Course Number: SOWO 854

Course Title: Antisocial, Aggressive Behavior in Childhood and Early Adolescence: Theory and Practice

Course Website: http://blackboard.unc.edu/

Location and Time: TTK Building, Rm.500, 2-4:50 pm, Tuesdays

Instructor: Joelle D. Powers, Ph.D., M.S.W.
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Jeff Edwards, MSW
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Semester: Fall, 2009

Course Description
This course explores theories and methods related to practice with children whose behavior is disruptive, oppositional, aggressive, or otherwise antisocial. Emphasis is placed on using protective and risk factors to design ecologically and developmentally appropriate interventions.

Course Goal
The course is designed to strengthen understanding of the social (individual, peer, family, school, and community), economic (local, regional, and national marketplaces), and political (including the politics of hate and fear related to disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, and other issues of difference) forces that define and shape conduct problems in childhood and that, if viewed from an ecological-developmental perspective, inform practice with children and families.

Course Objectives
Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:
1. Identify and characterize the individual, family, school, peer, and community determinants of conduct problems in childhood and early adolescence.
2. Describe and assess competing theories related to different forms of antisocial, aggressive behavior.
3. Based on theories and research related to antisocial behavior, values in social work, and the NASW Code of Ethics, conceptualize individual, family, school, and community social interventions to prevent and control conduct problems in childhood.
4. Articulate and apply theory – in professional oral and written form – to the design of social interventions for disadvantaged, vulnerable, and oppressed persons, including persons of color, women, and people affected by poverty. Special emphasis will be afforded females and adolescents from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Required Texts

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities, which affect their participation in the course, should notify the instructor if they wish to have special accommodations in instructional format, examination format, etc., considered. Accommodations and services are provided by Disability Services (Voice/TDD 962-8300; 966-4041). Learning Disability Services (962-7227) provides supportive services for students with learning disabilities and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders.

Policy on Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty is contrary to the ethics of the social work profession, unfair to other students, and will not be tolerated in any form. All written assignments should include the following signed pledge: “I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in preparing this written work.”

Policy on Unexcused Absences
Attendance and participation points obtained through the weekly quizzes contribute substantially to final grades. Students missing 3 classes (or more) may receive an L for the course, because it is not possible to meet course requirements for learning objectives with that level of absenteeism. Students are responsible for obtaining from their classmates ALL announcements, instructional information, and handouts for class sessions they miss.

Policy on Incomplete and Late Assignments
A grade of Incomplete is given on rare occasions when there is sufficient reason to warrant it. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate a conversation with the instructor to request an Incomplete.

Late assignments are strongly discouraged. In case of a dire, life-threatening emergency,
a late assignment may be accepted at the discretion of the instructor. If permission for late submission is not granted before breaking a deadline, the grade will automatically be reduced 10%, and another 10% reduction will occur each day (including weekends).

Teaching Methods
Class sessions will include a combination of methods: lecture, discussion, videos, student/guest presentations, and activities.

Assignments and Guidelines
All written assignments must be typed and follow APA format. Several writing resources are posted on the website. Students should also refer to the following: American Psychological Association. (2002). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.). Washington, DC.

Weekly Quizzes.
Each class session will begin with a quiz on the assigned readings for that session and course material covered in the previous class. This is how attendance and participation are graded for this course thus they cannot be made up at a later time. Students can refer to class notes, handouts, and assigned readings while taking the quizzes. Quizzes will comprise 25% of your overall grade.

Case Comparison Paper/Review
For this assignment students will compare two youths who are similar in terms of demographic factors but who have experienced very different outcomes. The goal is to begin identifying risk and promotive factors associated with resilience. The Case Comparison Paper and Review is worth 30% of your overall grade in this course and is due October 20 at the beginning of class.

Special Assignment
There will be no class sessions on November 17 and 24. To ensure appropriate learning about delinquency and critical contextual factors promoting and sustaining such activity, a special assignment will be completed in lieu of class time, participation, and quizzes. Students have the option to complete one of 3 alternatives for the Special Assignment. The 3-4 page paper is worth 15% of your course grade and is due on November 24th at 5pm and can be emailed to the instructor.

Final Exam: Social Intervention Paper
The goal of the Social Intervention Paper is to describe how theory guides effective social work practice with antisocial and aggressive youth. The paper will focus on the linkage between theory (including risk and protective factors) to effective treatment strategies. The 6-8 page paper is worth 30% of your overall grade and is due December 9th.

