



Course Syllabus: Family Focused Social Work Practice

College of Health Sciences and Human Services

Social Work Department

SOWK 4143- X20

Spring 2023

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Packiaraj Arumugham

Office: Department of Social Work Centennial Hall 450B

Office Phone: 940-397-4659

Email: packiaraj.arumugham@msutexas.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 1.00 p.m.-4.00 p.m.
Thursdays: 1.00 p.m. -3.00 p.m.

COURSE RATIONALE

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. An understanding of the concepts of family intervention will help prepare students for effective social work practice.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Family Focused Social Work Practice builds on the history and traditions of family intervention in the basic social services. This course examines pertinent practice issues,

family therapy concepts, approaches used in contemporary social work intervention, and current research. There is an emphasis on family resilience and applying family intervention concepts with families under economic stress, families within vulnerable populations, and with diverse family structures. A strengths perspective is highlighted as an approach to treatment.

Family Focused Social Work Practice will address the stages of the family life cycle and the implementation of family therapy theories to support practice. Family Focused Social Work Practice will address varying family forms and challenges, ethnic and cultural dimensions, and developmental perspectives on family functioning. In this course there is attention to family intervention with families under economic stress, ethnic and racial minority families, women and alternative lifestyle families.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Knowledge dimension:

- 1 Integrate information about the social work origin and historical development of family assessment and intervention into present day practice.

Values dimensions:

- 2 Apply family intervention approaches differentially across the life cycle to families from diverse racial, ethnic, spiritual, cultural, and socio-economic groups.
- 3 Distinguish what constitutes ethical social work family practice with particular attention to diverse populations and oppressed groups.

Skills dimensions:

- 4 Demonstrate family assessment and intervention concepts within the framework of social work knowledge, values, and skills.
- 5 Demonstrate the ability to assess family situations utilizing current research in family intervention.

Cognitive and affective dimensions:

- 6 Distinguish the theoretical basis and techniques of different family therapy approaches used in contemporary social work intervention.
- 7 Apply the techniques of various approaches to family intervention from a strengths perspective for assessment and intervention.

Relationships among Core Competencies, Course Objectives, Practice Behaviors, and Assignments:

Core Competencies	Course Objectives	Practice Behaviors	Assignments
Ethical and Professional Behavior	3 & 4	Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values; demonstrate professional oral and written communication	Assignments # 1 & 2
Diversity and Difference in Practice	3 & 4	Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences	Assignments # 1 & 2
Research-informed Practice	7	Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice	Assignment # 2
Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities	All the course objectives	Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information; select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge	Assignments 1 & 2 and Quizzes, Final Exam and Class Exercises

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Nichols, M. P., & Davis, S.D. (2020). *The essentials of family therapy* (7th ed.). New York: Pearson.

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's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Exams: There will be two exams (each worth 30 points). Questions for the exams will be drawn from the assigned chapters. ***Although the instructor will assign specific pages from the textbook for the ten weekly discussions, it is the responsibility of the students to read all the assigned chapters thoroughly, so they are well-prepared for the exams.** The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions and true or false statements.

Assignment #1: Family Assessment and Essential Concepts:

The purpose of this assignment is to help you integrate knowledge of the fundamental concepts of family therapy into social work assessment of families.

Select a family that you know well. To ensure confidentiality, give fictitious names for family members and do not share your relationship with this family. Utilizing essential concepts in family therapy (read chapter 3 from the textbook) and knowledge of family life cycle stages, complete a family assessment addressing each of the following items:

Describe Family:

Identify and describe family members. Discuss the impact of the characteristics of each of the family members (including their ethnicity and gender) on the family as a unit.

Apply Fundamental Concepts and Terms:

Apply and discuss fundamental concepts and terms (cybernetics, systems theory, general systems theory, constructivism, social constructionism, and attachment theory) to the family and its members.

Apply Working Concepts of Family Therapy:

Apply and discuss working concepts of family therapy (interpersonal context, complementarity, circular causality, triangles, process/content, and family structure.

Family Life Cycle Stages:

Identify and discuss the family's current life cycle stage. How has the family's progression through previous life cycle stages impacted their current stage? How is the family prepared or not prepared to enter the next family life cycle stage?

