California State University, Sacramento
Division of Social Work
Social Work 125A: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fall 2003

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Class meeting place: Douglas Hall room 212
Class meeting day: Thursdays
Class meeting time: 6:30 – 9:15
Office hours: Tues. 10:30 – 12:30 and Thurs.
5:15 – 6:15 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Human Behavior in the Social Environment is a two semester sequence (SWK 125A and SWK 125B). The courses explore ecological theory, systems theory and diverse developmental frameworks to emphasize the influence that context has in shaping individual and family dynamics across the life span. The 125A course examines growth and development with special focus on lifespan from birth through adolescence in the context of family, community, complex organizations, and a social –political order that oppresses some and privileges others. The 125B course examines growth and development with special focus on lifespan from young adulthood through old age in the context of family, community, complex organizations, and a social – political order that oppresses some and privileges others.

The sequence engages students in questioning the idea of normalcy in human behavior and development by exploring the context in which it occurs. The theories that explain the sequence of human development and behavior suggest that we can expect individual’s to accomplish various tasks during different age segments of the life span. Thus, implying the existence of a “normal” sequence in which individual development should proceed. However, when we examine individuals within the context of their own personal, social, and cultural contexts we obtain a more realistic picture of human development and behavior. This more realistic picture enables us to view human development and behavior as “normal” within a particular context regardless of whether or not it follows the prescriptions set out by the theories. This knowledge and perspective is essential for creating a social work practice that embodies the social work value related to upholding the dignity and worth of the person. This value promotes social work practice in which, “Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients’ socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients’ capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs” (http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp).

Multi-level systems theory, a central feature of the sequence, is a lens through which we will examine the networks and social circles of relationships that link the individual with the context in which he or she functions. Diverse groups including ethnic and racial “minorities” (specifically, African American, American Indians, Asian Americans, Chicanos/Latinos), diverse genders, people with disabilities, gays and lesbians and people experiencing poverty will be an important focus throughout the two semesters. The impact of discrimination, social and political oppression will be explored as they impact human development. Identification of potential
strategies to optimize well-being, to enhance social justice in the environment and to prevent harm to diverse individuals, families, groups, or communities will be explored. Empowerment and the strengths perspective will be emphasized.

Students will be expected to think critically and analyze critically the research and theoretical perspectives explored in this sequence. They are further encouraged to explore personal values and ethical implications of environmental conditions and their impact on development. This sequence is designed to help students to increase their own awareness and to assess the consequences of oppression on the ability of individuals, families, groups and communities to meet the needs that lead to optimal development. This general goal is consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics which states that “Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability” (NASW Code of Ethics, 1.05c).

**Course Objectives**

It is expected that students will be able to demonstrate the objectives listed below by the completion of the course sequence (SWK 125A and 125B).

1. Students will be able to think critically about the theories and process of human development as demonstrated by class discussion, written assignments and oral presentations.

2. Students will be able to demonstrate their comprehension of the person-in-environment perspective (the dynamic transactions that occur among the biological, psychological, social, cultural, environmental, ecological, economic and political systems) as measured by class discussion, written assignments and oral presentations.

3. Students will be able to apply the concepts of the ecological model of human development and relate those concepts to the process of human development, particularly from birth through adolescence (125A) and young adulthood through old age (125B) as measured by class discussion, written assignments and oral presentations.

4. Students will be able to describe various theories of identity development as they play out in a context of social-political privilege and oppressions as demonstrated by class discussion and written work.

5. Students will be able to explain how environmental conditions (e.g., poverty, unsafe living quarters, inadequate nutrition, lack of health care, deteriorated schools, and other manifestations of oppression or social stratification) impact human development as measured by classroom discussion and small group activities.

6. Students will be able to recognize the negative social attitudes and behaviors, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, social exclusion, and social stigma that negatively influence human development as demonstrated in class discussions and written work.
7. Students will be able to reframe deficit-based perspectives of human development by employing the strengths and the empowerment models as a means to understand human agency and resistance to oppressive social and political circumstances as demonstrated in classroom discussion and small group activities.

8. Students will be able to integrate values and ethics compatible with the profession of social work as demonstrated through classroom discussion and small group exercises.

**Course Format**

This class will be conducted on a lecture-discussion basis. Student preparation and participation are integral parts of the learning process. Contributions from students about their experiences from the field are encouraged. Video, guest speakers, and group exercises may also be used to accomplish the learning objectives.

**Disability Accommodation**

If you would like to request academic accommodation due to a disability, please contact Services to Students with Disabilities- Lassen Hall room 1008, phone: 916-278-6955 (voice only) or 916-278-7239 (TDD only) or http://www.csus.edu/sswd. Office hours are Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (except holidays). If you have a letter from Services to Students with Disabilities please present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for this class.

