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**SW 515 Practice with Individuals and Families in a Community Context
Foundation Year Fall Semester**

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Office Hrs: Tuesday 1-3

Class Time: Friday 1-5

Credits: 4

Prerequisite: Admission to MSW program or permission of instructor

COURSE OVERVIEW

This practice course builds on students' developing knowledge and skills of social work practice and explores their application in practice with individuals and families in the context of community. The course begins with critical inquiry into the concept of family and an introduction to an integrated approach to practice with families and individuals. We explore a range of theoretical, cultural, and historical perspectives on family and personhood and consider their relevance for justice-oriented interventions in the context of community. We examine diverse conceptual frameworks and practice models and consider their contributions to understanding individuals and families and engaging in processes of change. We continually link theory, practice, policy, and social work values as we explore the implications of diverse perspectives for grounded, concrete, community-based interventions. Students critically examine methods of assessment and intervention and findings in the literature on individual and family practice from ethical, cultural, and social justice perspectives. We will also examine the roles of community mediating structures in promoting the well-being and social participation of individuals and families. In addition we attend to the linkages of local and global issues and the international implications of family policies and practices in the 21st century.

COURSE CONTENT

Over the course of the semester students will develop basic competence in culturally grounded approaches to practice with individuals and families in a community context. To this end, students will investigate and assess various theories and models of family and intervention, critically explore the politics and ethics of practice with individuals and families, examine interplay of values, policies and practices, and commit to ongoing professional development and assessment of their own practice. Questions of meaning, power, difference, and inequality are central to this course. Students will consider ways in which cultural background, class positioning, racial, gender, and sexual identity, age, ability, and life experience of all parties (including the social worker) shape the social work relationship and the processes of change with individuals and families. Students will be introduced to a range of intervention models that are informed by the experiences of historically marginalized or excluded groups including people of color, women, persons with disabilities, and gay, lesbian and transgender groups.

This course helps prepare students to be researcher-practitioners capable of linking theory, practice, policy, and community context. It is designed to challenge assumptions and broaden understanding regarding differing meanings of personhood, family, and community. We consider the challenges these differences pose to our conceptual frameworks and practice models and explore possibilities for informing theory and practice. Themes addressed in the course include: a human rights perspective on practice; constructions of personhood, family, and difference; historical context of practice; families and globalization; assessment; families as partners in

action; grief and loss; spirituality; children and youth; kinship, culture, and intervention; violence, containment and control; and care giving through the life course.

This course is interactive in nature with an emphasis on development of practice knowledge and skills through in-class activities and engagement with community practitioners. The course introduces students to a range of assessment tools that bring issues of gender, culture and power to bear on understanding personal strengths and struggles, family dynamics and assets, and community context and capacities. Class members will develop practice knowledge by utilizing these tools and critiquing their strengths and limitations in promoting individual, family and community empowerment. Working in small groups and in ongoing dialogue with community-based practitioners, class members will explore limits and possibilities of integrated, social justice-oriented practice with individuals and families.

RELATION TO OTHER COURSES:

This course draws on the foundation knowledge of social work practice and human behavior in the social environment being developed in SW 505 and 510. It gives students the opportunity to reflect on and apply foundation knowledge in the context of practice with individuals and families. The experiential aspect of the course and the emphasis on community context of practice provide students grounds for knowledge and skill development related to the foundation practicum. This course provides a foundation in community context that will be developed in SW 525, and it provides students with an introduction to integrated practice, which will be developed in depth in SW 535 during the concentration year. SW515 also provides students an opportunity to link theory and practice through individually designed projects that will comprise part of the professional portfolio.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Apply skills of critical thinking to social work practice with individuals and families.
2. Articulate and uphold professional values, standards and ethics in practice with individual and families in community context.
3. Demonstrate understanding of dominant and emergent conceptual frameworks in social work as they relate to practice with individuals and families in community context.
4. Demonstrate understanding of diverse theoretical perspectives on personhood, family, and community and their differing implications for practice and utilize this knowledge to identify or formulate appropriate and effective interventions.
5. Critically evaluate the values and assumptions that underlie theoretical frameworks and the ways in which these frameworks influence intervention decisions.
6. Apply knowledge of cultural, political, and historical factors in shaping understandings of personhood, family, and community.
7. Demonstrate capacity to develop and carry out appropriate assessments with individuals and families, sensitive to and informed by social, political, and cultural context of practice.
8. Address issues of power, difference, oppression and discrimination as they relate to social work practice with individuals and families.
9. Engage in ongoing critical assessment of own knowledge, values, attitudes, and practice.
10. Demonstrate competence in listening and communication skills needed for effective engagement with diverse people and groups.
11. Demonstrate commitment to professional, valued-based practice with individuals and families informed by appropriate theoretical, empirical, and experiential knowledge

