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### SW 510.01: Human Behavior and Social Environment I

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## **SW 510      HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT I**

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Semester: Autumn, 2002  
Credits: 3

### **CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

Introduction to and critical consideration of social work perspectives on human behavior as influenced by the social environment. Particular attention is paid to diversity of human experience, power relations, and processes of oppression.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course, as well as SW 511, Human Behavior and Social Environment II: Diversity, Discrimination, and Oppression, introduce students to both traditional and emergent alternative perspectives on human behavior as influenced by the social environment. In the present course we examine contemporary theory and research on the biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the individual, as well as the impact of eight environmental dimensions: physical environment, social institutions and social structure, culture, formal organizations, communities, social movements, small groups, and families. Particular attention is given to the diversity of human experience, power relations, and processes of oppression as related to gender, social class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. Special consideration is given to native people, rural lifestyles and environmental concerns that include social isolation, economic uncertainty, and relatively few social support systems. Critiques of the traditional paradigm of human behavior and social environment will be examined and provide a basis for the alternative paradigm emphases of Human Behavior and Social Environment II and its in-depth analysis of diversity, discrimination, and oppression.

### **RELATION TO OTHER COURSES:**

This course supplements material introduced in SW505, SW515 and SW520 by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the theoretical dimensions and practical implications of human behavior across the life span. The course is also intended to provide the foundational material necessary for next semester's HBSE II course.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Understand and employ accurately concepts, perspectives, and theories of human behavior fundamental to understanding the functioning of humans individually and collectively.
2. Demonstrate acute awareness of, and the ability to accurately assess, the multiple dimensions of person-environment situations in social work practice.

3. Understand major assumptions, biases and values attendant to a range of perspectives and theories relating to the study of human behavior, including compatibility with social work values and ethics.
4. Recognize the historical and political contexts in which relevant theories and perspectives were developed, and critically assess each in terms of their attention to diversity, power arrangements, and processes of oppression.
5. Expanded knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity in American society, with particular emphasis on Native American, African American, Hispanic, and Asian American individuals, families, and groups.
6. Understand diverse patterns of functioning, life styles, and value systems, and manifest a positive commitment to understanding the differing goals of individuals and populations, most especially those defined as socially oppressed.
7. Improved ability to analyze issues relating to social and economic justice and their relevance for understanding human behavior.
8. Beginning ability to critically analyze power arrangements and the processes of oppression in the physical environment, social institutions and social structure, culture, formal organizations, communities, social movements, small groups, and families, with particular attention to gender, social class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. (NOTE: development of advanced skill in this area is a key emphasis of Human Behavior and Social Environment II).
9. Improved understanding of the Montana (and similar) context, with emphasis on native peoples, reservation and small communities, economic uncertainty, limited social support systems.

#### **CURRICULAR OBJECTIVES: FOUNDATION YEAR**

1. Provide students with analytical skills needed to critically examine the cultural, historical, political and economic contexts that have shaped the meaning of social work and its practice.
2. Provide students with knowledge and skills of generalist social work practice as a foundation for assessment and intervention with diverse systems and client populations.
3. Introduce students to the integrated practice model and the epistemological and theoretical issues that inform it.
4. Develop students' knowledge of dominant theories of human behavior and social environment, their relationship to social work practice, and the challenges and possibilities posed by alternative perspectives (e.g. feminist and other critical perspectives).

5. Provide students with theoretical perspectives and practice frameworks to understand and address questions of difference and diversity and forms and mechanisms of oppression, inequality, discrimination, with particular attention to special populations in the region.
6. Engage students in collaborative teaching-learning opportunities with diverse scholars, activists, and community practitioners regarding contemporary issues and debates in social welfare.
7. Promote understanding of key social, political and economic issues facing communities in the Rocky Mountain West, and their implications for social work.
8. Prepare students to analyze social policies and their influence on social work organizations, services, and client populations and contribute to their development and improvement.
9. Develop students' knowledge of diverse fields of service and the particular challenges posed by practice in a rural context.
10. Develop students' knowledge of key issues in individual and family practice and their relation to contemporary federal and state social welfare policy and programs.
11. Provide students with skills and strategies of participatory, collaborative practice that include the voices of client population in the decisions that affect their lives.

### **REQUIRED BOOKS and READINGS**

Cohen, T. (2002). Men and Masculinity: A Text Reader. Wadsworth: Belmont, CA.

Sacks, O. (1985). The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat. Touchstone: New York.

Schraver, J. M., (2001). Human Behavior and the Social Environment: Shifting Paradigms in Essential Knowledge for Social Work Practice, 3rd edition. Allyn and Bacon: Needham Heights, MA.

Reserve/E-Res readings

### **RECOMMENDED BOOK:**

Merck Manual, Mosby or Bantam Medical Dictionary (to better understand Sacks' book)

**EXPECTATIONS:** Classes will be a combination of seminar and didactic format. Each week the instructor or invited speaker will present some material in a traditional lecture, plus the readings will be discussed in a seminar format. It is expected that students will read the assignments prior to each class.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

Orientation (August 29-30)

Syllabus distributed

*Reading* -- Schriver ch. 1

Week One (September 5)

Course overview, assignments, & grading

Historic and contemporary understandings of human behavior

Discussion of Schriver reading

Positivist research & findings that dominate practice, policy, and research

Need for alternative perspectives & theories, inclusive of silenced majority

Assessment and the multiple dimensions of person-environment situations in sw practice.

