THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

COURSE NUMBER:   SOWO 802 (Spring 2009)

COURSE TITLE, SEMESTER AND YEAR: FAMILY STRESS, COPING AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

INSTRUCTOR:       Gary L. Bowen, Ph.D., ACSW
School of Social Work
Tate-Turner-Kuralt, Room 438
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OFFICE HOURS:     Monday, 1-3:30 PM (By Appointment)
UNC-CH Safe Zone

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:

1. 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, with emphasis on women, on gays
   and lesbians, on African-Americans, and on other minority groups.

2. Understand the development and role of explanatory and practice theory in social
   work informing social interventions with families.

3. Understand concepts, selected theory and research concerning family stress, coping
   and social support.

4. Understand concepts, selected theory and research concerning internal family
   functioning and interaction.

5. 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.

6. Apply models of family functioning and interaction to inform and analyze social
   interventions with families and children.
REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS:


RELATED READINGS:


TEACHING METHODS:

This course has been designed to maximize student involvement, and it will be facilitated using a transformative learning model. From this model, students work with the instructor as full partners in assuming responsibility for the success of the course. Students will prepare lectures, develop assignments, lead class discussion, and peer review a written assignment.

CLASS MEETINGS:

January 12, January 19 (Holiday, No Class), January 26 (No Class), February 2, February 9, February 16, February 23, March 2, March 9 (Spring Break), March 16, March 23, March 30, April 6, April 13, April 20, April 27, May 4 (Exam Date @ 0800)

The typical class will have the following structure:

9:00 – 9:15:  Check-in
9:15 – 10:30  Lecture/Presentation
10:30 – 10:45  Break
10:45 – 11:40  Lecture/Presentation/Discussion
11:40 – 11:50  Checkout
BAD WEATHER POLICY:

Please check your email by 7:00 a.m. on the day of class in case of snow, ice or other threatening and/or unsafe conditions. Use your best judgment about travel safety if you are driving to Chapel Hill from surrounding areas that have snow, ice or other threatening and/or unsafe conditions.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:

Class Attendance
Students are expected to attend all class sessions, and classes will begin and end on time. A roll sheet will be distributed at the beginning of each class. If there is some reason that you cannot attend a class, please contact the instructor or leave a message for the instructor at the School of Social Work. Students who miss two class sessions will be penalized by one letter grade (special exceptions may apply). Students who miss three or more class sessions will receive an "F" as their final grade for the class.

Email Accounts
All students are required to have a valid UNC email account. A valid UNC email address has the following extension: @email.unc.edu.

Required Reading
To facilitate class involvement and discussion, students are expected to read all required materials prior to class.

Class Participation
Students are expected to contribute "meaningfully" to class discussion. The professor may call upon students to respond to assigned readings/class discussion. Please let the professor know if you have particular concerns about being called upon in class. At the beginning of each class session, time will be allocated to address questions about readings and assignments.

Short Essay
A two-page essay will be assigned on the first day of class, which will be due on February 2. Please read Blink by Malcolm Gladwell and define and discuss Gladwell’s concept of “thin-slicing” in the context social work practice with families and children. Please include definitions of “critical thinking” and “intuitive practice” in your response (see Paul & Heaslip, 1994), and distinguish “intuition” from “thin-slicing.” What are some dangers associated with intuitive practice alone? What makes Blink a good choice for an opening reading in SoWo 233? Please bring three copies of your essay to class, and email the professor a copy of your essay. Please include only your personal identification number (PID) on the essay. No title page is necessary.

Each of you will have an opportunity to review two essays from your class colleagues. Please see the attached essay evaluation form. Six criteria are specified across two domains (content and writing style/editing), which are evaluating using the following scale: 60 = Poor (60%), 70 = Fair (70%), 80 = Good (80%), 90 = Very Good (90%), and 100 = Clearly Exceptional (100%).
Class Lecture
Consistent with the professor’s teaching philosophy, students will have an opportunity to prepare and deliver a class lecture on an assigned topic, which should be approximately 75 minutes in duration (some presentations may be longer). In a few situations, two students will work together. Topics will be assigned randomly, although students may trade topics with each other. Please submit an electronic copy (email attachment) of the PowerPoint slides (15-20 slides) to the professor at least 12 hours in advance of the presentation. Please distribute a hard copy of the PowerPoint presentation slides to all student participants on the day of the presentation (6 slides per page). Students are expected to consult at least two additional reference sources in preparing for their lectures, and they are asked to identify, play and integrate a video clip (movie) in class (no more than 5-7 minutes in length) that depicts key assumptions/concepts from their presentation. Please prepare a one-page summary of this video clip for class distribution that includes reference information, a brief summary of its theme/content, and its implications for the topic. Presenters need to assume responsibility for having AV equipment necessary for their presentation.

