WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY  
Graduate Social Work Department  
SWG 554: Human Behavior in the Social Environment: Individuals & Families  
Fall 2015 Syllabus

Credit Hours: Three graduate credit hours

Course Description:

This Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) course (SWG 554) uses a developmental and ecological perspective to explore the interaction of biological, psychological, and sociocultural systems, the influence of human diversity, and economics as determinants of the behaviors of individuals and families. As a foundation course, linkages to practice, research, and policy are also stressed.

Text

Required:  

Assignments.

All assignments are required to be in proper APA format. Professional style, format, and organization; integration of course concepts; and implications for social work are expected. Additional information is provided on the individual assignment rubrics.

1. **Resiliency Reflective Paper** (25%) Due Week 4
   
   Objective: Students will be able to reflect upon their own resiliency from a strengths-based perspective.

   Access the Resiliency Quiz at http://www.resiliency.com/free-articles-resources/the-resiliency-quiz/. After completing the quiz, write a reflection addressing what you learned about your own resiliency and protective factors at this point in your life. Reflect upon any resiliency builders you would like to add to your repertoire and what support you need to do so. Discuss the resiliency frame and how as a social worker you will work to promote resiliency among those with whom you will work (use your field placement or population of interest as a point of reference). (3-5 pages)

2. **Student Teacher** (20%) Each Student will be assigned a week on the first day of class. My Week is ________
   
   Objective: Students will be able to lead a brief presentation on a phase in the life cycle.

   After selecting a phase in the life cycle on the first day of class, develop a brief presentation to facilitate the class’s understanding of the phase. You may be as creative as you like in your presentation and may use the format of your choice (i.e. powerpoint, handouts, small or large group discussions, etc.). The instructor will work with students prior to their assigned week to develop presentations as requested.

3. **Movie Analysis** (40%) Due Week 12
   
   Objective: Students will be able to apply knowledge of human behavior across the life span to assess functioning and needs.

   Select a character from the movie version of one of the books listed below. Select a character and briefly describe them as an individual and as a family member. Apply relevant concepts from the human behavior knowledge base to your understanding of the selected character. Consider effects of oppression and stigma related to race, ethnicity, gender, and/or socioeconomic status, as well as developmental issues, mental and physical abilities, and family structure. Identify a theoretical model and its major concepts that provides a relevant understanding of the character. Include relevant empirical literature regarding the problems/issues facing the character. (8-10 pages)

**Movies in Book Format:**

Other titles may be used with instructor approval.

4. **Class Activities and On-line Participation** (25%)
Objective: Students will be able to actively participate in class and on-line discussion and exercises.

Class participation includes quality engagement in active learning activities, small group and dyad discussions, and D2L. Your participation should communicate evidence of reading and contribute relevant resources to the discussions.

**Course Outline:**

**Week 1: Human Behavior in the Social Environment: Theoretical framework**
- Overview of Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) - The ecological perspective as an organizing perspective and the relationship of HBSE to policy, practice, and research
- In the context of life that surrounds theories
- Social systems (community, family, and individual) in the environment
- Social justice and human rights frameworks

**Required reading:**

**Recommended reading:**

**Week 2: Families: Diverse contexts and new paradigms**
- Bio-psycho-social-cultural-economic-spiritual perspectives
- Systems perspective - Changing social environment
- Macro system: policy, ideology, substance, and technology
- Intimate relationships - Is marriage mandatory?
- Family life and dynamics: Traditional families, LGBTQ families, and other arrangements
- Environmental elements: grandparents, kinship care, foster care, and group homes
- Parenting and children
- Culture, peer, and community relationships
Required readings:


Recommended reading:

Week 3: Conception, pregnancy, and childbirth
- Transitioning into parenthood
- Family connections with newborns
- All humans are born with rights

Required reading:


Recommended reading:


Week 4: Infancy and toddlerhood
- Infancy and toddlerhood
- Attachment
- Trauma and pre-school behavior and performance
- Rights of children
**Week 5: Early childhood**

- Bio-psycho-social-cultural-economic-spiritual contexts
- Developmental paths of children
- Biological connection to later development of mental disorders
- Environmental factors of health and unhealthy patterns of development
- Risk and resilience

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Week 6: Middle childhood**

- Elements of community socialization
- Children’s growth and development
- Family dynamics
- Ethnic identity
- Elementary and middle school structures and processes
- Community centers and after school programs

Required reading:

Recommended reading:

Week 7: Adolescence
- Youth and identity development
- Families with adolescents
- Community connections
- Prevention opportunities
- Giving voice: Inclusion of adolescents in decision making

Required reading:

Recommended reading:


**Week 8: Family relationships**
- Traditional theoretical perspectives of the family
- Family as fulfillment versus family as encumbrance
- Family life
- Family and individual identity development (ethnic, race, intersectionality, multiple social identities)
- Effects of violence

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Week 9 Young adults**
- Young adults – the odyssey generation, millennials
- Socioeconomic status and health disparities; suicidality, and prevention
- Transitions, disappointments, and celebrations
- Roles
- Stressors, adaptations
- Violence, separation, divorce
- Racial discrimination and psychological distress
- Immigration

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Week 10: Middle adulthood**
- Economic influences
- Sandwich generation
- Employment and work-life balance
- Family Healthcare
- Civic participation
- Divorce and Change

**Required reading:**

**Recommended reading:**

**Week 11: Late adulthood**
- Influences of education and information on the life course
- Education and employment
- Retirement or ongoing employment
- Economic changes, unemployment
- Substance use
- Transitions
- Shifting endeavors; retirement, continuing activity
- Care giving activities
- Relationships with children
- Solitary life

**Required reading:**

**Recommended reading:**

**Week 12: Very late adulthood**
- Later life influences
- Physical capacity
- Historical and cultural perspectives
- Spirituality
- Loss and bereavement
- Changing dynamics of the life course
- Working with older adults
- At home care, assisted living, assisted dying, hospice
- Theoretical perspectives across the life span

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Week 13: Implications for practice**
- Mental health recovery movement
- Trauma-informed care

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Week 14: Conclusion**
- Summary of the life cycle and implications for social work profession

**Required reading:**
Recommended reading:
Bibliography


The Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI) maintains a number of quality measurement tools and strategies to assess the quality of care provided to children and young adults.


Paul, P. (2012, August). Q. Just how hard can it be to avoid getting pregnant? A. Much harder than you’d think: Considering the right not to have children. *Vogue*, 122-123.


