The University of Kansas  
School of Social Welfare  

SW 868 Crisis Intervention  

MASTER SYLLABUS  

Semester, Year  
Phone #  
Instructor Name  
Office Hours, Place  

I. Course Rationale  

A. In keeping with the mission of the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, this course is designed to meet the educational needs of students in the following areas related to crisis intervention. First, the student will be provided with broad based, holistic information about the nature of crisis intervention work, and the theoretical rationale necessary for making informed practice decisions. Second, the student will be guided through the process of scholarly inquiry as it relates to the practice of crisis intervention related services. Third, the student will learn about the varying levels of crisis related impact (macro versus micro), and their significance to individuals and communities.

The crisis intervention course will cover specific theoretical material about crisis work, it's evolution, and the use of crisis theory across a broad range of crisis situations. As a foundation to each of these theoretical bodies, students will be presented with the four themes of the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare curriculum. A focus on individual, community, group, and other systemic strengths will be a part of each theoretical presentation, and students will be required to identify strengths in their overall assessment of differing practice scenarios.

This elective course is offered as part of the clinical specialization concentration during the second year of the graduate program. It is intended to further enhance knowledge of practice with individuals, groups and communities through the specific teaching of theory and practice techniques related to crisis situations. The specific application of crises theory onto general practice skills is intended to inform the student of issues relevant to conducting the practice of social work during a crisis situation, immediately following crisis, and in situations where the clinician may be faced with the task of assisting an individual, group or community in dealing with the long term effects of a crisis experience.

Individuals, groups, and communities all respond to crisis on several levels and in diverse ways. One of the purposes of this course is to assist the student in more fully understanding the critical factors which require attention and assessment in all crisis: the context in which the crisis occurred, the interpersonal, familial, and social forces which affect the experience and outcome of the crisis, the strengths of the respective systems in dealing with the crisis, the cultural, racial, ethnic, and experiential factors which influence the crisis, the nature of the crisis itself (i.e., long standing tension which finally becomes explosive versus an unexpected trauma or natural disaster), and the nature of the resources designed to assist in crisis resolution. These skills require the use of a critical
perspective when engaging in practice and an understanding of both strengths and diversity issues.

The nature of crisis intervention work makes it highly demanding, and requires that the clinician be able to work in such a manner that involves evaluation of many systems simultaneously. The crisis intervention worker must have the ability to sort through biological, individual, interpersonal, familial and societal forces which will influence the approach used. Specific counseling techniques and use of a variety of theoretical models to assist in formulating appropriate approaches will be presented in this course, as well as an evaluation of how these techniques and theories build upon or differ from theoretical information taught in the graduate program thus far.

B. The information presented in this course is intended to build upon the Social Work Practice class, the Human Behavior in the Social Environment course focusing on Individual, Family and Group Behavior, the Community Group and Organizational practice course, and to apply to the Field Practicum experience.

C. The course first introduces the student to general crisis frameworks and provides a history of crisis theory. The course then provides an overview of the range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses of those experiencing crisis. Specific types of crises are reviewed (e.g. developmental, crises of abuse, trauma, grief and loss) and the student is expected to participate in intervention planning for various clinical situations. The student will then be presented with information on the evaluation of practice effectiveness. The student will also be presented with macro issues related to the interpretation and experience of crisis associated with social justice concerns. Policy implications and political systems and their effect on the experience of crisis will also be covered.

Finally, the student will learn about professional challenges associated with conducting crisis intervention work and issues such as compassion fatigue and worker stress management.

The rationale in individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

II. Educational Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of crisis theory through the development of culturally appropriate assessment and intervention strategies, including the strengths perspective, for a range of situations. (Reflects concentration objectives 1 and 2.)

2. The student will demonstrate critical thinking, an understanding of and ability to incorporate culturally competent practice, and an ability to place the situation in context to the individual, group, or community's life in which the event occurred. (Reflects clinical concentration objectives 2 & 4.)

3. The student will identify systemic barriers that have contributed to marginalization and oppression of vulnerable groups, with particular attention to social and economic
justice, and formulate crisis intervention strategies that incorporate an understanding of these. (Reflects clinical concentration objectives 3, 5, and 6.)

4. The student will analyze the relevance of social work values and ethics, including self determination, in the delivery of crisis intervention services. (Reflects clinical objective 6.)

5. The student will be able to articulate strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of their crisis intervention work. (Reflects clinical objective 7.)