Feedback on the presentation will be requested from other class members via a structured presentation evaluation form using the following scale: 60 = Poor (60%), 70 = Fair (70%), 80 = Good (80%), 90 = Very Good (90%), and 100 = Clearly Exceptional (100%) (see attached). The professor will prepare a summary critique, including an assigned grade, which will be distributed to students in the class following the presentation. Students’ critiques will be included. On some occasions, class lecture grades are adjusted upward at the end of the semester in the context of other lectures. Due: Day of Presentation.

Special Assignment
All students will need to complete a special assignment. Consistent with professor’s teaching philosophy, this assignment is intended to provide students with an opportunity to explore a topic of personal interest, which is related to course objectives. For example, a potential topic might be “Disasters and Youth,” which was the focus on the September 2008 issue of The Prevention Researcher. The nature and parameters of this assignment will be determined in consultation with the professor. Topics, including a 50-word overview, must be submitted to the professor for review by February 16. Under special circumstances, students may work with another student in completing this assignment. Students will have an opportunity to present key findings/conclusions from their special assignment on April 20 (class 13). These presentations will not involve the use of PowerPoints or AV equipment. The exact date will be determined by the nature of the topic—related topics will be grouped together.

The final deliverable to the Professor is a 9-13 page summary in PowerPoint format:
• Title Page (1 slide that identifies the title, your name(s) and PID(s), and the date)
• Introduction (1-2 slides that identify the question(s) that guided your review, the basis of your interest in addressing the question(s), and the link to SoWo 802—in what way does this question(s) relate to our course content)
• Method (1 slide that identifies the procedures you used to seek an answer to the question(s)—e.g., literature review, Web search, expert interviews, and so forth)
• Findings (2-3 slides the present your findings in relation to the question(s) that guided the inquiry)
• Discussion (2-3 slides that address what sense you make of the findings, the nature of any surprises from your review, the limitations of your methods, and how these findings inform our study of family stress, coping, and social support)

• Implications for Practice (2-3 slides that present the implications of your findings for policies, programs, and/or direct practice).

Due: Day of Presentation

**Integrative Collage**

Please develop a collage (images and words from magazines) on an approximately 22” by 28” poster board or heavy-duty card stock paper that describe your understanding of and perspective toward working with families and children in the context of our work this semester. Of all the concepts and assumptions that we have reviewed, which ones have most influenced your perspective—try to represent this in developing your collage. The same for people—which authors had a particular impact on your perspective? Please attempt to represent how your family history, gender and racial/ethnic/cultural heritage contributes to your integrative perspective. Please be prepared to explain your collage to a colleague. Bring a “sticky pad” (2” x 2”) to class to attach comments on other collages. You will be able to keep your collage.

Due: April 27 (Class 14)

**Final Integrative Experience**

Prepare a seven-page, written essay that summarizes your integrative perspective at the beginning of SoWo 802 (1 page); your integrative perspective at this point (2 pages); a discussion of how your perspective is influenced by your family history, gender and racial/ethnic/cultural heritage (1 page); implications of your analysis for your social work/professional practice (2 page); and strengths and weaknesses in your integrative perspective for social work/professional practice and, if applicable, the implications of your analysis for informing your work next semester (1 page). Please edit your papers carefully.

Due: Exam Date

**GRADING SYSTEM:**

The core assignments and their relative weights in the grading system are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Essay</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Lecture</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Assignment</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collage</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Integrative Experience</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review/Class Participation</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each assignment/requirement will be graded using the following numeric system:

- H = 94-100
- P = 80-93
- L = 70-79
- F = 69 and below

To qualify for a grade of Clear Excellence (H), students will need to complete all assignments with a grade of 70% or better, with an average grade of 94% or better.

**POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**
Please refer to the *APA Style Guide*, The SSW Manual, and the SSW Writing Guide for information on attribution of quotes, plagiarism and appropriate use of assistance in preparing assignments. 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".