12. Demonstrate knowledge of assessment strategies and of value-based criteria for selecting approaches to assessment, intervention, and evaluation that promote individual and family strengths and empowerment.
13. Discuss the significance of an integrated practice approach to intervention with individuals and families
14. Identify strategies for promoting the meaningful participation of those affected in processes of individual, family, and community change.
15. Identify approaches to intervention with individuals and families that promote social and economic justice.
16. Critique social work literature on family practice in terms of assumptions about appropriate family structure and function and consider the implications for diverse family situations (e.g. solo parent, multigenerational, extended, and gay and lesbian families).
17. Conduct an assessment of community resources for family support and empowerment.
18. Identify community mediating structures and evaluate their effectiveness in promoting individual and family well-being and participation
19. Identify key social policies relevant to social work with families and discuss their implications for practice at the community level.
20. Discuss the concept of globalization and the challenges and opportunities for family centered policies, practices, and development.

Course Texts:

Briar-Lawson, K., Lawson, H., Hennon, C., & Jones, A. (2001). *Family-centered policies and practices: International implications*. New York: Columbia University Press. (FCPP)

Shulman, L. (1999). *The skills of helping individuals, families and groups*. Itasca: F.E. Peacock Publishers. (Shulman)

Course Pack of required readings.

Course Assignments:

Class Participation and Leadership of Class Discussion (15% of grade)

Each student will be assigned to co-facilitate classroom discussion of the assigned readings for one week during the course of the semester. On their assigned week, discussion leaders will be responsible for preparing 3-5 thoughtful questions and topics for discussion. Ideally, questions will be designed to stimulate conversation regarding critical analysis of the assigned readings and integrated social work practice. Discussion facilitation and classroom participation will constitute 15% of the student's final grade for the course.

Critical Analysis of Theory: Group Presentation and Paper (30% of grade)

As social work practitioners, it is impossible to separate practice from theory. Practice is the utilization of theoretical concepts in an effort to bring about or further the change process. Social work practice with individuals and families has been informed by a range of theoretical frameworks. Each framework is based upon a set of principles, beliefs, values, ideas, etc., that propose to guide practice. Practitioners need an understanding of key theoretical frameworks and the capacity to critically assess the

values and assumptions that inform these frameworks in order to appreciate the relationship between theory and practice and make informed choices regarding intervention strategies.

To meet this end, students will work in groups to research and critically analyze one of the following frameworks: narrative, solution-focused, strategic, structural, systems, experiential, psychodynamic, and cognitive-behavioral.. Each group will give a 45 minute presentation regarding their assigned framework focusing on: Historical overview, key themes and principles, a critique of strengths and weaknesses, attention to difference and diversity (e.g. applicability in relation to diverse cultural backgrounds, race, gender, class, age and sexual identity), and provide a practice demonstration of one or more key intervention strategies. Additionally, each group will provide a 1-2 page fact sheet regarding their assigned framework for each class member. **Presentation and fact sheet are due September 26.**

Each group will also complete an 8-10 page critical analysis of their assigned framework. The **paper is due on October 3**. The group presentation and paper will each constitute 15% of the student's grade for the course.

Assessment from a Perspective of Difference – Due October 31 (15% of grade)

Throughout this course we will be critically examining constructions of “normal” and “normative” beliefs, relations, and practices among individuals and families. Many assessment tools and models of intervention have been critiqued for assuming universal norms based on the experiences and beliefs of particular groups (often white, middle-class males). However, we have also seen the possibilities for challenging the limits and expanding the possibilities of practice by starting from a different perspective, for example, that of a solo mother, a gay man, or a poor, African American community. In this assignment you will explore an aspect of individual or family assessment from a perspective of “difference.” For example, what sorts of values and assumptions are encoded in frequently used family assessment tools? Are there particular beliefs about personhood or gender relations that go without saying? Are there particular assumptions about life-course development that may be challenged by differing social locations and experiences? How do they fit with the experiences of intergenerational, extended families, gay and lesbian families, or others who may have differing understandings of kinship? What might the foster parent application and assessment process look like if it were developed from the perspective of the foster child? How might the life story of a person who has experienced marginalization and oppression pose challenges to dominant assumptions about “problems” and intervention? You are invited to be creative. You may wish to approach this from first-hand experience or draw on autobiographical or fictional accounts about the collision of meaning systems in the “helping process” and its consequences. You may want to conduct an analysis of the cultural appropriateness of assessment tools and practices used in your practicum agency. We will take time in class to brainstorm other possibilities. The final product should be an 8-10 page typed double-spaced paper.