Assignments and Course Performance Assessment:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Comparison Paper/Review</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Final Exam/Social Intervention 30%
Course Total 100%

Grading System:

<table>
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<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>&lt;69</td>
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<td>70 - 79</td>
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<td>80 - 93</td>
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<td>94 - 100</td>
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*Additional details for each major assignment (including instructions, description, and grading rubric) are included at the end of the syllabus and will be discussed in class.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 - August 25: Course Introduction and Overview**
• Course Organization and Expectations
• Defining Delinquency and Other Forms of Antisocial Behavior
• What Is a Theory? What Is a Model?
• Programs That Work: What Are They, and Why Do They Help?

Readings:
McWhirter (2007): Ch 1

**Week 2 – September 1: Delinquency: Theoretical Perspectives, Contributing Factors, and Legal Status**
• Status of Children in the United States
• Contributing Factors
• Status Offenses
• Theories

Assignment:
Quiz

Readings:
McWhirter (2007): Ch 2-3

**Week 3 - September 8: Individual Factors**
• Biological and Biosocial Perspectives
• Mental Health Issues
• Intelligence
• Cultural factors

Readings:
McWhirter (2007): Ch 6


**Assignment:**
Quiz

**Week 4 - September 15: Family Factors and Context**
- Parenting Skills, Parental Supervision, and Parent-Child Attachment

**Readings:**
McWhirter (2007): Ch 4


**Assignment:**
Quiz

**Week 5 - Sept 22: School Factors & Context**
- Size and Structure
- Violence
- Dropout
- The Social Development Perspective

**Readings:**
McWhirter (2007): Ch 5 and 7


**Assignment:**
Quiz

**Week 6 - September 29: Neighborhood Factors & Context**
- Social Disorganization and Anomie
- Lower-Class-Based Theories: Lower-Class Culture?
- Social Control or ‘Bonding’
Readings:


Assignments:
- Quiz

**Week 7 - October 6: Peer Influence & Gang Involvement: Context & Intervention**
- Bullying and peer victimization
- Gangs
- Substance Use
- Gang Violence Reduction Techniques
- Community Practice and Community Policing
- Gun Buy-Back Programs

Readings:
McWhirter (2007): Ch 8 and 10


Assignment:
Quiz

**Week 8 - October 13: Female Delinquency**
- Relational aggression
- Gender differences in social development and delinquency
- Pregnancy

Readings:
McWhirter (2007): Ch 9


**Assignments:**

Quiz

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**Week 9 - October 20: Case Comparison Peer Review**

Please bring one copy of your paper with name and PID, and bring three extra copies of your Case Comparison with only PID (no name or SSN). A modified peer review form from the Society for Social Work Research (SSWR), the profession’s leading research-for-practice organization, will be used. As is done in SSWR conferences, you will select the top papers in the class. Be prepared to make constructive comments on others’ papers.

**Assignments:**

- Quiz
- Case Comparison due

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**Week 10 – October 27: The Individual and the Family: How to Intervene**

- Key Risk and Protective Factors
- Clinical Assessment and Early Intervention
- In-Home Family Interventions
- Involving Parents in Schools
- Parenting Training
- Functional Family Therapy
- Multisystemic Family Treatment

**Readings:**


**Assignments:**

- Quiz
Week 11 - November 3: The Peer Group: How to Intervene
• Key Risk and Protective Factors
• Assessment Strategies
• Peer Acceptance and Rejection
• Family-Peer Linkages
• Deviancy Training: Heterogeneous versus homogenous groups
• Social Skill Training
• Mentoring

Readings: TBA

Assignments:
• Quiz

Week 12 - November 10: The School: How to Intervene
• Key Risk and Protective Factors
• School Environment Assessment
• School Violence: What to Do?
• Bullying Prevention
• Low Academic Achievement: Tutoring
• Alternative Schools and Beyond (e.g. Residential Schools)

Readings:


Assignments:
• Quiz

**Weeks 13-14 – November 17 and 24: - Special Assignment (no class sessions)**

Assignments:
• Special Assignment (due Tuesday, Nov. 24 by 5pm)

Week 15 - December 8: Summary and Review

Assignments:
• Quiz
• Social Intervention Project (due December 9)
GUIDELINES FOR THE CASE COMPARISON ASSIGNMENT

For this assignment you will compare two youth who are similar in terms of demographic factors but who have experienced very different outcomes. The goal is to begin identifying risk and promotive factors associated with resilience. The Case Comparison Paper and Review is worth 30% of your overall grade in this course and is due October 20 at the beginning of class. Please bring 1 copy of your paper with your name and PID, and bring 3 extra copies with no name and only your PID. Using a modified peer-review process, class members will review one another’s case analyses during class.

