The University of Kansas
School of Social Welfare

Master Syllabus: SW 811 Narrative Approaches

Instructor
Twente Hall

Classes:
Office Hours:

I. COURSE RATIONALE

A. How the Course Relates to the School’s Mission.
Social work has a commitment to values of social justice; social work ethics articulate the necessity of attending to the influences of culture, race, gender, sexual orientation and class. Narrative approaches are founded on the idea that our experiences and identities are profoundly affected by these socially constructed influences. Within these approaches there is an emphasis on working collaboratively with people to open up the space for re-authoring preferred stories for one’s life. This course will focus on contemporary Narrative approaches and their application in social work practice. The course will explore the underlying assumptions of Narrative approaches and also focus on specific Narrative practices. Issues of social justice, critical thinking and analysis, focus on strengths, and respect for all persons are paramount in Narrative approaches as they are in the school’s mission.

B. How this Course Links with Other Courses in the Curriculum
The knowledge base drawn upon for this clinical course includes every sector of the curriculum of the School. The course synthesizes material dealing with definitions of social and personal living; historical and institutional factors leading to individual and social stresses; the various institutional arrangements provided by society in which clinical helping occurs; the nature of organizational and bureaucratic dynamics; the impact of various social and public policies on clients’ lives and on their problem situations; the characteristics of clinically oriented social welfare institutions; and theories about the strengths and resiliencies of persons and the effects on their functioning and on the helping process. In particular, this course will actively bridge the macro and micro perspectives as Narrative approaches emphasize the necessity of attending to the larger socio-cultural and political influences on the lives of families and individuals.

C. How this Course Prepares Participants to be Advanced Level Practitioners
This advanced clinical course demands a high level of critical thinking and analysis. Building on the foundation year of the MSW program, it calls upon the student to actively incorporate knowledge from their practice course and experience as well as HBSE and policy courses. Grounding in social work ethics and values as well as the strengths perspective are essential in understanding Narrative approaches. The course will advance the ability of students to critically reflect on the larger social, cultural, and political influences in their own lives as well as in the lives of the persons with whom
they work. Students will be challenged to continually evaluate their practice and the underlying assumptions of their work.

D. What This Course Covers
Narrative Approaches introduces students to the fundamental tenets of contemporary Narrative ideas and practices. The influences of postmodernism, feminism and critical theory are discussed as they are integral in understanding Narrative ideas. Students will learn, through reading and experience, some of the practices of Narrative approaches. Some of these practices include: externalizing conversations, deconstructing conversations, letter writing, compassionate witness groups and definitional ceremony. The application of narrative approaches over a range of social work settings will be covered. The course will provide an active and engaged learn experience as these ideas are best learned “from the inside out”. That is, the students will learn about Narrative Approaches through actually experiencing the practices in the classroom. Throughout the course emphasis will be placed on increasing the students’ abilities for critical thinking and analysis and advancing their appreciation for the influence of many forms of oppression. The course will actively discuss issues related to ethically congruent practice.

II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester students will be able to:

1. Describe and analyze the use and purpose of the Narrative Therapy model in advanced clinical practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 5, 6)

2. Analyze major components of and the constraints involved in applying the Narrative Therapy model based on one or more evaluative frameworks. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 5, 6)

3. Critically analyze the effects of applying the Narrative Therapy model to their practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 4, 5, 7)

4. Analyze the values and relevance of using the Narrative Therapy model as a diagnostic framework to understand the client and to develop an appropriate treatment plan with the client’s full participation. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 2, 6)

5. Critically analyze the use of the DSM IV in the Narrative Therapy model and apply these concepts of assessment when appropriate. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 5)

6. Develop intervention plans based on their assessment of specific case materials and analyze the relationship of subsequent practice activities to those plans. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 5, 7)

7. Identify gaps in resources that promote when performing their ongoing clinical responsibilities and influence institutional and professional systems in order to improve resource availability to clients. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 3, 4, 5, 6)
8. Describe important characteristics of relationships with other professionals and their differential impact on collaborative clinical practice on behalf of families. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 3, 4, 6)

9. Demonstrate cultural competency by analyzing and applying a framework for understanding the impact on the clinical process of client, worker and system characteristics including race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion and culture. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 2, 5)

10. Apply methods for evaluating the worker’s use of self on the clinical process in the Narrative Therapy model and use the resulting feedback to modify, when necessary, their practice activities with families, colleagues and/or collaterals. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 3, 7)

11. Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which factors related to economic and social justice impact the lives of individuals. (Reflects Clinical Concentration objective 3)

12. Critically analyze the ethical and value implications of the Narrative Therapy model for clients, professionals, and social service organizations. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 6)

13. Integrate the sum of their academic and experiential learning processes through a concerted focus on the course of their MSW studies, achieved through a semi-structured capstone agenda designed for all clinical students during their final weeks of their academic stay. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 6)

III. CURRICULUM THEMES

The overarching themes which guide the total curriculum of the School of Social Welfare are integrated throughout the course Narrative Approaches.

- The strengths perspective is a humanistic, empowerment approach to social work practice in clinical practice settings that operates on the assumption that all persons have untapped mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional resources. Students are encouraged to extend their understanding of assessment, goal setting, design and selection of interventions, and evaluation practice in clinical settings, and to view themselves as collaborators in working with clients to achieve their chosen goals.