**Course Expectations**

Comment on attendance, participation, and keeping up with the course:

This class does require that you turn in your assignments on time and be present and ready to work at each class session. I expect that you will complete the assigned readings prior to each class and be prepared to share your original thoughts and reactions to the readings with the class. If you must be absent from class because of illness or a family emergency please let me know before missing a class. In the event that you must miss a class you are still responsible for the readings and for submitting any assignments that are due that day. Sometimes people get sick, have accidents, or other situations that cause them miss an assignment deadline. If something happens during the semester that prevents you from turning in an assignment on time please come and talk to me. As your instructor I will do my best to work with you to make sure that you complete the class on time and do as well as you possibly can.

The following list is a summary of the expectations for students in this class:

1) Arrive for class on time.
2) Attend each class and be an active participant.
3) Read and think about the readings prior to each class so that you may contribute to the class in an intelligent manner.
4) Challenge yourself to be an active learner by asking questions, discussing the course content with your classmates, and by addressing your concerns and criticisms to the professor.
5) Challenge yourself to be open to hearing the ideas and thoughts of people with whom you disagree.
6) If you have concerns about your understanding of the course content or assignments I expect that you will let me know so we can discuss your concerns.

7) If you have a concern about anything that happens during class please let me know so we can discuss your concern.

8) Thoughts on ethical practice. As developing social work professionals, it is expected that students will become familiar with and adhere to the *NASW Code of Ethics*. This code for professional behavior should guide your actions in class and in the field agency setting. Disrespect for student colleagues will not be tolerated as classroom dynamics must be safe, appropriate, on topic, open and respectful of diverse opinions and experiences.

9) Students take ownership of expression of bigotry. In other words, rather than attribute negative characteristics to a social group or to a member of that group, students begin with, “This is how I have been taught to believe,” or “I don’t like to admit it, but I do have the belief that…”

As a guideline for organizing your workload, note that it is standard educational expectation that students spend 2-3 hours outside of class time “studying” for every hour spent in class. It is expected that student class members spend 6 to 9 hours per week in preparation outside of class time.

**Comment on written assignments:**
Clear and concise writing are key ingredients for your future in the field of social work. As future social workers, each of you will be called upon to write letters that will impact the lives of individuals, funding, and social policies. It is in this spirit that I encourage you to use the written assignments in this class to hone your writing skills. We are fortunate to have access to a writing tutor here in the Division of Social Work. The development of writing skills is a life long endeavor, therefore I encourage you to seek out the assistance of the writing tutor whenever you feel the need. Additionally, after I read your assigned work I may refer you to the writing tutor.

**General guidelines for written assignments:**
1) All papers are to be double spaced and printed in 12 point font.
2) All papers are evaluated for proper use of grammar and spelling and coherently and logically arranged thoughts.
3) All papers are evaluated for proper use of knowledge: the integration of concepts, theories, models, and information from readings, lectures and class discussions is used in a way that demonstrates your grasp of the material.
4) All papers should demonstrate accurate citation of references (both text and internet) in the style of the American Psychological Association (APA Style).

**Plagiarism:** Any form of cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course.

Written work must reflect your own thinking. It is considered plagiarism if you copy from your textbook or claim ideas that belong to others without citing the source of those ideas.

**University policy on plagiarism is an automatic failure.**

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>points</th>
<th>due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation and reflection</td>
<td>15 pts.</td>
<td>Oct 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly literature and human development</td>
<td>25 pts.</td>
<td>Oct 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating observations and scholarly literature</td>
<td>25 pts.</td>
<td>Nov 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration and presentations with colleagues</td>
<td>35 pts.</td>
<td>Dec 11</td>
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</table>
1) All assignments are required to be turned in on time.
2) Late assignments will have 5 points deducted for each day the assignment is late.
3) I have provided clear guidelines for each assignment and suggest that you follow them closely.
4) I am happy to discuss and answer questions about any assignment.
5) You will receive clear feedback on each assignment so that you will know both the strengths of your work as well as the ways in which your work can be improved.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pts. Earned</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 - 95</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>76 – 73</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94 – 90</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>72 – 70</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>89 – 87</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>69 – 67</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>86 – 83</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>66 – 63</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>82 – 80</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>62 – 60</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>79 – 77</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
<td>F</td>
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**DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**Assignment One  DUE Oct 2**
Observation and reflection of a life span segment (15 points)
(1) Choose a segment of the life span from pregnancy to adolescence that interests you: pregnancy (anytime during the 9 months), infancy (birth through about 18 months), toddler years (18 months through about 3 years), early childhood (4 years through about 6 years), middle childhood (7 years through about 12 years), adolescence (13 years through about 17 years),

(2) Create an opportunity for yourself to observe and interact with a group of people who are in the age phase you chose. Arrange to spend 1 hour interacting with and observing this group (in research methods we call this participant observation).

