

**University of Minnesota
School of Social Work
SW 5810, Child Development: Resilience and Risk
(Unspecified # of credits)**

Course Syllabus

This is an advanced course in human behavior and the social environment. The course is designed specifically for students who plan to work with children and their families who have experienced adversities. This course

- provides students with opportunities to learn and apply theories of human development to typical issues confronting children, families, and social workers in agencies that serve children and their families;
- assumes that human behavior and development result from the interactions over time of persons with their social environments and that these social environments can be remarkably diverse;
- takes strengths-based perspectives by seeking to identify resources within the various ecologies in which families and children live their lives and to mobilize these resources to empower clients to cope with, adapt to, and overcome adversities; and
- focuses on how families and children interpret the various events and relationships that they experience within the various environments in which they live their lives.

Developing capacities for understanding clients' points of view requires an appreciation of the multiple influences on human development while at the same time recognizing that each person is unique. The theories and ideas that students learn in this course must be tested for fit with individual client situations.

A major issue in social work in general and work with children and families in particular is social location, an issue many contemporary theories of human development overlook. Persons within particular categories of social location, such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, may have some characteristics in common, but each individual also is unique. In applying theories, students will be guided to assess for common and unique qualities of individuals within the various groups in which they hold membership. In short, human diversity is a major theme of this course.

In the United States, access to opportunity, power, privilege, and prestige is associated with indicators of social location, such as those listed earlier. Thus, persons from non-European, poorer classes are over-represented in the caseloads of

practitioners who work with children and families. Social work's task is to facilitate the access individuals have to opportunities so that they, too, can enjoy the benefits of living in a wealthy, imperfect democracy.

The course provides substantial information on assessment of children and families and covers interventions based on normative milestones of child development. The purposes of these assessments and interventions is to foster the optimal development of children who have experienced serious adversities.

Course Objectives

This course has four educational objectives. By the end of the course students will have developed skills and capacities

1. to identify and understand behaviors associated with healthy development and with challenges to healthy development, within the contexts of cultural, ethnic, and social class influences, throughout the life course;
2. to become familiar with issues that children and families in social work caseloads typically confront and theories and research that shed light on these issues;
3. to demonstrate abilities to apply course content in assessments and interventions and in analyzing and planning interventions from observed developmental successes; and
4. to evaluate their own practice with children and families in terms of principles of human behavior in the social environment, in keeping with social work values and goals, including respect for client diversities and self-directed goals.

Readings

There is one required text and two packets of required readings for this course. The text is

Schroeder, Carolyn S., & Betty N. Gordon (2002). *Assessment & treatment of childhood problems: A clinician's guide* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford.

The text and one reading packet are on sale at the St. Paul campus bookstore. The second packet is composed of readings that are available on-line. Other readings are assigned throughout the semester. Background readings are not required for this course but provide students with suggestions for further exploration of topics.

You are required to apply a minimum of six articles and chapters assigned in this course to your paper/project. Students can use no more than two writings published on the internet. Articles published in scholarly, refereed e-journals do not count as internet publications. If you want to use more than two internet publications, please consult with the instructor. In multiply-authored projects, additional readings are required, commensurate with the number of persons involved. You may use other

readings to supplement but not substitute for course readings. This is a sign of excellent scholarship.

Course Requirements

Besides reading the weekly assignments and sharing your observations in class discussions, you are expected to complete two short assignments, a mid-term exam, and a course project. The first required small paper is an interview, outlined below and to be discussed in class. The second required assignment is either an in-class presentation or a journal. The course project is an assessment and case plan described below. The following is a description of the assignments.

1. *an interview* with a social worker whose clients are children and their families. These professionals could work in such settings as public child welfare, schools, children's mental health, or community mental health. Your general task is to discuss strengths the social worker typically finds in the various ecologies in which children and families live their lives. In the first class, your instructor will provide you with a separate handout that provides the specifics of this assignment.

Be sure to ask follow-up questions that provide specific examples. Note in particular whether your interviewee shows an appreciation of strengths-based practice. Oral report due class 3. Written paper due class 4. Maximum of four pages. You may make lists and/or bullet points of strengths and how families and children use them.

2. *A take-home mid-term exam*, due Class 9, consisting of definitions and short essay questions.

3. *A journal or an in-class presentation*—choose one.

