ability. For example, standards for understanding mental health and disorder vary widely in diverse cultural
contexts. Gender is a significant factor affecting differences in developmental themes, communication patterns, values, and life experiences. A wide variety of family structures and developmental possibilities exist, such as single parent, nuclear, multigenerational, remarried, and gay and lesbian. Furthermore, individual and family experiences are strongly influenced by the political context of discrimination and oppression. Standards for normality and well-being vary widely in diverse cultural contexts. This course examines the effects of discrimination and oppression on diverse patterns of individual and family development and functioning within the social environment.

V. LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE

Students in this course are expected to have a liberal arts background, especially in the behavioral, social, and biological sciences as well as history. In classroom discussion, students are encouraged to draw upon their liberal arts perspective as well as their life experience.

The course intends to open students and educators' minds to new ideas and possibilities for understanding individual and family behavior. It challenges conventional thinking and contributes to personal and professional growth. It attempts to preserve and develop knowledge that liberates and to examine critically theories and practices that oppress or marginalize people.

VI. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSE AND VALUES

All theories and social work practices contain implicit or explicit values and goals for behavior. This course critically examines these inherent values and goals, and helps the student to reflect on their congruence with both personal commitments and professional ethics and values. Possible value conflicts and ethical dilemmas that may emerge in the application of theories and research findings to practice are discussed.

The four curricular themes and practice-focused mission of the school help to orient the examination of personal and professional value issues. For example, the strengths perspective highlights individual and family qualities of resilience, creativity, self-determination, and empowerment. The political and value implications of human behavior theories and practice models are considered for their contribution to the relief of oppression and the promotion of social justice. The variety of theories and practice models are subjected to critical reflection through comparison and analysis, including consideration of their congruence with professional mission, values, and ethics. Theories and practice approaches are examined for their applicability to diverse peoples. Finally, theories and concepts are examined for their relevance to social work practice in various settings in accordance with the school's mission.

VII. SPECIAL POPULATIONS

As discussed under course content area number 4 above, issues of human diversity are integral to understanding individual and family behavior and development. For example, diversity based on social class, gender, ethnicity and culture, age, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation, and religious and spiritual perspective is crucial to consider both in terms of individual and family behavior and in terms of constraints and challenges imposed by societal discrimination
and oppression. Such issues include racist, sexist, and other oppressive behaviors as well as effective strategies for empowering people and working toward social justice.

However, the negative aspects of discrimination and oppression are not considered alone. Diversity is considered a positive personal and collective resource in a multicultural society and world. Similarly, discussion of dysfunctional behavior and psychopathology need to consider the types of stress and oppression encountered by various populations and the differing concepts of dysfunction, creativity, and well being in different cultures and social groups.

VIII. TOPICS

A. The following content areas are relevant to SW 530:

1. Most be covered:
   - Strengths and empowerment
   - Systems theory
   - Person-in environment perspective
   - Family systems theory
   - The influence of prejudice, discrimination, and oppression on human functioning

2. Recommended:

   - Various spiritual perspectives on human behavior and development
   - Moral development

IX. LINKAGES TO OTHER COURSES IN THE CURRICULUM

This course is complementary with and most closely related to the Practice and Practicum Sequences. It underlies the Practice and Practicum sequences with the theoretical understanding and analytical skills necessary for the formulation, monitoring, and evaluation of social work practice. Whereas this course presents theories at a relatively high level of abstraction as relevant to practice, the practice courses and practicum focus on applied level theories and conceptual frameworks in connection with skills and particular practice settings. This course supports the Research Course by providing theoretical, historical, and empirical material derived from a wide range of qualitative and quantitative ways of inquiry. It promotes students' ability to engage in critical reflection about human behavior theory and research, including the ethical, philosophical, political, and scientific implications.

X. RECOMMENDED READINGS

Commonly Used Textbooks


A multidimensional perspective. (3rd Ed.). Chicago, IL: Wadsworth.


