

**SW 5317**  
**Social Work with Involuntary Clients**  
**2 credits**

**Course Description:**

This course includes an analysis of involuntary transactions experienced by social workers in a variety of settings. The course also includes theory, ethics and strategies for intervention (from university catalogue). In addition to an approach to work with involuntary clients developed by the instructor (Rooney, 1992), you will learn about three additional approaches to such work: Chris Trotter's model, motivational interviewing, and solution-focused approaches. You will also have access to drafts of chapters submitted for the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Strategies for Work with Involuntary Clients* by national and international experts on such work .

This course is about understanding and intervening in involuntary transactions. It is about working in a legal, ethical and effective manner with involuntary individuals, families and groups, many of whom are members of oppressed groups and/or persons of color. The course is also about survival strategies for the involuntary practitioners who often make constrained choices to continue such work. Finally, the course is about the reform of helping systems to become more legal, ethical and effective settings in which clients are helped to change and rights to self-determination are preserved to the degree possible.

**Prerequisites:**

SW 5317 is open to both graduate and undergraduate students. This course requires some computer and internet skills (such as word processing, browsing the web, uploading and downloading files, and using e-mail with file attachments). It also requires access to a printer and at twice weekly access to the Web. It is recommended that you have PowerPoint installed on the computer you use to view the PowerPoint files.

**Course Objectives:**

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

1. Define categories of involuntary clients including legally mandated and nonvoluntary contact under pressure with helping professionals.
2. Understand the importance of sensitivity to diversity in ethnic, racial, cultural, class, gender and sexual orientation in work with involuntary clients.
3. Realize how membership in an oppressed group influences relationships between clients and agencies. Oppressed groups include, but are not limited to, persons of color, groups identified by gender, sexual orientation, poverty, and special mental and physical abilities.

4. Explain how the concepts of deviance, resistance and reactance can be used in understanding involuntary transactions.
5. Apply ethical principles to practice with involuntary clients, identifying when practitioners have a legal and ethical right to pressure change and when they do not.
6. Identify advantages and disadvantages of various influence methods and when to use them most effectively.
7. identify intervention principles from four sources (Trotter, solution-focused , motivational interviewing and Rooney) and be able to asses their empirical and theoretical rationales
8. Begin collaborative contracts with involuntary clients by identifying negotiable and non-negotiable items.
9. Agree upon goals and tasks with involuntary clients and monitor their achievement.
10. Build skills in maintaining behavior or attitude changes and in confronting appropriately and helpfully.
11. Know how and when to terminate involuntary contact including appropriate linkage with resources and assessment of effectiveness of intervention.
12. Apply concepts and skills to work with individuals, families, groups and other systems including their own agencies and public policy in general working toward social justice at the macro level.

**Course Assignments:**

- 1) **Web participation.** A significant part of your course learning will occur through participation in the course website on WebCt. This form of learning requires active learning, critical thinking, and integration of thoughts, experiences and readings. You are required to post a substantive reflection on the application of course work to your practice respond to discussion questions, participate in discussions, read, respond to and support other students' contributions..
  1. **Post a substantive reflection on the application of course work to your practice .** You are to compose a thoughtful reflection on course work, course readings and class sessions as they pertain to work with involuntary clients in either field or work settings. Be sure to protect confidentiality of your setting and clients in this review. This reflection should be about 2 pages long. It is recommended that you type your reflection with a word processor and paste it into the bulletin board on WebCt. An example of a reflection will be posted on the web site for the 1<sup>st</sup> module. You may choose to submit additional reflections for extra credit. Your review should include
    - Posing the issue or situation you are concerned about
    - Describe case circumstance pertinent to the issue

- Reflect on course readings, class sessions, other web postings and other resources as they pertain to your issue and situation . Do so in ways that are clear to other readers about the sources you are citing.
2. **Respond to discussion questions, post questions, respond to other students and the instructor on the bulletin board** On a regular basis, you should read and comment on other student's reflections and reviews. Such comments should be substantive, beyond "great stuff" to reflect comprehension and thoughtful commentary. You will be expected to make several entries for each week or module. Comments need not however be lengthy, but should occur at least weekly. Hello or "I agree" is not a substantive contribution. You must support a position, begin a new topic, or add to an existing discussion. A substantive response might consist of a different point of view, a disagreement that includes fact to support your point, or an "aha" moment. Use proper English (grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation) in your postings. :

