



MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

A Member of the Texas Tech University System

Course Syllabus: SOWK 4363 **Family Systems & Substance Abuse**

College of Health Sciences and Human Services
Spring 2026

Contact Information

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Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 9:00am-11:00am and Wednesday 10:00am to 12:00noon or by appointment (Zoom meetings by appointment)

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Course Description

This course focuses on the family life cycle and family development. The origins of family intervention are deeply rooted in the profession of Social Work. The tradition of viewing the person and the presenting problem in a contextual framework is congruent with the theoretical adherence of social work to an ecological approach. Interpersonal and societal transactions are seen as equally vital areas of both assessment and intervention in social work practice. The family is the basic unit of social analysis in this approach. Different theories regarding the improvement of family functioning are covered such as structural, problem-solving, communication, solution-focused, and intergenerational systems theory. Specific attention to the effects of drugs and alcohol on the family is addressed in the textbook.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the different family therapies and their application with regard to working with families. (knowledge, skills, cognitive & affective processes)
- Distinguish the theoretical basis and techniques of different family therapy approaches used in treating chemical dependency.(knowledge, skills, cognitive & affective processes)
- Explain why some people misuse substances while others stop or control use without negative consequences. (knowledge, skills,

- cognitive & affective processes)
- Describe the stages of change and debate the importance of the social work motto "start where the client is" when responding to the unique needs of each addicted client.(knowledge, skills, cognitive & affective processes)
- Apply strengths perspective for assessment and intervention.(knowledge, skills, cognitive & affective processes)

Midwestern State University Values:

People-Centered – Engage others with respect, empathy, and joy.

Community – Cultivate a diverse and inclusive campus environment.

Integrity – Always do the right thing.

Visionary – Adopt innovative ideas to pioneer new paths.

Connections – Value relationships with broader communities.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Required: Fisher, G. L., & Harrison, T. C. (2018). *Substance abuse: information for school counselors, social workers, therapists, and counselors* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Recommended: American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.).

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

Class Participation

It is expected that students will contribute to the maintenance of a healthy learning environment, by paying attention to lectures, to fellow students' contributions in the class and by not being disruptive in class. **Side conversations, making noises, leaving, working on outside assignments, or inappropriate use of electronics during class are disruptive, will result in a lower participation grade, and may result in the student being asked to leave.** It is expected that students actively participate in class discussions and exercises. It is also expected that everyone who shares ideas/views is respectful of others' time and ideas/views. We could agree to disagree, but we ought not to be disagreeable.

Class participation is expected not only at the time of class discussions but also during lectures by raising pertinent questions, by contributing relevant ideas and by sharing relevant examples. **Students will be expected to read all the assigned materials prior to class** and be prepared to engage in class discussions related to the class topics.

Laptop and Cell Phone regulation

No Photographing, recording, text messaging is allowed without the permission of the instructor. Please turn off or set cell phones on vibrate. Please do not surf the internet or listen to music while in class. Please note that using electronic devices during class time will have an adverse impact on participation grade.

Tutoring Assistance

Begin drafting papers as early as possible and take advantage of the [Tutoring & Academic Support Programs](#), located off the first floor of the Moffett Library. The MSU TASP Learning Center offers drop-in tutoring support for most general subject areas including but not limited to Writing, Math, Science, Business, and Foreign Languages. Students check in to work one-on-one with a tutor typically for an hour regarding specific concepts.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work, not the individual to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

MSU Counseling Resources

The MSU Counseling Center recognizes that during this time of change, many may feel uncertainty and fear along with a host of other emotions. We are committed to helping our campus community through this difficult time.

The Counseling Center has counselors working remotely to help students. Therapy sessions are conducted through the Therapy Assist Online (TAO) video conferencing platform. Students at home or on campus can have a telephone or video conference session using this platform. Appointments are available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Call to schedule 940-397-6911.

Pregnant and Parenting Students

To support the academic success of pregnant and parenting students and students with pregnancy-related conditions, the University offers reasonable modifications based on the student's particular needs. Any student who is pregnant or parenting

a child up to age 18 or has conditions related to pregnancy, may contact MSU's designated [Pregnancy and Parenting](#) Liaison to discuss support available through the University.