- The ***journal*** will consist of your responses to class content. For the journal, please adhere to the following format
 - write each entry as soon as possible after each class
 - begin with a brief summary of the topic(s) on which you will be commenting;
 - then give your responses to the topic(s). The responses can cover a variety of areas, such as new insights that resulted from learning about the topic(s), some personal meanings that the topic(s) might have, or the learnings as affirmations of what you've learned through practice. You are not required to relate personal, private experiences in your journal. If you want to do this, please feel free to disguise your own identity.
 - Conclude with a discussion section that explores the implications of your responses to your practice.

The journal is due on the last day of class. The journal is an individual project.

- For the ***in-class presentation***, you are encouraged to work with one or

more other students and to consult with the instructor at least one week before the presentations are to be done. The presentations are applications to work with children and families of the principles discussed in the readings assigned for that week. The ideal presentation is to show how principles in the readings apply to your work with clients. You can apply this presentation to your final project. The presentation must be done by the next to the last class.

4. **Final Project** The final project is a **comprehensive assessment-to-intervention case plan** based on the format that the textbook for the course provides and on information taken from other course readings. Your instructor will work with class members to construct the format to be used in this project. This case plan is your opportunity to apply course learnings to a case of your choice. The case plan will build on the principle that ecological factors influence child development and will identify strengths and protective processes within the various ecologies in which children live their lives.

Students will develop a statement that formulates and integrates information about the case into a viable work plan and will identify interventions that will support healthy development. This plan will include descriptions of protective processes, supports (interpersonal; community-based), obstacles, and identifiable outcomes.

The paper is to be 14-16 pages long. You may work with other students on this paper. The more students involved, the more comprehensive the paper must be. **A written and signed accounting of the contribution of each collaborator is required if students choose this option.** I will return the paper unread if this statement is not with the paper.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Class 1 **Risk and Resilience Processes
in Ecological Perspective**

Reading

Smokowski, Paul (1998). Prevention and intervention strategies for promoting resilience in disadvantaged children. *Social Service Review*, 72(3), 337-364. (on-line)

Class 2 **Strengths-Based Assessments
Classifications of Childhood Adaptations
Attachment and Adaptation**

Readings

Davies, Douglas (1999). Attachment as a context of development. *Child Development: A practitioner's guide* (pp. 13-43). New York: Guilford. (reading packet)
Hinshaw-Fusilier, Sarah, Neil W. Boris, & Charles H. Neenan (1999). Reactive attachment disorder in maltreated twins. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 20(1), 42-59.

(on-line)

Schroeder & Gordon, Chapter 2: Assessment to Intervention

Assignment

Interview a social worker on risk and resilience processes of children and their families within their various ecologies. Instructor will provide hand-out to guide the work.

Class 3

Attachment Processes Self-Regulation Inner-Representations of Self and Others

Readings

Albus, Kathleen E., & Mary Dozier (1999). Indiscriminate friendliness and terror of strangers in infancy: Contributions from the study of infants in foster care. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 20(1), 30-41. (on-line).

Koren-Karie, Nina, David Oppenheim, & Rachel Getzler-Yosef (2004). Mothers who were severely abused during childhood and their children talk about emotions: Co-construction of narratives in light of maternal trauma. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 25(4), (300-317 (on-line)

Shonkoff, Jack P., & Deborah A. Phillips (Eds.). (2000). Acquiring self-regulation. *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development* (pp. 93-123). Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. (reading packet)

Class 4

Attachment, Resilience, and Brain Functioning Parenting and Styles of Adult Attachment Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Activity

Review the Epilepsy Project website that has an excellent presentation on the anatomy of the brain, plus information on seizure disorders. Address is http://www.epilepsy.com/web/animation.php?swf=what_is

Readings

Gilgun, Jane F. (in press). Evidence-based practice, descriptive research, and the resilience-schema-gender-brain (RSGB) assessment. *British Journal of Social Work*. (available from instructor)

Hohman, Melinda, Rhonda Oliver, & Wendy Wright (2004). Methamphetamine abuse and manufacture: The child welfare response. *Social Work*, 49(3), 373-381. (on-line)

Sokol, Robert J., Virginia Delaney-Black, & Beth Nordstrom (2003). Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. *JAMA*, 290(22), 2996-2999. (on-line)

Steele, Miriam & Tessa Baradon (2004). Clinical use of the adult attachment interview in parent-infant psychotherapy. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 25(4), 284-299. (on-

line)

*****Interview with a social worker due*****

SAMPLE

*****Projects due one week later *****

SAMPLE