2) **Video Assignment 1:**

This assignment will provide you with an opportunity to integrate content from the first part of the course. You are free to view the videotape "Work with Involuntary Clients: the Consumers' Perspective" indicated as the midterm n your CD ROM. throughout the first part of the course. Molly Morgan tells her story of involvement in the child welfare, public welfare and mental health systems. Her story resonates with many themes we will have discussed in the course. You are encouraged to work together with classmates in analyzing the tape, sharing materials, insights and perspectives. The assignment counts for 30 points. Ten to fifteen typed pages are expected. The assignment should be turned in as an email attachment using word or through the assignment function of WebCt. Papers should include specific references to the literature in APA format (e.g. (Rooney, 1990, p.2). Your answer must demonstrate both thorough comprehension of the concepts and analytic skill in applying concepts to the interview. Appropriate quotes from the readings will assist in your demonstration of your ability to understand and appropriately apply concepts in analysis. You should find that the additional required readings are also relevant to your analysis. Include a reference page. Include page numbers for quotes. You may choose to answer each question separately or integrate them into an essay. If you choose the latter, be sure that you cover the points requested in each question. You may choose to write this paper as a group.

1. You are to respond to Molly's life story for what we can learn about the experience of involuntary clients with systems. For example, Molly insists that she was never involuntary nor ever court ordered. What do you make of this given concepts from the course? What relevance does oppressed group status have to her story?
2. The concepts of paternalism and learned helplessness also appear in her story, though she does not use those words. Similarly, self-determination and empowerment are glimpsed, though not discussed directly. Define each of these concepts from course or other literature and describe how they relate to her story.
3. Define and describe the concepts of deviance, reactance and resistance are useful in analyzing her story.

4. In addition, Molly has advice for helpers that are somewhat similar to the clues for effective intervention discussed in Rooney, chapter 5 and Trotter, chapter 2. Compare her advice with that cited by the above authors.
  5. You should close with the lessons you have taken from her story and the lessons you believe that other helping professionals can take.
- 3) **2<sup>nd</sup> assignment. You can choose between a) being part of a group presentation of an approach or b) analyzing a video**
1. **group presentation.** The class will consider three different approaches to work with involuntary clients. For example, the focus will be on the solution-focused approach and its application to work with involuntary clients. Similarly, the focus is on motivational interviewing and Trotter's approach. Those students making presentations will have one hour to present key points of the approach and model it. They should also reflect critically on the claims of the approach. They should assume that students will read the required readings for the day and may not need to go beyond these in their own preparation. Handouts and PowerPoint presentations are often helpful, if you go beyond reading them to students.
  2. **video assignment:** You will be able to choose to assess one of three videos to assess their use of skills in work with involuntary clients. There will be more details on this option.
- 4) **3<sup>rd</sup> and Final Assignment:**
1. **There are four options for the final assignment: a) take home examination; b) application to a particular problem or population; c) assessment of your own work with a client or d) development of a videotape of a role-play of work with an involuntary client.**
    - a. **Take home examination**

This course exposes you to four approaches to work with involuntary clients (Rooney, motivational interviewing, Trotter, and solution focused). By the end of the course, you should be very familiar with how each of these approaches deals with key issues in involuntary transactions. This option includes analysis and comparison of these approaches and application to a case. You may choose to submit this paper as a group assignment (with a maximum of three persons per group). The paper should be 10-15 pages (if individual) and 15-20 pages long (if group) and double-spaced with references in APA format.

      1. What position do the approaches take in regard to definitions of status? Do they mean the same thing by involuntary client? Is the presence of a legal mandate essential to their definition? Describe similarities and differences.
      2. One of Trotter's key principles involves promoting pro-social behavior. Describe the rationale for this and the implications.