College Policies

Obligation to Report Sex Discrimination under State and Federal Law

Midwestern State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. State and federal law require University employees to report sex discrimination and sexual misconduct to the University's Office of Title IX. As a faculty member, I am required to report to the Title IX Coordinator any allegations, personally observed behavior, or other direct or indirect knowledge of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, or stalking, involving a student or employee. After a report is made, the office of Title IX will reach out to the affected student or employee in an effort to connect such person(s) with resources and options in addressing the allegations made in the report. You are also encouraged to report any incidents to the office of Title IX. You may do so by contacting:

Laura Hetrick
Title IX Coordinator
Sunwatcher Village Clubhouse
940-397-4213
laura.hetrick@msutexas.edu

You may also file an online report 24/7 at

https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?MSUTexas&layout_id=6

Should you wish to visit with someone about your experience in confidence, you may contact the MSU Counseling Center at 940-397-4618. For more information on the University's policy on Title IX or sexual misconduct, please visit

<https://msutexas.edu/titleix/>

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, refer to [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits using tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place that prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state, and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Professional Expectations of Student Behavior

Midwestern State University Department of Social Work is mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to foster and evaluate professional behavioral development for all students in the social work program. The Department of Social Work also bears a responsibility to the community at large to produce fully trained professional social workers who consciously exhibit the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession of social work. The values of the profession are codified in the NASW Code of Ethics. Given this context, all students in the social work program will be expected to exhibit the following ethical standards of behavior.

1. **Accountability:** Attend class, arrive on time, and return from break in a timely manner. *Participate in group activities and assignments at a comparable level to peers. Complete work in a timely fashion and according to directions provided. Come to class prepared, with readings and other homework completed.*
2. **Respect:** Treat all your peers, your instructors and all those you come in contact with, with dignity and respect at all times. *Listen while others are speaking. Give feedback to peers in a constructive manner. Approach conflict with peers or instructors in a cooperative manner. Use positive and nonjudgmental language.*

3. **Confidentiality:** Treat any personal information that you hear about a peer or an instructor as strictly confidential. *Maintain any information shared in class, dyads or smaller groups within that unit. Use judgment in self-disclosing information of a very personal nature in the classroom. (Class time should not be used as therapy or treatment. If students feel the need to talk about issues they are struggling with, they may consult with their instructor to receive a referral for counseling.)*
Never use names of clients or disclose other identifying information in the classroom.
4. **Competence:** Apply yourself to all your academic pursuits with seriousness and conscientiousness, meeting all deadlines as given by your instructors. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.
Come to class with books, handouts, syllabus, and pens
Seek out appropriate support when having difficulties to ensure success incompletion course requirements. Take responsibility for the quality of completed tests and assignment. Strive to work toward greater awareness of personal issues that may impede your effectiveness with clients.
5. **Integrity:** Practice honesty with yourself, your peers, and your instructors. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.
Academic: Commit yourself to learning the rules of citing other's work properly. Do your own work and take credit only for your own work.
Acknowledge areas where improvement is needed.
Accept and benefit from constructive feedback *Submission of Papers:*
Students will submit their written assignments through D2L. Papers will be subject to plagiarism analysis and will be kept in electronic file for future reference. A student may not submit the same paper, or essentially the same, paper, project, assignment, or finished project to an instructor, which has been submitted to another instructor, unless specifically authorized by both instructors to do so.
6. **Humility:** Strive to become more open to people, ideas, and creeds that you are not familiar with. *Maintain speech free of racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, or stereotyping. Exhibit a willingness to serve diverse groups of persons. Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact.*
7. **Communication:** Strive to improve both verbal and written communication skills as these skills are used heavily in interactions with clients and peers and also with creating client records. *Demonstrate assertive communication with peers and instructors. Practice positive, constructive, respectful and professional communications skills with peers and instructor: (body language, empathy, listening)*
8. **Social Justice:** Strive to deepen your commitment to social justice for all populations at risk. *Demonstrate an understanding of how institutional and personal oppression impede the experience of social justice for individuals and groups. Strive to learn about methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.*