In keeping with the UNC Honor Code, if reason exists to believe that academic dishonesty has occurred, a referral will be made to the Office of the Student Attorney General for investigation and further action as required.

**POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**
Students with disabilities that affect their participation in the course and who wish to have special accommodations should contact the University’s Disabilities Services and provide documentation of their disability. Disabilities Services will notify the instructor that the student has a documented disability and may require accommodations. Students should discuss the specific accommodations they require (e.g. changes in instructional format, examination format) directly with the instructor.

**POLICIES ON THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM:**
*Do not engage in activities unrelated to the course including, but not limited to:*
- checking email during class
- communication unrelated to in-class activities (i.e., voice, email, text messaging)
- surfing the web or visiting websites unrelated to in-class activities
- playing games, listening to music or watching videos

*Do not distract others*
- Set all devices including all sound alerts to “vibrate” or “mute” during class
- Do not place or accept calls or text messages during class
- Arrive with sufficient time to set up laptops before class begins. Set-up must be completed before class begins.
- Be aware of potentially distracting typing or clicking

*Prohibited use of computers and other wireless devices includes:*
- Special events or guest speakers
- Presentation or role-play demonstration by classmates
- While viewing videotapes
- Any other time designated by the instructor

*ALWAYS respect the request of a classmate or the instructor to cease the use of any and all electronic/wireless devices.*
COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS:

January 12: Class 1

Introductions
Course Review
Personal Integrative Perspectives
☐ Small Group Exercise (Groups of 3)
☐ Record for later review
Reflected Best Self Exercise (Due: February 2)
Short Essay Assignment (Due: February 2)

January 19: No Class (Holiday)

January 26: No Class

February 2: Class 2

Critical Thinking/Essay Review


Introduction to Theory

Smith et al. (2009). *Introduction* (pp. 1-8).

Application

*Children In Context*


*The School Success Profile*

**February 9: Class 3**

**Families In Context**


**Application**

*Building Corp Families Website*

**February 16: Class 5**

**Family Development Theory (Adrian Daye)**

Smith et al. (2009). *Family Development Theory* (pp. 64-81)

**Application (Professor)**

*Living in Low-Resource Community Settings*


**February 23: Class 6**
Symbolic Interactionism Theory (Lisa Lindley, Chanitta Deloatch)


**Application (Lisa Lindley, Chanitta Deloatch)**

*Teenage Pregnancy*


**March 2: Class 7**

Social Exchange Theory (Mirium Pugh)

Smith et al. (2009). *Social Exchange Theory* (pp. 201-212).


**Application (Professor)**

*Intimate Relationship Cohesion and Dissolution*

Smith et al. (2009). Sample Reading: *Power and Dependence in Intimate Exchange* (pp. 213-229).


**March 9: No Class (Spring Break)**

**March 16: Class 8**

Family Systems Theory (Vernetta Alston)


**Application (Professor)**

*The Circumplex Model*
Review Website of Professor David Olson: http://fsos2.che.umn.edu/olson/default.html


March 23: Class 9

Feminist Family Theory (Michelle Bertuglia-Haley, Robin Siska)


Smith et al. (2009). Sample Reading: Why Welfare? (pp. 177-200).

Application (Michelle Bertuglia-Haley, Robin Siska)

Working and Still Poor


March 30: Class 10

Family Stress Theory (Professor)


Application (Professor)

April 6: Class 11

Ambiguous Loss (Yeongmi Ha)


Application (Professor)

**Ambiguous Loss in Practice**


April 13: Class 12

**The MEES Model (Alyson Nowicki)**


Application (Professor)

**The Coming Out Process**


April 20: Class 13

Special Assignment Presentations

April 27: Class 14
A Personal Integrative Perspective (Collage)

Final Integrative Experience Discussion

Final Exam

Final Integrative Experience Due (See Exam Schedule)
Exercise: Reflected Best Self

Objectives: This exercise is intended to help you identify and take advantage of your strengths. In addition, this exercise will help you recognize and take advantage of collaborations with colleagues whose abilities and skills complement your strengths.

What you need to know as you begin this exercise:

- Most of us are better at some things than other things – and that is OK! (e.g., A GREAT baseball pitcher may be a very poor hitter).
- It is a paradox of human behavior that while people remember criticism, *they respond to praise*.
- When you come to know your strengths, you are in a position to make full use of them across a wider range of activities and situations—you enhance your potential for success. You also become better aware of the complementary abilities and skills you need from others to ensure success.
- Most of us fail to fully recognize the strengths that others see in us—strengths they recognize and have come to value, strengths we often discount as unimportant.

