Course Number: SOWO 802, Fall 2008

Course Title: Family Stress

Location and Time: TTK Building, Room 107, Tuesday, 2:00pm-4:50pm

Instructor: Joanne Caye, M.S.W.
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Office Hours: Mon. 11:00am-1:00pm, and by appointment

Course Description: A review of theories and research on family functioning and interaction in social context; an examination of family coping and adaptation associated with developmental transitions and environmental stressors.

Course Objectives: By course end, students will:

- Understand shifts in family structure and functioning in the context of changes in the institutions of work and community in the United States, especially those trends and issues that differentially affect oppressed groups.
- Understand the development and role of explanatory and practice theory in social work informing social interventions with families.
- Understand concepts, selected theory and research concerning family stress, functioning and interaction.
- Understand concepts, selected theory and research describing the role of personal resources, family resources, and informal and formal social support in the coping and adaptation process.
- Apply models of family functioning and interaction to inform and analyze social interventions with families and children.

Required Texts


All of these books can be purchased used.

**Supplemental reading materials** can be found ONLINE:
1) At the URL stated in the reading list
   OR
2) Through an electronic academic journal accessible through UNC Libraries ([http://www.lib.unc.edu/](http://www.lib.unc.edu/)) marked as “UL” (for “UNC Libraries”) OR
3) Via Blackboard ([http://blackboard.unc.edu/](http://blackboard.unc.edu/)) “BB” (login and find SOWO 802)

**CLASS ATTENDANCE**
It is expected that students will attend all classes or **notify the instructor in advance** and make arrangements to obtain class notes from other students if there is a compelling (illness, family emergency) reason to miss a class. The instructor will not place notes in student boxes or leave messages concerning what was covered or what is due. The Class Participation and Contribution grade is explained below.

**EXPECTATIONS**
Learning can only truly occur in a space where all participants feel respected and safe. Therefore all class participants, student and instructor, will be expected to interact in a collegial manner, challenging ideas while respecting people.

Written assignments have a fair amount of flexibility so that students can pursue learning around areas of particular interest. If you have ideas or suggestions for how a particular assignment might be adapted to be more challenging for you, we hope you will bring this to our attention. Please check with us before making any changes or adaptations.

**GRADING SYSTEM:**
The School of Social Work operates on an evaluation system of Honors (H), Pass (P), Low Pass (L), and Fail (F). The numerical values of these grades are:

- **H:** 94-100
- **P:** 80-93
- **L:** 70-79
- **F:** 69 and lower

A grade of P is considered entirely satisfactory. The grade of Honors (“H”) — which a limited number of students attain—signifies that the work is clearly excellent in all respects.
HONOR CODE:
It is the responsibility of every student to obey and to support the enforcement of the Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing in actions involving the academic processes of this class. Students will properly attribute sources used in preparing written work and will sign a pledge on all graded coursework certifying that no unauthorized assistance has been received or given in the completion of the work. All written assignments should contain a signed pledge from you stating that, “I have not given or received unauthorized aid in preparing this written work.” Credit will not be awarded for unpledged work.

POLICY ON LATE PAPERS:
A paper is considered late if it is handed in any later than the start of class on the day it is due. Late papers will lose 2 points per day, including weekends.

The instructor will approve extensions only under extraordinary circumstances. In such cases, the student must seek approval from the instructor before the paper is due.

POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
Students with disabilities that affect their participation in the course should notify the instructor if they wish to have special accommodations in instructional format, examination format, etc., considered, and should obtain a supporting letter from the UNC Department of Disability Services (http://disabilityservices.unc.edu).

APA FORMAT:
The School of Social Work faculty has adopted APA style as the preferred format for papers and publications. A summary was distributed at orientation. The following web sites provide additional information:

- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html (general information about documentation using APA style)
- http://www.bartleby.com/141/ (electronic version of Strunk's The Elements of Style which was originally published in 1918)
- http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/resources.html (The Harvard Writing Center, links to on-line reference material and many other useful sites for authors)
ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment #1: Quizzes (30% of grade):
Five class sessions will begin with a short quiz on the assigned readings and course material covered in the previous two classes. The content of the quizzes is NOT cumulative across the semester. Note: this will include content when presentations are made by fellow students. Students can refer to class notes, handouts, and assigned readings while taking the quizzes. Since only 20 minutes will be allowed for the quizzes, familiarity with info from the previous two weeks is important to be able to answer the questions. Each quiz is worth 20 points, and will accumulate over the semester to 100 points. Quizzes will comprise 30% of your overall grade, and cannot be made up at a later time.