Consequences of Unacceptable Behavior

The Department of Social Work may terminate a student's participation in the program on the basis of professional non-suitability if the Department's faculty members determine that a student's behavior has constituted a significant violation or pattern of violations of the NASW Code of Ethics, the MSU of Social Work Student Manual, or the MSU Academic Policies and Regulations. Examples of violations that may lead to termination include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Failure to meet or maintain academic grade point requirements as established by the University and the Social Work program.
2. Academic cheating, lying, or plagiarism (turnitin.com will be used to check the originality of the text).
3. Behavior judged to violate the NASW Code of Ethics.
4. Failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity, or emotional stability requisite for professional practice.
5. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior toward colleagues, faculty, or staff (at the department or in the field placement).
6. Consistent failure to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills necessary for forming professional relationships (for example, unable to demonstrate a nonjudgmental attitude or unable to allow client self-determination).
7. Documented evidence of criminal activity occurring during the course of study.

For additional university-wide policies and regulations, see the MSU [Undergraduate Catalog](#). This web site contains information on grading, incomplete grades, cheating on exams, plagiarism, and expectations of student behavior.

Attendance

Students are responsible for checking emails and logging onto D2L regularly to ensure that messages from the instructor and fellow students are received in a timely manner.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered a reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ***Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world that is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student help desk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into D2L through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Grading

Table 1: The student's achievement will be evaluated on the basis of discussion board assignments, a research paper, and quizzes/exams.

| Assignments | Due | Percentage |
|--|-------------------|------------|
| Discussion board assignments & discussion thread participation | Sundays @ 11:59pm | 35% |
| Quizzes | Sundays @ 11:59pm | 35% |
| Meeting Observation Paper | March 29 | 10% |
| Final Exam posted Nov 29 | May 14 | 20% |

Table 2: The weighted average will be used to calculate the final grade.

| Grade | Percentages |
|-------|--------------|
| A | 90-100 |
| B | 80 to 89 |
| C | 70 to 79 |
| D | 60 to 69 |
| F | Less than 60 |

Social Work Program Grade Policy

A course grade of below a C or an average of below 70% will be considered a failing grade. ***Students must repeat social work courses in which they receive a grade of D or F if they are enrolled in the Social Work Program.***

Discussion Thread/Board Participation:

As indicated in the course schedule, the instructor will post question(s) on D2L for the class. There are **two** parts to each discussion. Everyone should post an initial response to the question(s) and should also respond to at least two peer's posts by Sunday @ 11:59 pm. The discussion board is a mandatory component. Students are expected to read all discussion board instructions and to participate actively throughout the semester. Students are expected to write formally (no shorthand or text messaging abbreviations) and use APA format and referencing where appropriate. There will be general questions relating to the chapter(s), case vignettes, current events, and/or watching a video and posting your response. Thoughtful responses, constructive critique of fellow students, and meaningful participation are expected. Please keep in mind the discussion board is a formal assignment and part of your grade.

NOTE: If a student asks you a question on your post, you should be courteous and answer the question.

I will review your posts and responses and give individual feedback when grading posts. I may respond in the discussion thread to a select few posts and/or responses or respond collectively to the class. This does not mean only the posts and/or responses of those to whom I respond are good and other posts and/or responses are not good.

Quizzes

Students will complete weekly quizzes by **11:59pm on Sundays** based on the required book chapters and unit notes as indicated in the class schedule. The quizzes are open book and notes, but there will be only 30 minutes to complete them. **Quizzes cannot be made up if missed, and a grade of zero (0) will be recorded.**

Meeting Observation Paper

Due March 29: Attend and document what occurs at an **open** AA/NA/Al-Anon, CODA, or ACOA meeting (can be online or in person). The meeting must be one that you attend during the current semester. Write a 1-2 page summary (not including your cover page) using APA format. Include at least **one** scholarly citation in your summary (use APA manual 6th ed. guidelines) and a final page for your reference(s). Use these headings:

- Demographics: Describe the demographics of the group (such as age, gender, socioeconomic status)
- Culture/Atmosphere: Describe the culture of the meeting (friendly, formal, rigid, chaotic?)
- Structure/Format: Describe the structure of the meeting (how was it conducted?)
- Effective Components: List and describe things you thought were effective or healing about the meeting.
- Room for Improvement: List and describe things you thought were ineffective or counterproductive about the meeting.
- Personal Reflection: How did it feel to attend the meeting (nervous, intimidating, judged, etc.)? Examine your own attitudes about addiction, addicts, and other issues in relation to attending the meeting.

You will be expected to use appropriately cited and referenced professional or scholarly information when presenting your observations and recommendations.

*SPECIAL NOTE: These meetings are **anonymous**. As a visitor you should only attend open meetings and introduce yourself as a student when asked if there are any visitors. What you hear and who you see must remain anonymous.

Discussion Post: Your paper will be uploaded to the assignment drop box and the text and reference portions of your paper need to be posted in the Week 10

discussion board for peer review and class discussion.

Final Exam

Due: May 14 There will be a cumulative, open-book final exam at the end of the semester that will be completed in D2L. You will have 90 minutes to complete the exam. If the exam is missed due to an unexcused absence, the student will receive a score of zero (0). If the exam is missed due to an officially excused absence (documentation must be provided), a make-up will be arranged.

Course Schedule:

The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus schedule as needed.

| Week and Dates | Chapters/Readings | Exams and Discussions Due: Sundays @ 11:59pm |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Week 1 Jan 19-23 | Introductions Chapter 1: Role of the Professional | - Discussion post: Introduction |
| Week 2 Jan 26-Feb 1 | Chapter 2: Classification of Drugs Chapter 3: Models of Addiction | - Discussion Chapters 2/3 - Quiz Chapters 2 & 3 |
| Week 3 Feb 2-8 | Chapter 4: Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Populations | - Discussion Chapter 4 - Quiz Chapter 4 |
| Week 4 Feb 9-15 | Chapter 5: Confidentiality and Ethical Issues | - Discussion Chapter 5 - Quiz Chapter 5 |
| Week 5 Feb 16-22 | Chapter 6: Screening, Assessment, and Diagnosis | - Discussion Chapter 6 - Quiz Chapter 6 |
| Week 6 Feb 23-March 1 | Chapter 7: Motivational Interviewing and Brief Interventions | - Discussion Chapter 7 - Quiz Chapter 7 |
| Week 7 Mar 2-8 | Chapter 8: Treatment of Alcohol and Other Drugs | - Discussion Chapter 8 - Quiz Chapter 8 |
| March 9-15 | SPRING BREAK | |
| Week 8 Mar 16-22 | Chapter 9: Co-occurring Disorders and Other Special Populations | -Discussion Chapter 9 -Quiz Chapter 9 |
| Week 9 Mar 23-29 | Chapter 10: Relapse Prevention and Recovery | -Discussion Chapter 10 -Quiz Chapter 10 |

| Week and Dates | Chapters/Readings | Exams and Discussions Due: Sundays @ 11:59pm |
|--|--|--|
| Week 10 March 30- April 5 | Chapter 11: Twelve Step and Other Support Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting Observation Paper due - Discussion- post Meeting Observation Paper and two peer responses - Quiz Chapter & 11 |
| Week 11 April 6-12 | Chapter 12: Children and Families Chapter 13: Adult Children and Codependency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Chapters - Quiz Chapters 12 & 13 |
| Week 12 April 13-19 | Chapter 14: HIV/AIDS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Chapter 14 - Quiz Chapter 14 |
| Week 13 April 20-26 | Chapter 15: Gambling and Other Behavioral Addictions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quiz Chapter 15 |
| Week 14 April 27 to May 3 | Chapter 16: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Chapter 16 - Quiz Chapter 16 |
| Week 15 May 4 to May 14 (Finals Week) | Final Review Final Exam - due May 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final exam posted |