Other Readings: Additional Texts and Chapters from Texts:


Articles:


**XI. ASSIGNMENTS**

Assessment of student performance in SW 530 may be based on a variety of means, such as formal tests, literature analysis papers, multimedia presentations, individual and social system analysis projects, participation in discussions and class presentations, performance of required readings, and reaction papers. Readings are assigned from textbooks and collections of other articles and book chapters. Written assignments require that students present and critically analyze important concepts and issues related to a body of professional literature.

For example, students have written three page papers describing a personal experience or social event by applying two different human behavior theories. In this paper, students describe an interesting situation or problem concerning human behavior, ways in which the situation was dealt with or resolved, and personal reactions or the reactions of others close to the situation. Through the use of human behavior theories students describe knowledge and insights relevant to the personal situation or social event. Students also complete a library science paper in which they research in more depth a human behavior theory and apply it to a population they are interested in working with in their social work practice.
XII. GRADING

BSW GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Incomplete grades. A temporary grade of Incomplete may be assigned to a student who, for a reason beyond the student’s control, has been unable to complete the required work in a course on time. It is the student’s responsibility to request an Incomplete from the instructor. A request signed by the student and the faculty member must be on file when grades are submitted. A student may not enroll in a course sequential to one in which he or she has an I or F letter grade. An incomplete not removed by the end of the next semester will be changed to an F.

The Master syllabi should specify:
B. Attendance policies for BSW courses. For example: Class attendance is very important. More than two absences could result in the loss of all your attendance points. More than four absences will result in failure in this class. If you have missed two classes, please arrange an appointment with me to discuss the reasons for the absence and to arrange for make-up work that will count toward your class participation points. Points are deducted for missing class and coming to class late (3 pts. for each absence/lateness).

Individual instructors’ syllabi should specify the following:
C. The weighting of each assignment in the course and the dates by which they are done.
D. For every assignment, explain the standards used for grading.
E. If class participation is part of the grade, indicate what this means. For example, if 10 points are awarded for class participation, one point will be deducted for every class missed.
F. Indicate the policy on late assignments, e.g., they are not accepted and treated as an “F” grade or the grade is reduced by ____ for each day, week, etc.
G. Indicate how final grades will be determined.
XIII. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Students who have special educational needs of any kind, including those related to learning disabilities, other disabilities, English as a second language should discuss necessary accommodations with the instructor within the first two sessions of the course. The university and School of Social Welfare are committed to provide supportive programs and accommodations to assist students who have special learning needs to successfully meet course expectations. In particular, students who feel that they have a disability that may require accommodation should advise the instructor of such disability and desired accommodation as soon as one obtains written documentation of the disability. The instructor will work with the student and the office of Services for Students with Disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations.

Please notify the instructor if your religious observances conflict with class or due dates for class assignments so we can make appropriate arrangements.

XIV. RECORDING AND SHARING RECORDINGS OF LECTURES

Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. On request, the instructor will usually grant permission for students to audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

XV. HIPAA REGULATIONS

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires that any personal information that may identify a person must be removed to protect confidentiality. Confidentiality applies to both classroom discussions and to written work. Please follow these simple, yet essential guidelines:

- Always disguise the name and other personal identifying information when you speak and write about a person, following the guidelines established by HIPAA.
- If writing in great detail about a client, ask permission from the client.
- Share nothing about specific clients, agencies or other students outside of the classroom.

Any information shared with the class/instructor will be confidential, within the limits defined by the Code of Ethics and state guidelines.

**Individual instructors' syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.**
XVI. INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

Provide students with information on how to see and/or reach you.

XVII. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather students should call

- Lawrence: the University (785) 864-SNOW, or if hearing impaired and have TTY/TDD equipment, (800) 766-3777
- Edwards Campus: (913) 897-8499
- KCKCC Campus: (913) 334-1100

to determine if classes have been cancelled. Class will be held if classes have not been cancelled, and students should contact the instructor if weather or driving conditions make it impossible for them to get to class.