The educational outcomes in individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

III. Curriculum Themes

This practice course is centered around the development of thinking processes that will allow the student to respond quickly in understanding practice situations and formulating responses that are reflective of social work practice values. The development of these thinking processes will not only occur through the presentation of conceptual and theoretical educational information, but will utilize information available through the use of the strengths perspective, enhanced critical thinking, an understanding of pertinent social justice issues, and diversity training.

The initial assessment of any client situation will involve the identification of strengths on several levels. First, the identification of strengths an individual has used in past problem resolution is a crucial piece of understanding as to what may assist in the current crisis. Second, the community strengths that make up the support system are also important to identify. Third, the strengths the individual displays that may be evident to others but not to the client are important. Fourth, the resources which exist to assist the individual in crisis situations need to be mobilized. Lastly, the social work practitioner must capitalize on his/her own professional strengths in a crisis situation. The social work student will be required to take the identification of strengths into case planning, by presenting case plans which utilize many aspects of strengths.

Social Work students will also be encouraged to question underlying assumptions of theories, and challenge the traditional way of intervening. The analysis of crisis response from a critical perspective will also be utilized as a teaching tool throughout the conceptual and practice related pieces of information given to the student. Reasons underlying questioning will be presented—such as cultural bias in the interpretation of the severity of crisis, the reasons behind the establishment of a crisis sequence, and theoretical limitations of current crisis theory. Students will also be encouraged to explore the differing, highly individualized nature of crisis and critique traditional definitions of crisis. For example, many individuals identify life cycle crisis at varying times throughout their history. How is this crisis compared to the crisis imposed by a traumatic event or an unexpected loss? Are responses to crisis and trauma different? How should treatment interventions be gauged relative to the subjective nature of how one defines crisis? Students will also be challenged to explore both the possibilities and limitations inherent in diagnostics related to unresolved crisis. When is bereavement
"complicated"? How does Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder contribute to substance abuse? Does one have to experience a perceived threat to his/her life to develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder? What are the practical, cultural, political, ethnic, familial, and interpersonal ramifications of developing a highly defined way of responding to crisis?

Social Work students will also be challenged regarding the above questions and diversity issues. For example, life cycle crisis are interpreted differently in different cultures. How are they different? How does the student find out what the meaning is of the crisis? Also, within various cultural groups social and economic justice issues and issues of oppression are significant pieces of understanding to have when a clinician is attempting to understand the impact of a new crisis situation (which may very well evoke emotions associated with old or original crisis themes in the client's life).

Social Work students will also be encouraged to examine the political, social, cultural, and economic impacts that often contribute to personal crisis, particularly as they relate to impeding the successful resolution of crisis. Social Work students will be asked to identify barriers to successful resolution, and to identify how a barrier at one point in time may affect later adjustment to crisis.

Social Work students will also be given information on how to obtain access to information about differing cultures and implications for human service delivery within a specific population. The use of university based web sites, reading material and library searches will be utilized as assignments for gaining additional information about diversity.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

IV. The Liberal Arts Perspective

The current concept of crisis resolution is representative of the Chinese symbol for crisis, which means both opportunity and danger. In ancient Greek writings, the interpretation for crisis means decision and judgment (Slaikeu, 1990). This course is designed to assist the advanced practice student in utilizing his/her skills to assist clients in defining a successful resolution to their crisis, and utilizing the time of crisis as a conduit for change thus enhancing the ability of the client to problem solve in the future. Successful resolution of crisis, and an increased ability to problem solve are liberating to the human spirit, enhance one's intellectual abilities, and are freeing in nature.

The same external circumstance can occur in many individual's lives simultaneously (a natural disaster, for example) and be universally devastating, yet individualized to the person experiencing it. The very nature of crisis is that it occurs and is perceived through a filter of personal experience and context. For this reason, the School of Social Welfare is committed to providing liberal arts education which will produce practitioners with the ability to understand the systemic impact as well as the importance of personal experience.
Finally, the liberal arts perspective commits us to understanding the importance of values and moral purpose in the development, accumulation, and employment of knowledge. What we seek is bodies of knowledge which allow us to understand the forces which restrain and restrict human energy, and which allow us to come to grips with moral and social problems, which undermine the human spirit.

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V. **Professional Purposes and Values**

This course challenges students to think critically about the interaction of ideas and values embedded in the literature on crisis intervention, as they allow us to achieve social work's purpose of enhancing interaction between people and their environments. This course examines how social work values and ethics guide our practice from assessment through outcome evaluation, and considers the tensions inherent in operationalizing core values as they relate to work with vulnerable groups.