Video-taped interview and critique – Due November 14 (15% of grade)

Each student will conduct a videotaped interview with another member of the class regarding his or her personal values and biases, professional challenges, and

opportunities for discussions, presentations, and readings (e.g. meanings of families, assessment issues, action and accompaniment, gender, power, families as experts and partners, grief, loss, separation, and connection, culture and spirituality, constructions of children and youth pathology, culturally competent practice, globalization, etc). This is a two fold assignment that provides 1) opportunity for structured personal assessment and identification of areas for personal and professional development over the course of the program and 2) opportunity for the interviewer to conduct a self-assessment of interview skills and receive structured feedback from the instructor and another class member. Interviewer-interviewee pairs will be assigned in class and a checklist of interpersonal skills will be handed out.

Portfolio Project – Due December 12 (25% of grade)

The social work portfolio is a compilation of materials that provide evidence of student's knowledge, values, competencies and ability to reflect on the practice of social work. Each class member will carry out one project related to the theme of practice with individuals and families in community context that will comprise part of his/her social work portfolio. The project is to be developed in consultation with the student's faculty advisor. It should address one or more of the student's individual learning goals and one or more of the SW 515 course objectives. The portfolio project may be carried out in conjunction with the Fall 2002 practicum placement. We anticipate that the portfolio projects will be varied, reflecting individual interests and objectives. Project possibilities include: preparation of a grant proposal for program development within a family service or advocacy organization; preparation of a literature review and annotated bibliography on best practices for a particular arena or modality of intervention; handbook or Power Point presentation for practicum in-service training; documentation of apprenticeship and evaluation of knowledge and skills in a particular individual or family practice model. These are only suggestions, and you are invited to be creative.

Please turn in a 1-2 page project proposal by Friday, October 17. The proposal should include a brief statement of the project, its relationship to personal learning goals and course objectives, plan and timeline for completion. The final product is to be submitted by **Monday December 15.**

Note: the contribution to the portfolio may be a product that represents one phase of a larger project. For example, if you are interested in development and innovation in family resource centers, this semester's project may consist of a literature review and assessment of best practices.

Course Outline:

Week One 9/5: Introduction and Overview

- Integrating Personal Struggles and Social Issues
- Locating ourselves in the process: where have we been, where do we want to go?
- Getting acquainted and setting ground rules for classroom as arena for practice
- Building classroom as community and community as classroom
- Form project groups

Readings: FP 1 Witkin (1998), **FP 2** Early & GlenMaye (2000), **FCPP**, "Introduction."

Week Two 9/12: Community, Family, and Personhood: Context, Meanings, and Power

Theoretical overview
Introduction to the concept of social construction
Family, personhood, and “positionality” – cultural and historical perspectives
Identity, Belonging and Difference
Problematizing the local and global
“Meanings of Family”

Readings: **FP 3**, “Comparing Approaches, **FP 4**, Blundo (2001), **FP 5**, Rose (2000), **FP 6** Deagan (1990). **FCPP** Ch.1; **Shulman**, Ch. 1.

Week Three 9/19: Histories, Visions, and Values

Families as Social Welfare Institutions
Difference and Pathology: The Making of Us/Not Us
Values, Ethics, and Visions
Questions of globalization
“Culturally competent” practice?

Readings: **FP 7**, Mattison (2000); **FP 8** Rhodes (1992); **FP 9** Spickard et al (1996); **FP 10** Rodriguez (2000); **FP 11** Scheller (2000); **FP 12** Dean (2001); **FCPP** Ch. 2.

Week Four 9/26: Conceptual Frameworks and Practice Models

Diverse perspectives on families and interventions (cognitive, narrative, psychodynamic, solution-focused, strategic, structural, and systems)
Linking theory and practice: class member presentations

Readings: **FP 17** Hartman & Laird (1983); **FP 18** Germain (1994); **FCPP** Chs. 3&4.