What you need to do to complete this exercise:

**Step 1** – Identify three (3) individuals who know you well and are willing to offer you candid feedback on your strengths in relating to others and/or dealing with challenging situations – *what they see as your true strengths*. It is suggested that one individual be a supervisor, one a peer, and one a friend or someone in your immediate family (your spouse or even teenage child).

**Step 2** – Ask each individual to send you a brief written note (an e-mail is fine) that identifies what they feel are your two or three most important strengths. Ask each person to include a *specific example* of an event or situation when you demonstrated what they believe is your most important strength. They should also comment on why your contribution to this event or situation was important. Remember – you are asking them for a *brief note* (an example of a request for this information that you can copy to give them is attached to this sheet).

**Step 3** – Once you have the responses, examine each and try to identify any common themes. You may be surprised by the comments you receive and by the fact that there is likely a common theme present in these comments.

**Step 4** – Now write a brief self-portrait (*one or two paragraphs only*) from these comments—a description of yourself that summarizes the accumulated information. *This should be a description of you at your best*—one that highlights your major strengths (as experienced and acknowledged by others around you). You might begin this descriptive paragraph beginning with the words “*When I am at my best, I ...*”

**Step 5** – Now write down the two or three strengths that you need from others to best complement your core strength(s). These are the strengths most needed from others in
order to meet the challenges you feel you are facing in the immediate future—tasks you must complete.

**Step 6** – Now look around. Who do you know who has these strengths? Now think about how you can begin to connect with these people to incorporate their strengths into your efforts.

**Step 7** – Bring your self-description paragraph with you to class on February 2.


**Exercise Title: Reflected Best Self**

This statement/request is for the individuals you have chosen to comment on your strengths in relating to others and/or dealing with challenging situations. *You can use your own words in your request.*

Subject: Request from________________
Date Needed By: _____________________

I would like your assistance in completing an exercise for a graduate course in which I am currently enrolled.

The exercise involves developing a better understanding of my own personal and/or professional strengths. To accomplish this task, I am asking three colleagues/friends to provide me with their candid and thoughtful observations on my personal and/or professional strengths.

I am asking you to write me a *brief note* (an e-mail is fine) that identifies what you feel are my two or three most important strengths. Please include a specific example of an event or situation when I demonstrated what you believe is one of these strengths. Please remember to comment on why my contribution to this event or situation was important. Remember – this is just a brief note.

Thank you
Essay Evaluation Form

PID Author: ____________________________________________________________

Essay Number/Topic: ____________________________________________________

Please evaluate the essay in the following areas with:
60 = Poor, 70 = Fair, 80 = Good, 90 = Very Good, and 100 = Clearly Exceptional.

Content:
Demonstrates understanding of assumptions/concepts from the assigned readings/reference materials  60  70  80  90  100
Effectively communicates ideas—freedom from ambiguity  60  70  80  90  100
Overall responsiveness to the essay assignment  60  70  80  90  100

Writing Style/Editing:
Orderly presentation of ideas and use of transitions  60  70  80  90  100
Free from grammatical/spelling errors  60  70  80  90  100
Overall writing style and editing  60  70  80  90  100

What I liked best about your essay:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

One recommendation that I would offer to improve your essay:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Presentation Evaluation Form

Presentation:___________________________________________________________________

Presenter(s):_________________________________________________________________

Please rate the group presentation in the following areas with:
60 = Poor, 70 = Fair, 80 = Good, 90 = Very Good, and 100 = Clearly Exceptional.

Content:

- Overall integration of assigned readings/reference materials
- Use of examples to clarify presentation material
- Application to family functioning and interaction
- Integration of video selection

Style/Delivery:

- Creativity—Use of innovative ways to convey information
- Organization—Use of transitions, flow of content in a logical manner, and good use of time
- Visual aids—Use of hand-outs, PowerPoint, and other forms of media to supplement information presented
- Interaction with class—Answering questions, requests for class participation, receiving feedback from class members
- Enthusiasm—Communicated ideas with fervor

Please identify two strengths of the presentation:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Please provide at least one recommendation for improvement:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________