Research, theory, and professional experience—how are interventions chosen?

*Reading 1* - The Biophysical Dimension for Assessing Social Functioning; *Reading 2* – Fright Illness in Hmong Children; *Reading 3* – Who Cares: A Reflection on Healing Communities

Week Two (September 12)

Biological connections to sw practice, policy, and research. How changes to physical self cause personal/social/political problems, how these problems are addressed through community action efforts, advocacy, & policy (historical and contemporary responses).

Biology, Human Behavior, and Social Work: How Health Impacts and is Impacted by Social and Economic Status, Intro to the Ecological Perspective

Human biology overview

Five Major Biological Systems

Video or Guest Speaker Presentation

*Reading* -- Sacks, Parts One and Two

Week Three (September 19)

Neurosciences and the brain

Spheres, divisions and lobes (central features, injuries, corresponding behaviors)

Aging, organic disorders, & CNS injuries and personal/social/political problems)

Review Sacks reading – strengths focus

Disability/death – celebration, grief, despair and traditional/alternative healing practices

Guest Speaker Presentation or video

*Reading* -- Sacks, O. Parts Three and Four

Week Four (September 26)

Brief review of human biology & Sacks reading

Presentation and critique of traditional developmental stage theories and their relevance to personal problems/conditions experienced across the life span

Traditional theory and its application to people based on class, gender, race, and spiritual differences. (Strengths/limitations)

Paradigms, models, and perspectives: what are these and how do they differ from theories? What implications do they have for social work practice?

*Reading* -- Schriver Chs. 2 & 3

Week Five (October 3)

FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE

Discuss major assumptions, biases and values attendant to a range of perspectives and theories relating to the study of human behavior, including compatibility with social work values and ethics.

Recognize the historical and political contexts in which relevant theories and perspectives were developed, and critically assess each in terms of their attention to diversity, power arrangements, and processes of oppression

*Reading* – Schriver Chapters 4 & 5

Week Six (October 10)

Introduction to the cultural construction of gender

Problems men experience, why they have historically and currently dominate certain social problems (e.g., crime, violence, suicide, alcoholism, drug abuse), reframing these social problems as issues specific to men.

The importance of identity in the construction of gender and dominant and alternative identity theories. Historical and contemporary media portrayals of gender...compliance or non-conformity. The significance of gender with regard to SES, geographic location (MT and rocky mountain west), occupation, and social acceptance.

Boys and the experiences of shame and humiliation as a mechanism for social conformity. Avoiding the 'sissy' factor and complying with the boy code and 'tough guise.'

Dorothy Van Soest, Ph.D. Dean University of Washington School of Social Work

*Reading* - Cohen—chs 1 & 2

Week Seven (October 17)

SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE

Discussion of readings

What are the rules that boys learn? How does compliance to the rules of masculinity limit boys' emotional development? How does this socialization process parallel predominant theories of development?

Contemporary forms of power and control. Its presence in small groups (i.e., marriages, family & work settings), organizations, and social and political contexts. The power and privilege of white heterosexual men, the diminished power afforded to men of color, the disabled or homosexuals. How does power and control impact women and children, diverse groups, and men themselves?

Compare and contrast traditional and alternative humanist, psycho-social, cognitive, and moral theories of human development as it applies to gender and sexual identity differences.

How might predominant forms of problem treatment exacerbate power and control patterns and reinforce oppression?

Videotape – Tough guise

*Reading* – Cohen Chs. 3 & 4

Week Eight (October 24)

Small/large group discussion on the film

Media portrayal of boy and manhood; how the media feeds problematic aspects of masculinity

Implications of gender on structural and systemic changes and treatment approaches  
New possibilities for the future

Panel presentation

*Reading* - Cohen Chs. 5, 6, & 7

Week Nine (October 31)

THIRD ASSIGNMENT DUE

The significance of culture and spirituality in human development and social work practice. Contemporary theories and research

Organized religion & contributions to health and well-being. Ways the church has harmed human development through rigidity, hypocrisy, sexism, and discrimination.

The Smith Video – the collision of sexual identity, infidelity, and the Mormon Church

*Reading 4* – Religion and Spirituality: A Long-Neglected Cultural Component of Rural Social Work Practice; *Reading 5* - Treating Religious Fundamentalist Families: Therapists' Suggestions from a Qualitative Study

Week Ten (November 7)

Critical review of the readings on sw practice and spirituality.

The significance of spirituality and culture in formulating assessments and interventions: how native people, the rural poor, and the recently economically and technologically displaced can be more effectively empowered. Learning from the errors of our ways.

Expanded discussion of cultural diversity in American society, with particular emphasis on Native people, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian American individuals, families, and groups.