- This course integrates the School’s commitment to the principles of securing social justice and honoring human diversity. This commitment entails helping students develop an appreciation for multiculturalism and an awareness of how oppression limits human and community development, and to foster economic and social justice that enables all persons to pursue their chosen goals. Narrative approaches are based upon principles of social justice and are thus, highly congruent with the School’s commitment.

- Advancing student’s abilities to continually hone and develop a critical perspective, students in the course Narrative Approaches will be required to raise questions about, reflect upon, and systematically evaluate and apply the divergent theories and knowledge claims upon which social work practice is based in clinical settings. Deconstructing conversations will
take place in the classroom; as well students will learn how to have these conversations with the people with whom they work.

IV. THE LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE

Building upon the liberal arts perspective, students in this course are expected to: (1) think and write clearly and effectively about their practice activities, the effects of those activities, and specific ways in which client outcomes can be improved; (2) understand ways in which knowledge is gained and applied through review of practice research findings and analysis of various practice theories relevant to clinical social work practice; (3) use knowledge of the social, biological, and behavioral sciences in completing broad based bio-psycho-social assessments of clients' problem situations; (4) use knowledge of history in understanding the impact of a history of oppression on different ethnic groups' current functioning and the influence of family history on individual functioning; (5) understand the effects of variations in worker/client values on the clinical helping process through knowledge of clients whose cultures are different from their own.

V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND VALUES

The person-environment focus is the basic framework for presenting the content of this course. Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to shift from the more typical person-oriented focus to one that reflects an ability to analyze human functioning in terms of both intrapsychic and environmental influences. In addition, the value assumptions of different theories, policies, and programs will be explored throughout this course and the implication of these assumptions on the professional assessment of client functioning will be discussed.

VI. PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS

This is an advanced clinical practice course. Consequently, the focus is on the strengths, capacities, and potentials of individuals as they interact with their environments. Lecture, discussions, and written assignments demand the melding of clinical concepts in every aspect of learning. Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to shift from the more typical person-oriented focus to one that reflects an ability to analyze human functioning in terms of both intrapsychic and environmental influences. In addition, the value assumptions of different theories, policies, and programs will be explored throughout this course and the implications of these assumptions on the professional assessment of client functioning will be discussed.

Content on ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, and women will be integral to this clinical practice course, with examination of how membership in these groups influences assessment, diagnosis, intervention, collaboration, evaluation of intervention, and feedback to institutional and agency systems. Content on these special populations will be included in both readings and class discussion and students are expected to take this information into consideration in completion of all assignments.
VII. TOPICS

a. The Narrative metaphor
b. Feminism, Post-Modernism & Social Constructionism
c. Deconstructing Conversations
d. Externalizing Questions & Conversations
e. Writing – Literary Means
f. Ethics and Accountability
g. Reflecting Teams
h. Compassionate Witness Groups
i. Definitional Ceremonies

VIII. RECOMMENDED READINGS


IX. RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENTS

A. Learning/Reading Logs (Educational Outcomes #1,2,3,4,5,8,10,11,12)

Reading for this class is essential. The ideas are complex, challenging and require grappling with. It is recommended that learning/reading logs would be assigned throughout the course. The logs would be a narrative discussion of the student’s understanding of the organizing ideas found in the reading. Students would be expected to articulate the ideas and then to actively engage in the process of critically reflecting on the effects of incorporating these ideas in social work practice.

The instructor would provide detailed responses to the students’ learning/reading logs. This written “conversation” between student and instructor would be an active dialogue engaging both people in the narrative process of co-construction. This assignment is consistent with the goal of learning “from the inside out” as it provides students with a direct experience of Narrative Practices.

B. Capstone Assignment (Educational Outcome #13)

Rationale: Regardless of the specific theory covered in SW 811 class, students need the opportunity to integrate this specific course content with other courses and experiences from the start of their MSW education. Students need to look at where they have been and how they have changed and to engage in discussions and activities that help them to solidify their identities as professional clinical social workers as they enter the workforce.

X. GRADING

Grading-Grading in this course follows the policy set forth in the Bulletin of the School of Social Welfare

A = Exceptional work; outstanding. This grade will be assigned to work which shows extensive use of the literature as well as concrete examples of practice.
B = Fully meets graduate standards: This grade will be assigned to work in which all the aspects of assignments are completed satisfactorily, showing a combination of accurate use of theory and principles and precise descriptions of practice.

C = Overall performance is unsatisfactory, below graduate standards, although all aspects of assignments were completed.

F = Failure: overall quality of work is unsatisfactory, or some aspects of assignments not done.

I = Incomplete: a temporary grade assigned to students who, for impelling reasons beyond their control, were unable to complete the required work. This grade is granted only after prior arrangements with the instructor.

A sample grading scale is:

A = 93-100  B+ = 88-89  C+ = 78-79  F = <70
A- = 90-92  B = 83-87  C = 73-77
B- = 80-82  C- = 70-72

ATTENDANCE POLICY

In order to pass the course, students cannot miss more than three classes during the semester. Any additional policies regarding class attendance will be determined by individual instructors.

XI. 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.
XII. 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.

XIII. 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.

XIV. INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

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

XV. 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.