SW 300.01: Human Behavior in the Social Environment

Monica Trimble  
*University of Montana - Missoula*
This course examines and focuses on the development and dynamics of human behavior within a biological, social, psychological, cultural and spiritual context. Emphasis will be placed on a working knowledge of systems theory, the ecological perspective and the interaction between social systems and the developing individual. Underlying the course will be an appreciation for human diversity and the changes across the life span. Students will be encouraged to organize and use knowledge of human development and social work practice already acquired along with materials presented in this course. Practice – relevant content will be reviewed and special emphasis placed on the incorporation of content relating to ethnic, racial, cultural, gender, ability/disability and sexual orientation diversity.

This course will help the student preparing for multi-level integrated social work practice develop an understanding of the individual in interaction with his/her environment and as a continuously developing product of biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual influences. Exposure to the ecological perspective on social work practice will give students the ability to integrate knowledge of individuals and families within their environments into all aspects of the social work process.

Enrollment in SW 300 is concurrent with enrollment in the first advanced social work practice course, SW 350. Social work majors enrolling in SW 300 should have completed at least six of the eight of the extra-departmental requirements established by the Department of Social Work. In particular, students must have completed or be concurrently enrolled in Psychology 240 and 245: Developmental Psychology. Additionally, social work students must have been officially approved as social work majors at the upper division level.

**Course Objectives**

The student will be able to integrate human behavior and human development concepts within an ecological systems framework.

The student will demonstrate an understanding of the individual as a social/psychological/biological/cultural/spiritual being, incorporating individuality and environmental influences.

The student will demonstrate an appreciation for the complexity and diversity of developmental processes across gender, race and other variables of diversity.
The student will develop analytic and assessment skills for use in understanding the interaction of the individual and the environmental systems that influence behavior.

The student will understand the individual as a component part of various social systems, and as able to influence the social systems of which they are a part.

The student will increase in understanding of human development, value systems, and life styles that differ from one’s own, as well as in commitment to empowering individuals and groups in pursuit of their goals. This includes an emphasis on groups who are subject to stereotyping, oppression and discrimination.

**Required Books**
Photocopied Readings, available through the U.C. Bookstore

**Class Attendance and Participation Requirements**
Students are expected to attend class regularly, to do the assigned reading and to be prepared to participate in class discussion and activities. Poor attendance and failure to participate in discussions will lower students’ overall grades. **Attendance will be taken.** Late papers are unacceptable. All papers must be typed.

**Class Assignments**
**Introduction Paper** 2-3 pages, addressing questions 1 and 2 in text on page 24. Due September 12, 2002 at the beginning of class.

**Family Event Paper** 3-5 pages. Identify a vital event in the life of your family or another family. Interview at least three people from three different generations about the event. Describe how each person perceived the event and identify the differences in perception. Generate ideas about why each would view the event differently. Due October 8.

**Reaction Paper** 2-3 pages. Attend an art exhibit or view a film. Describe how culture is experienced through art. Due November 7.

**Mid-term written exam** October 15, 2002

**Class presentations by small groups**. . .topics TBA  Due dates December 5&10

**Final Exam will be on** Monday, December 16, 10:10 – 12:00

**Grading**
Introduction Paper 100 points
Reaction Paper 100 points
Family Event Paper 150 points
Attendance 100 points
Mid-term Examination 150 points
Group Presentation 50 points
Final Examination 150 points
Total 800 points

Class Schedule

Week 1: September 3
   Introduction to course
   Berger: Chapter 1

   September 5
   Behavior, Knowledge, Skill and Commitment
   Membership exercise

   Read *The Spirits Catches You and You Fall Down* at your own pace during the semester. Must be completed by November 19. There will be a final exam exercise on this book.

Week 2: September 10
   Families
   Berger: Chapter 2, pages 33-63

   September 12
   Family Systems - Rituals and Secrets
   Introduction paper due

Week 3: September 17
   Dimensions of Human Behavior
   Berger: Chapter 3, pages 69-121

   September 19
   Film: *Beyond Killing Me Softly*
   Group discussion

Week 4: September 24
   Communities and Social work practice
   When I’m 64 exercise

   September 26
   Aging in Place
   Neighborhoods and older adults

Week 5: October 1
   Myths and Truths about Aging
   Berger: Chapter 4, pages 129-167

   October 3
   *Surfing for Life*
   Group discussion

Week 6: October 8
   Advance Directives
   Family Event Paper due

   October 10
   Choices Bank and My Choices
   Guest Speaker

Week 7: October 15
   Mid-term Exam (first 50 minutes)
   Individual and family loss

   October 17
   Cultural and group loss
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<th>Week 8:</th>
<th>October 22</th>
<th>October 24</th>
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<td>Human Diversity</td>
<td>Racism in America</td>
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<td>Gender, Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Strange Fruit</td>
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<td>Case Study</td>
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<th>Week 9:</th>
<th>October 29</th>
<th>October 31</th>
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<td>Experiencing culture through the arts</td>
<td>Native American Culture</td>
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<th>Week 10:</th>
<th>November 5-Election Day</th>
<th>November 7</th>
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<td>Homelessness</td>
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<td>Berger: pages 125-128</td>
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<td>Reaction paper due</td>
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<th>Week 11:</th>
<th>November 12</th>
<th>November 14</th>
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<td>Focusing on Practice</td>
<td>Ethics and case studies</td>
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<td>Assessment in a healthcare setting</td>
<td>Group discussion</td>
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<td>Berger: Chapter 5, pages 175-212</td>
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<th>Week 12:</th>
<th>November 19</th>
<th>November 21</th>
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<td>Class discussion of The Spirit Catches</td>
<td>Cultural competency</td>
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<td>You and You Fall Down</td>
<td>and the Kleinman questions</td>
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<th>Week 13:</th>
<th>November 26</th>
<th>Thanksgiving</th>
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<td>Dependency and Frailty</td>
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<th>Week 14:</th>
<th>December 3</th>
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<td>End of Life</td>
<td>Group presentations</td>
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<td>Cultural Considerations</td>
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<th>December 10</th>
<th>December 12</th>
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<td>Group presentations</td>
<td>Concluding session and review</td>
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<th>Week 16:</th>
<th>December 16, Monday 10:10 –12:00</th>
<th>Final Exam</th>
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*The instructor may make revisions to the class schedule. Students will be advised of changes as soon as possible.*

*Please remember to turn off cell phones and pagers during class.*