From the same neighborhood (or family), select two youth that you work with in your field placement: one delinquent or otherwise in trouble, and one not delinquent or in trouble. The children should be matched on age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Describe the factors that differentiate the children, use at least two theories to explain the diverse outcomes, and provide brief implications for practice with the youth. The Case Comparison (6-7 pages, excluding references, tables, and figures) must include the following sections:

1. **Introduction**: Explain the purpose of the paper and the broad context of the case, e.g. firesetting in a low-income neighborhood. (2 points)

2. **Case Description and Comparison**: In this section, please fully describe each case and identify the risk and protective factors for both children (please disguise exact identities). Be sure to discuss special issues related to culture, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, and other issues of difference. Include information about relevant family history, school-related problems, prior aggressive or antisocial behavior (if any), social characteristics, and broader social influences on the case (e.g. racism, sexism, hate, and other issues related to oppression and discrimination). Use a table to summarize comparative information. (5 points)

3. **Theoretical Perspectives on Difference**: Include insights from at least two theories to explain the different outcomes for your cases. Briefly summarize the theories and then specifically identify how the perspectives help you to understand resilience. Assess both individual and contextual effects for your case comparison with the theories. (10 points)

4. **Practice Implications**: Based on your theoretical perspective, briefly develop and discuss guidelines for practice (prevention, early intervention, or treatment) related to the problem behavior identified in your case. Do the theories raise any issues related to social work values or ethics? What do you suggest as theory-based strategies regarding the prevention or treatment of the target problem? Be sure to attend to issues of diversity as they apply to your case. In addition, attend to ethical or Social Work values in the Implications. (5 points)

5. **References**: Use a minimum of 6 references that reflect independent and current reading (use recent research from journals not included in course assigned readings). Using APA style, list all references cited in the paper. (3 points)
GUIDELINES FOR THE SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

There will be no class sessions on November 17 and 24. To ensure appropriate learning about delinquency and critical contextual factors promoting and sustaining such activity, a special assignment will be completed in lieu of class time, participation, and quizzes. Students have the option to complete one of the following 3 alternatives for the Special Assignment. The 3-5 page paper is worth 15% of your course grade and is due on November 24th at 5pm and can be emailed to the instructor.

- **Alternative 1: Book Review: Gang Leader for a Day**

- **Alternative 2: Book Review: Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls**

- **Alternative 3: Series Review: The Wire**
  The Wire: HBO TV series. Season 1 (all episodes).

Your paper should include the following sections (no matter which alternative you choose).

1. **Summary:** Please summarize the book/series providing special attention to aspects of delinquent youth behavior. (3 points)
2. **Significant Characters and Their Involvement:** Identify 4 of the critical characters in the book/series. Describe their role(s) in antisocial and delinquent behavior and the purpose that involvement serves for each character (i.e., What need is being met? Why is the person involved in such activity? ) (5 points)
3. **Critical Context:** Identify and discuss the role of context (i.e., poverty, drugs, schools, family, peers, policy, etc.) in the perpetuation of antisocial, aggressive, and/or delinquent behavior. (5 points)
4. **Personal Reflection:** What was the most meaningful aspect of the book/movie from your perspective? How might this impact your social work practice in the future? (2 points)
GUIDELINES FOR THE SOCIAL INTERVENTION PAPER

The paper should be based on the application and linkage between theory (including risk and protective factors) to a treatment strategy. The Social Intervention Paper is your final exam for this course and is comprised of a 6-8 page paper worth 30% of your overall grade. The paper is due December 9th.

The goal of the Social Intervention Paper is to describe how theory guides effective social work practice with antisocial and aggressive youth. The paper should consist of the following sections:

1. **Target Behavior**: Identify a target behavior (i.e. a specific kind of antisocial behavior), an interventive focus (prevention, early intervention, or treatment) and a setting (home, school, neighborhood, work site, community-based program, residential treatment program, youth corrections facility, or community at-large). (2 points)

2. **Etiological Theory of Antisocial Behavior**: Describe an etiological theory of antisocial or delinquent behavior that helps to explain the cause and perpetuation of the target behavior. (5 points)

3. **Causal model**: With causal modeling, diagram your conceptual framework for working with antisocial or delinquent youths. Append this as Figure 1. (Figures will not count in page calculations.) Be specific about the relationship between theory and practice implications. Be sure to discuss how theoretical constructs included in your paper are addressed in the interventions discussed later in the paper. (5 points)

4. **Intervention Review**: Review and describe empirically supported and theory based interventions (1 or more) likely to prevent or correct the target behavior. Be sure to include information about previous effectiveness of the intervention. List strengths and weaknesses of the intervention from your perspective, and identify issues of feasibility for social workers when implementing the intervention(s). (10 points)

5. **References**: Your paper should be based on at least 12 professional journal readings (readings other than those assigned during the semester). (3 points)

6. **Writing and APA**: Your paper should be clearly written and void of basic grammatical errors. The paper and references should be presented in APA format. (5 points)