3. Motivational Interviewing, Trotter and Rooney are all essentially problem solving approaches. Compare these problem solving approaches with the solution-focused approach. Describe similarities and differences.
4. What position do the approaches take as to whether clients should have a role in defining their own problems or goals?
5. Describe the major conceptual and value *similarities and differences* among the approaches. Note : constructing a table may be helpful here. .
6. Take one of these approaches and apply it to a case situation. Explain how the approach would be used and describe an example of its use. This can pertain to an actual current case, a case served in the past, or a fictitious case. This may be an instance in which groups of students can work together to assist each other. For example, some students have more practice experience than others and can provide case vignettes. The example should include a selection of dialogue describing interaction between a social worker and client including at least 5 exchanges.
7. Provide a final brief assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches for assisting us in work with involuntary clients.

**b. application to a particular problem or population**

Topic areas might include, for example, how would the approach be useful in child welfare, chemical dependency, adult mental health, or probation? Include at least five references about the specific target group or area you have chosen. The paper also must include your own adaptation of course content and readings to your chosen target area. You can choose to write a paper and make a presentation, work individually or in a group. The paper should show awareness of content in the course text on the subject and build on it through additional review of the literature and thought. The paper should be 8-10 pages long (10-15 for group paper) long and double-spaced with references in APA format. This option includes a 20-minute in-class presentation with visual aids/PowerPoint and handouts. A demonstration of methods through a role-play or case study is often useful. Your paper should include answers to the following questions. You may choose to answer them numerically or thematically through your paper. Note that the chapters you will read that have been submitted for the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Strategies for work with Involuntary Clients* were attempting to answer these questions.

1. Describe the population, problem or setting descriptively.
2. In what way does the problem, population or setting relate to involuntary clients? How do the concepts of mandated and nonvoluntary clients apply to this problem, population or setting? Are these terms used? How are clients referred to? To what degree is voluntarism or lack thereof visible or not to the practitioner or agency?

3. What is known about effectiveness in work with this problem, population or setting?
  4. What are best practices with this problem or population and what is the evidence for them?
  5. What are key issues in this problem, population or setting?
  6. What does work with this problem, population or setting contribute to our knowledge about involuntary clients?
  7. What could knowledge about involuntary clients contribute to work with this problem, population or setting?
- c. You may choose to analyze the interactions, which have occurred or are occurring in your own work with involuntary clients.** The paper should include appropriate references to course readings. The paper should be 10-15 pages in length. The paper should include:
1. A brief description of the setting and client circumstances, with appropriate confidentiality protected
  2. A description and analysis of what occurred in initial client contacts according to concepts studied in the course; your analysis should reflect course readings. Initial contacts refers to beginning sessions you had with the client or family.
  3. A description and analysis of what occurred in client contacts after the initial ones according to concepts studied in the course. This refers to later contacts after those initial contacts.
  4. An analysis of the positive and negative effects of the interventions you used
  5. An assessment of what things you would now do differently and what you would continue the same
  6. For an area which you would now choose to do differently, write a section of dialogue including at least 5 exchanges describing both what occurred and what you would now say and do differently and your reasons for doing so. Write out what you would actually say and imagine and write what the client would say.
- d. You may choose to carry out a beginning session or a subsequent session role-play on videotape.** You may choose to develop such videotape with other class members. The role-play should be 20-30 minutes long. You are then to analyze what transpires in the role-play according to course content. The presentation should include: a) a description and analysis of involuntary client treatment skills employed; those skills should be described based on your course readings. Your paper should include: a) a

succinct description of what transpires in the tape; b) an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the practitioner interventions; c) an assessment of what things you would now do differently and what you would continue the same and your rationale for this; d) a succinct rewritten dialogue for a section of the videotape which you think could have been improved with your rationale for its selection. The paper should include appropriate references to course readings and should be about 10 pages in length and include a reference page. Both the videotape and your analysis should be submitted. You should be prepared to share a five-minute segment of the video with the entire class on the final class session with questions posed for students raised by the segment of video. The video presentation as a whole will last 15 minutes.

## **5. Class participation**

### **Course Texts:**

Rooney, Ronald H. (1992). *Strategies for Work with Involuntary Clients*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Trotter, C. (1999). *Working with Involuntary Clients*. London: Sage

**Reading packet required.**

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