(3) After your participant observation type two double spaced (12 point font) pages that:
* describe the group you observed and interacted with in terms of: age(s), ethnicities, sexual orientations, social classes, genders. (4 points)
* describe your experience of being with this group and one new thing you learned from this experience. (4 points)
* describe your impressions of this age group in terms of what they do and say and how they express themselves. (4 points)

(4) Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling and coherent and logically arranged thoughts. (3 points)

**Assignment Two DUE Oct 30**
Exploring the professional literature on human development (25 points)
Locate three (3) scholarly articles from professional journals (this excludes magazines, newspapers, web sites) that discuss the life span segment you chose for assignment one. If you have trouble locating professional journals see the reference librarian in the CSUS library.

One of the articles should discuss the biological issues related to the age group you chose in assignment one.
One of the article should discuss cognitive issues related to the age group you chose in assignment one.
One of the articles should discuss psychological or emotional issues related to the age group you chose.

Read each article and prepare an annotated bibliography. (20 pts.)
Use APA style to reference the articles you chose. (2 points)
Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling and coherent and logically arranged thoughts. (3 points)

Assignment three  DUE: Nov 20
Integrating observations, experiences, and the professional literature. (25 points)

Based on your observations and interactions from assignment one and your readings from assignment two what would you say are the five most important issues facing the age group you chose. Be sure to support your choice of each of the five issues with evidence from your interactions, observations, and readings. (20 points)

Papers must be typed, double spaced, use 12 point font and be no longer than five pages.
Use APA style citation and referencing. (2 points)
Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling and coherent and logically arranged thoughts. (3 points)

Assignment four  DUE December 11
Collaboration and presentation with colleagues. (35 points)
(1) You will form a group the other students in the class who chose the same age group as you did for assignment one. You will have one full class time to work with your group on this assignment.

(2) Meet with your group to discuss the findings you wrote about for assignments two and three. Compile a list of these findings so as to incorporate the work of each person in your group. For example, you will want to summarize the various demographics of the groups you each interacted with and summarize the impressions and new learnings that your group members wrote about for assignment two. You will want to summarize the most important issues noted in the papers of each person in your group.

(3) Now as a group, discuss the theories we have learned about this semester and choose one theory that your group can agree would be useful in social work practice with this age group including the other demographic characteristics of the people each of you interacted with.
Prepare and hand in a one page typed summary (only one summary for each group) that describes the theory, explains why it would be useful for social work practice with this group, and discusses its strengths and limitations for use with this age group and the demographic characteristics of the people with whom each of you interacted. Be sure to explain how well the theory accounts for issues of privilege and oppression. (10 points)

(4) Prepare to present your findings to the class. You will have 20 minutes to present. Be sure to use your time wisely so as to cover all parts of this assignment. **Be sure that each person in the group has responsibility for speaking during the presentation.** Be sure that your presentation is professional. Your group may want to pretend that funding for work with this group depends on how well you present.

Your group will need to share the following information with your colleagues: The age group and demographic characteristics of the people you interacted with, the most important issues facing this group, the theory your group chose, a brief explanation of the theory and its strengths and limitations for use with this group. (25 points)

**REQUIRED BOOKS**


**WEEKLY READINGS AND TOPICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1 Sept 4</th>
<th>Intro, syllabus, readings, assignments.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 Sept 11</td>
<td>What is theory? Taking a critical view.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings: Hutchison Ch 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tatum p. ix to 17</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Beck p. 3 to 104</td>
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<td>Week 3 Sept 18</td>
<td>Conception, pregnancy, and birth through the lens of systems theory</td>
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<td>Readings: Hutchison Ch 2 p. 53 to 81</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Beck p. 105 to 198</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4 Sept 25</td>
<td>Conception, pregnancy, and birth considering issues of inequality/conflict theory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings: Hutchison Ch 2 p. 81 to 106</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beck p. 199 to 328</td>
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<td>Week 5 Oct 2</td>
<td>Infancy and Toddler Years</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Assignment One due</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Readings: Hutchison Ch 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6 Oct 9</td>
<td>Early childhood. Considering theories of cognitive and moral development</td>
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<td>Week 7 Oct 16</td>
<td>Developing knowledge of difference in early childhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8 Oct 23</td>
<td>Middle childhood and socialization. Considering the theory of symbolic interaction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9 Oct 30</td>
<td>Adolescence. A time of identity development</td>
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<td>Week 10 Nov 6</td>
<td>Theories of identity development</td>
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<td>Week 11 Nov 13</td>
<td>Work on group presentations</td>
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<td>Week 12 Nov 20</td>
<td>More theories of identity development</td>
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<td>Week 13 Nov 27</td>
<td>Happy Thanksgiving NO CLASS</td>
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<td>Week 14 Dec 4</td>
<td>Theories of empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15 Dec 11</td>
<td>Group Presentations</td>
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*Assignment two due
*Assignment Three due
*Assignment Four Due