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VI. **Preparation for Practice with Diverse Populations**

The Crisis Intervention course content prepares the student for working with diverse populations through a thorough review of the range of individual, group and community responses to certain situations. No single course curriculum can cover every specific type of crisis or every specific representation of diversity. Therefore, this course focuses on teaching students appropriate methods of inquiry to assist in determining the significance of certain events, and the broader meaning of the event to the individual and his or her community across diverse settings.

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VII. **Topics**

A. The crisis intervention course must cover the following content areas, with parentheses indicating which curriculum theme is most closely associated with the respective topic:

1. Major components and assumptions of crisis theory
2. Predictable phases and stages of the crisis experience
3. Range of responses to crisis experience ()
4. Frameworks for assessment of pre-crisis level of well-being and crisis assessment
5. Intervention techniques for initial crisis stabilization and longer term intervention designed to enhance post-crisis well-being
6. Post Traumatic Stress Syndromes
7. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
8. Crisis associated with loss
9. Crisis associated with developmental changes
10. Crisis associated with trauma/disaster
11. The relationship of individual crises to larger issues of social and economic justice.
12. Ethical and value issues inherent in the practice of crisis intervention.
13. The relationship of crisis to issues of diversity.
14. Policy/practice connections in the practice experience
15. Practice Evaluation
16. Compassion fatigue, worker self-reflection, and the use of supervision and support systems in practice
17. Assessment of situational danger to worker, client and community

B. It is recommended that the following topics be included in course instruction:
   1. Working in multi-disciplinary settings)
   2. Disaster protocol/common practices during disaster
   3. Utilization of group work in crisis counseling

**Individual instructors’ syllabi should provide a topical outline for the course and provide adequate information to determine where and when the required topics are being covered.**

VIII. **Recommended Readings**


Articles and Book chapters:


For individual syllabus, remove the word “RECOMMENDED.” In addition individual syllabi need to specify which readings are required and which are recommended. The entire list of “additional resources” does not need to be included in individual syllabi.

**IX. Recommended Assignments**

A. It is recommended that the students are assigned in-class assessments and intervention strategies for case scenarios presented by the instructor and, as an interactive experience, from other students. These assignments should require rapid formulation of relevant assessment information and preliminary intervention strategies. (This assignment is designed to measure progress in course outcomes 1-4.)

B. Students should have the opportunity to research an aspect of crisis that they identify as challenging or problematic to them in understanding. This assignment should evaluate the student's ability to critically analyze his or her own process of understanding, as well as gain deeper knowledge of a particular aspect of crisis. (This assignment is linked to course outcomes 1-4.)
C. The student should identify his/her own barriers in thinking surrounding cultural, spiritual, ethnic, socioeconomic, or other value based issues, and focus on dissecting this barrier in written form. The student will be required to examine a bias or long held belief that has been challenging to them in a practice or personal setting. The student will be required to conduct scholarly inquiry about the topic (through journal articles or text) and then dissect their bias through discussions with others or gaining personal exposure to that which they have perceived as difficult to deal with. Included in this assignment should be a thorough review of social work values, ethics, practices, and policies which assist or inhibit the student in overcoming this barrier. (This assignment is linked to course outcomes 1-4.)

D. The student will develop a systematic means of evaluating the results of their crisis intervention efforts, demonstrate its use with case examples, and modify their practice behavior based on these results. (This assignment is linked to course outcome 5)

For individual syllabus, remove the word “RECOMMENDED.” Assignments on individual syllabus should be selected to cover the course outcome objectives

X. GRADING

A. What Grades Mean  (plus and minuses are assigned at instructors’ discretion)

   A = Exceptional work: outstanding: this grade will be assigned to work that shows extensive use of the literature as well as wide use of concrete examples from practice.

   B = Fully meets graduate standards: this grade will be assigned to work in which all 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 aspect of assignments not done.

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.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

In order to pass the course, students cannot miss more than three classes during the semester. If a student misses three classes they will be referred to the Academic Planning Committee. Any additional policies regarding class attendance will be determined by individual instructors.
Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should specify the following:

A. The weighting of each assignment in the course and the dates by which they are done.

B. For every assignment, explain the standards used for grading.

C. 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.

D. 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.

E. Indicate how final grades will be determined

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.

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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.

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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.

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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. If classes are being held, students should contact the instructor if weather or driving conditions make it impossible for them to get to attend.