Assignment #2: Group Presentation (30% of grade):
Purpose: Translating theoretical content to issues likely to be encountered in a social work career is a necessary skill to develop. In the current world of evidence based practice, professional social workers need to be able to research an issue and articulate their findings and then connect those research findings to a real life case. Stress has profound effects on the lives of families and individuals with whom you will work, client and colleague alike.

Instructions: Students (in groups of two- three) will share responsibility for planning and implementing a 60 minute class session.

General Instructions:
1. Select a topic/issue from the list below, or determine you own, with professor’s agreement.
2. Each group will develop a hypothesis question(s) which will focus their research and presentation. Once the group has developed a hypothesis, you are ready to begin researching the literature.
3. The group completes a literature search to determine what is known about the issue, especially what relates to the hypothesis. Supporting research for the topic chosen is required.
4. Assign a reading that pertains to your topic area two weeks ahead of the presentation date. Bring a hard copy of the article for the instructor so that it can be put on Blackboard, or email an electronic copy of the article.
5. Each presentation should speak to the following items:
   • The ways your topic affects stress levels within the family or individual
   • How perception of your issue has changed over time What has happened in society to allow this change to take place? Has the change in perception increased or decreased the stress experienced by persons included in your target issue?
   • How culture, class, ethnicity, and gender affect perception and level of stress pertaining to this issue.
   • What strengths and resilience might mitigate the effect of the stressors?
• What strategies have been developed to help the individual/ family deal with this issue and reduce stress?
• Explain how research on the issue supported or nullified the groups initial hypothesis
• Are there any facets of this issue that are particularly sensitive or controversial?

6. Identify at least five references for each student in the group. References may include journal articles, books, websites, videos, pertinent YouTube sites, among others.

7. Completion of an evaluation of group involvement. A brief checklist will be provided to students for this purpose.

Possible issues may include:
• Physical Disabilities and family stress
• Mental Illness and family stress
• Attitudes toward marriage (partnership), infidelity, and family stress
• Launching of children and family stress
• Diverse sexual orientations and gender perceptions and family stress
• Attitudes toward death, burial rituals (speed, burial vs. cremation, ethnic expectations) and family stress
• Employment relocation/ distance from family and family stress
• Cultural assimilation and family stress
• Chronic Illness and family stress
• Addiction and family stress
• Family Violence and family stress
• Living in a war zone (soldier or civilian) and family stress

Evaluation [Group grade] based on:
• Specificity, obvious critical thinking, and clarity of hypothesis
• Quality, diversity, and content of literature search
• Quality of presentation,
• Engagement of class in discussion
• Connection of issue to theoretical constructs
• Comprehensive attention to items to be considered
• Collaborative involvement of all group members
• Discussion of support or null of hypothesis
• Self evaluation of group involvement
• Rigorous bibliography

Dates to choose from:
September 30
October 7
October 21
October 28
November 4
Assignment #3: Case Study of Family Stress (25% of grade)

Purpose: This assignment requires the student to analyze a client family, assessing origins and outcomes of stressors, and supports available to the family. The student will complete the assessment using specific theoretical constructs taught during the course, and suggest interventions to help the family reduce or alleviate that stress.

- Each student will choose a family from his/her field placement about whom the student will be able to gather specific information. [If this is not possible, the student can meet with the professor to determine what family is available for this assignment]
- The student will complete a genogram of the family, covering at least three generations.
- Using a specific perspective (from the theories taught in the course), the student will complete a comprehensive assessment of the stressors and strengths of both individuals in the family, and the family as a whole.
- The student should consider the possible origins of such stress/support [taking care to avoid linear thinking!] and what the research suggests might be outcomes of the stressors/supports.
- The student should make a plan of specific interventions which are focused on reducing, eliminating or enhancing the ability of the family to cope with the stressors. What does the research say about best ways to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for this family? Don’t forget informal as well as formal support systems. What steps would it take to put your interventions in place? How would you engage the client family in this process? How are their wishes and needs to be considered?

Product:
An eight to ten page paper, double spaced, using APA format that covers the information outlined above. One page should be the genogram, which may be drawn or completed on computer using genogram shareware. Either format is acceptable, as long as it is readable, and includes major events, and emotional connections between members of the family.