Guest Speaker Presentation

*Reading 6* – Perceptions of rehabilitation counselors regarding Native American Healing practices. *Reading 7* – native Hawaiian Traditional healing: Culturally based interventions for social work practice.

Week Eleven (November 14)

Participatory exercises designed to critically analyze power arrangements and the processes of oppression in the physical environment, social institutions and social structure, culture, formal organizations, communities, social movements, small groups, and families, with particular attention to gender, social class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability.

Diverse patterns of functioning, life styles, and value systems (polygamy, same sex relationships, religious fanaticism, militant groups of NW MT), and manifest a positive commitment to understanding the differing goals of individuals and populations, most especially those defined as socially oppressed.

Analyze issues relating to social and economic justice and their relevance for understanding human behavior.

*Reading 8* – The Appalachian Inheritance: A Culturally Transmitted Traumatic Stress Syndrome?; *Reading 9* – Social Work Practice in a Rural Health Practice setting: Farm Families; *Reading 10* – Depressive Symptoms in Farm Women: Effects of Health Status and Farming Lifestyle Characteristics, Behaviors and Beliefs.

Week Twelve (November 21)

FOURTH ASSIGNMENT -- TEACHING/PRESENTATION PAPER DUE

Focus on extreme poverty in MT reservations, spiritual lives being more important than consumer ones, sense of learned helplessness and traumatization through public policy.

Correlations between mental health and related problems with poverty, SES, geographic isolation, rural life

Promoting resilience, health, and wellness in youth. How to reinforce social systems to promote well-being.

*Reading 11* – The Psychiatrization of Post-Traumatic Distress: Issues for Social Workers  
*Reading 12* – Toward a Just Society: Lessons from Observations on the Primary Prevention of Psychopathology; *Reading 13* – Resilient Children: A Longitudinal study of high achieving socially disadvantaged children; *Reading 14* - Resilient Children, Psychological Wellness, and Primary Prevention

Week Thirteen (November 28)  
Thanksgiving (no class)

Week Fourteen (December 5)  
The influence of trauma and violence on learned helplessness (sociological factors—behavioral, psychological, and physiological implications)

Family violence, influence on domestic violence, child abuse and mental health concerns

Small and large group discussion

Videotape

*Reading 15* – The Compulsion to Repeat Trauma: Re-enactment, Revictimization, and Masochism; *Reading 16* – Integrating African and Western Healing Practices in South Africa; *Reading 17* – Violent events reported by normal urban school-aged children: characteristics and depression correlate; *Reading 18* - Posttraumatic symptomology in children and adolescents after an industrial fire.

Week Fifteen (December 12)  
Review of the readings, large group discussion

9/11, war, social crises, and vicarious traumatization  
Susceptibility of certain groups because of SES, long-term oppressive practices

Guest or Panel Presentation

Week Sixteen (December 19)  
TAKE HOME FINAL DUE  
Finals Week

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### *Case Studies*

You will conduct three separate interviews and develop a 4-5 page report on each that incorporate a minimum of two theories (e.g., developmental, cognitive, moral, personality, spiritual) covered in class. The papers will be a careful blending of

theoretical and research materials (from readings and class discussion) along with the case study data. The three reports are independent of each other and will require you to meet with your interviewee at least three separate times. Specific instructions will be distributed by the third week of class. Papers are due at the **beginning** of class on Thursday, October 3, 17, and 31. (20 points each)

#### *Teaching/Presentation module*

You will be required to design a presentation that addresses a specific, and in this case hypothetical problem experienced in a rural Montana community that involves a specific behavioral problem. You must outline the community's concern at the beginning of the paper and develop a presentation that specifically addresses the concern. Let's say, for example, that the superintendent of Broadus contacts you following a murder-suicide by one of the most popular boys in school. School administrators and parents are worried that other youth might engage in similar behavior and want guidance about how to prevent a related tragedy. As the identified expert on this topic, you must provide a certain amount of theoretical material and related research to help citizens understand the behavior better and how this and similar problematic behaviors are typically reinforced. Similarly, you must help them to devise a community response to the tragedy. There are a series of challenges that present themselves related to the community's politics, the current level of shock, anger, and disbelief, and the desire to blame the parents, school or guns for this tragedy. As the recognized expert, you must develop a well-choreographed presentation that addresses current feelings, provides the latest and least offensive information, and provides a series of action steps that the community can buy into and is willing participate in. Despite the challenges that present themselves, the community has a golden opportunity to come together and it is your job to make that happen. Due November 21 (5-7 pages; 20 points)

#### *Final Take Home Exam*

Comprehensive exam, open note, open book, and open everything else. This must, however, be an original work that utilizes APA format. The due date will be announced in class (20 points)

All papers must follow APA guidelines.

#### **Total Points: 100**

Grading Scale:           A = 90% or higher  
                                  B = 82-89%  
                                  C = 74-81%  
                                  D = 65-73%  
                                  F = Less than 65%

#### **Attendance Policy:**

With each class session lasting for three hours, attendance at all class sessions is MANDATORY. ONE absence is permitted if emergency situations make it necessary.