Week Five 10/3: Dimensions of Assessment Part I

Communication
The person in the process
Traditional and alternative resources for individual, family and community assessment
Assessing the assessment tools
Considerations from a strengths perspective
Skills Lab with second year MSW students

Readings: **FP 14** Graybeal (2001); **FP 15** McQuaide & Ehrenreich (1997); **FP 16** Weaver (1998); **FP 20** Congress (1994); **FP 25** Tracy & Whittaker (1990); **FP 26** McGill (1992).

Week Six 10/10: Dimensions of Assessment Part II

Gender, power and family
Feminist perspectives
Family and Political Economy
Policy-practice: gender, family and the implications of welfare reform
Skills lab with second year MSW students

Readings: **FP 19** Atwood (2001); **FP 56** MacKinnon et al (2001); **FP 22** White & Tyson-Rawson (1995); **FCPP** Ch. 5; **Shulman** Ch. 2,

Week Seven 10/17: Action and Accompaniment: Families as experts and partners

Social/family history and development
Family centered policy-practice skills
Family support models
Family practice from a strengths perspective
Family group conferencing
Guest Speakers: Linnea Wang and Carmen Underwood

Readings: **FP 13** Leon (1999); **FP 27** Early (2001); **FP 30** Waldegrave (2000); **FCPP** Chs. 6 & 7; **Shulman** Ch. 3.

Week Eight 10/24: Family, Culture, and Spirituality

Respecting belief systems
Spirituality and personhood
Tensions of church, state, and family
Reflection on our own belief systems and their influence on practice

FP 21 Pellebon & Anderson (1999), **FP 23** Schwarz (1997); **FP 41** Gotterer (2001); **Shulman** Ch. 4.

Week Nine 10/31: Loss, Grief, Separation, and Connection

Global loss model
Children, separation, loss and development
Nurturing fragile ties
Connections across generations
“Multiple Transitions”
Endings and Transitions

Readings: **Readings:** **FP 28** Edelstein et. al. (2001); **FP 29** Weber & Waldrop (2000); **FP 30** Whitley et. al (1999); **Schulman** Ch.5.

Week Ten 11/7: Cultural politics of Kinship: Adoption, Indian Child Welfare Act

Family Practice
Adoption and the politics of kinship
When meaning systems collide
Power in the intervention process
ICWA: Histories, tensions and possibilities
Intersections with issues of international adoption: Race, class, nation

Readings: **FP 31** Morris & Shepherd (2000); **FP32** Napoli & Gonzalez- (2001); **Shulman** Ch. 6; **FCPP** Ch. 8.

Week Eleven 11/14: Children, Youth and Intervention: 21st century challenges

Constructing adolescence as pathology
Social construction of children, youth and “trouble”
The history and politics of out of home care and wraparound services
Problem Centered Family Practice

Readings: **FP 33** Nybell & Williamson (2001); **FP 34** Malekoff (1999); **FP 35** Malekoff (1999); **Shulman** Ch. 7.

Week Twelve 11/21: Violence, Conflicts, and Containments

Mandated clients and resistance
Conflict, human agency and possibility
Gender, power, and violence
Humanizing spaces of containment
Crafting places of hope

Readings: **FP 44** Strenbach (2000); **FP 45** Cingolani (1984); **FP 46** De Jong & Berg (2001); **FP 47** O'Brien (2001); **FP 48** Krane & Davis (2002); **FP 49** Shepherd (2001).

Week Thirteen: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week Fourteen 12/5: Caring Communities: Care giving, participation, and empowerment

Demographic shifts and implications
Care giving throughout the life course
“Needs ”and rights: client vs. citizen
People with (Dis)abilites – realizing a strengths perspective
Living with and beyond chronic illness
Accompanying the end of life

Reading: **FP 36** Kisthardt (1992); **FP 37** Hatcher (2000); **FP 38** Mackelprang & Salsgiver (1996); **FP 39** Russo (1999); **FP 40** French Gibson (1998).

Week Fifteen 12/12: Children and Youth in Families and Communities: Opening possibilities for empowering practice

Beyond “risk” and “prevention” to participation and action
Families as resources and community builders
Promoting intergenerational engagement
Reflections on the Learning Process
Envision the future of local and global possibilities

Reading: **FCPP** Ch. 12

Week Sixteen 12/19: No Final Examination – No Class