Due Date: November 25

Class Participation (15%)
Active participation in class involves regular attendance, completion of the readings and involvement in class discussions. Classroom learning is a group event, and respectful attention to the ideas and input of all students increases the potential for an enriching experience. The more students are able and willing to bring outside relevant examples into the room, the more all will understand the topic at hand.

Course Evaluation and Grading:
Presentation (group) 30%
Quizzes (5) 30%
Case Study 25%
Attendance and Participation 15%
100%
Points | Grade
--- | ---
94 - 100 | H
80 - 93 | P
70 - 79 | L
< 69 | F

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**August 19 - Session one:**

**Course Introduction**

- Course Organization and Expectations
- Discussion of Presentations
- Stress
  - Definitions
  - Context
- PTSD
- What does stress do to people?

**Readings:**


**August 26 - Session two:**

**Stress associated with adult developmental milestones**

- Stress in the context of singles & couples
- Changes in perceptions of marriage/ couples/ dissolution over time
- Do changes in perceptions cause stress? Why or why not?
- What has economics have to do with family stress?
- Economic Hardship Scale

**Readings:**

Cherlin, A.J., (Spring, 1998) Marriage and marital dissolution among black Americans., *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*. (Special Issue: Comparative Perspectives on Black Family Life vol.1) 147-159. BB

**September 2 - Session three**

**Stress associated with issues of childhood & family life**

Quiz #1-
• Changes in perceptions of childhood over time
• Changes in expectations of parents over time
• What is the “place” of school in current society? Has that changed?

Readings:


September 9—Session four

**Family Stress Theory**

**Families in Community**

• Explanatory theory
• Practice theory
• Social Support

Readings:
Ingoldsby, Chapter Six. Family Stress Theory, 137-147


Lipper, J. Chapter One, Pittsfield. 1-52.


September 16—Session five:

**Family Stress Theory**

Quiz #2

• Risk and resiliency
• Social Support—how is it measured?

Readings:


**September 23–Session Six:**

**Family Stress Theory Application**

- Analysis of the community and residents in Kozol’s book
- Intervention Planning

**Reading:**


**September 30–Session Seven:**

**Symbolic Interactionism Theory**

**Presentation-group #1**

- Concepts of Symbolic Interactionism

**Readings:**

Ingoldsby, Chapter Four *Symbolic Interactionism Theory* 81-92.


**October 7–Session Eight:**

**Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress (MEES)**

**Presentation Group #2**

**Quiz 3**

- Concepts of Mundane Extreme Environmental stress (MEES) Model

**Readings:**


Hatzenbuehler, M.L., Nolen-Hoeksema, and S, Erickson, S.J., minority stress predictors of HIV risk behavior, substance use, and depressive symptoms:
Results from a prospective study of bereaved gay men. Health Psychology 27(4) 455-462.


Olson, S.L., and Banyard, V. (1993) Stop the world so I can get off for a while:
Sources of daily stress in the lives of low-income single mothers of young children. Family Relations. 42(1) 50-56. BB

October 14— FREE DAY  No Class!!

October 21-Session Nine:
Exchange Theory
Presentation Group #3

- Concepts of Exchange Theory

Readings:
Ingoldsby, B.B. Chapter Three Exchange Theory, 55-80

October 28-Session Ten
Conflict Theory
Presentation Group #4
Quiz #4

- Concepts of conflict theory

Readings:
Ingoldsby, B. B., Chapter Five, Conflict Theory 103-115
Conflict theory utilized in the study of criminology:
Study the conflict website: Retrieved January 9, 2008
http://www.criminology.fsu.edu/crimtheory/conflict.htm
Lipper, J. (2003) Sheri (pp217-266) In Growing up fast
November 4
Session Eleven: Feminist Family Theory Presentation Group #5

- Concepts of feminist theory

Readings:
Lipper, J. (2003) Jessica (pp267-316) In *Growing up fast*

November 11
Session Twelve: Planning Interventions to Reduce or Manage Stress Quiz #5

- Why Evidence based practice?
- Interventions based on risk and resilience factors

Readings:

November 18
Session Thirteen

Interventions, con't.

- Enhancing social support
- Planning your own interventions

Readings:


**November 25-Session Fourteen**

**Stress in the Agency**

**Traumatic Stress Symptoms in Professional Helpers**

- Secondary Stress Symptoms
- Centering

Readings:


**December 2 Session Fifteen**

**Evaluation and Feedback**

- Discussion of class experience
- Check Out
- Evaluations