Requirements:

The assignment must meet the following requirements:

1. Include a title page, and a references page.
2. Abstract is NOT required.
3. Double-space throughout, leaving a one-inch margin on all sides.
4. As permitted by APA, use an easily readable font such as, Times New Roman (12-point), or Calibri (11-point), or Arial (11-point), or Lucida Sans Unicode (10-point), or Georgia (11-point). Whichever font you choose, you should use the same font and font size throughout the assignment.
5. Provide relevant section headings.
6. The required writing style is that of the American Psychological Association (APA) Publications Manual (7th ed.).
7. The assignment should not exceed 5-7 pages, including the cover page and the references page(s).
8. Review scholarly articles (not less than 2) published within the last 5 years. Further details (if needed) will be provided via email to individual students or to the class who need further clarification. The total number of references should not be less than 3 (including the textbook). APA format (7th ed.) is required throughout the assignment.
9. ***Please note that assignments that do not meet the criterion in terms of the required number of sources (including peer-reviewed journals) will be given a "C" grade.**
10. Review carefully the rubric given below:

Criteria	Unsatisfactory	Struggling	Good	Proficient
Clarity	0-3 Ideas confusing, disconnected, and purpose is unclear.	3-6 Ideas somewhat clear, somewhat connected, and purpose is somewhat clear.	6-10 Ideas fairly clear, fairly connected, and purpose is fairly clear.	10-15 Ideas clear, well connected, and purpose is clear.
Content	0-5 Less adequate or inadequate; citations are not connected or connected poorly	5-10 Somewhat adequate; citations are connected somewhat well	10-20 Adequate; citations are connected well	20-30 Comprehensive; citations are connected very well
Relevance	0-5 Sources are not relevant. Poor connection has been made between the sources and the points made by the writer(s).	5-10 Relevance of the sources is not obvious. Fair connection has been made between the sources and the points made by the writer(s).	10-15 Relevance of the sources is somewhat obvious; good connection has been made between the sources and the points made by the writer(s).	15-20 Peer-reviewed journal articles are within the last 5 years; relevance of the sources is obvious; excellent connection has been made between the sources and the points made by the writer(s).
Logic	0-5 The transition between ideas is extremely weak.	5-10 There are several weak transitions between ideas.	10-15 There are very few weak transitions between ideas.	15-20 There are clear and effective transitions between ideas.
Writing Mechanics	0-3 4 or more violations of APA format, grammar or punctuation.	3-6 No more than 3 violations of APA format, grammar or punctuation.	6-10 No more than 2 violations of APA format, grammar or punctuation.	10-15 Appropriate use of APA formatting and appropriate use of grammar and punctuation.

Assignment #2: Research Paper on Social Work Assessment and Intervention with a Family System:

This assignment is designed to allow the application of current research in family therapy, ethnicity, ethics, the strengths perspective, and family life cycle events to contemporary social work practice with a family system.

To ensure confidentiality, exclude or disguise any identifying information. Utilizing current research in family therapy, ethnicity, ethics, the strengths perspective, and family life cycle events, complete an assessment and plan for social work intervention addressing each of the following items:

Describe Family:

Describe the family including ethnicity (you may either use the same family described in the first assignment or choose a different family), presenting problem, and stage of the family life cycle. On a separate page, complete a 3-generation genogram. The genogram must be clear and must include the genogram symbols, clearly denoting what those symbols mean for the three generations.

Apply and Compare Family Therapy Models:

Select a school/model of family therapy and apply to case. The major family therapy (for example, Structural Family Therapy, Strategic Family Therapy) must be chosen. Provide an assessment and intervention plan based on this model.

Select a second school/model of family therapy and provide an assessment and intervention plan based on the second model. Compare the benefits and problems of the two models for the family and the social worker.

Interactions between Life Cycle Stages:

Discuss interactions between the **client's** life cycle stage and **your own**. What potential problems do you need to consider?

Requirements:

The assignment must meet the following requirements:

1. Include a title page, and a references page.
2. Abstract is NOT required.
3. Double-space throughout, leaving a one-inch margin on all sides.
4. As permitted by APA, use an easily readable font such as, Times New Roman (12-point), or Calibri (11-point), or Arial (11-point), or Lucida Sans Unicode (10-point), or Georgia (11-point). Whichever font you choose, you should use the same font and font size throughout the assignment.
5. Provide relevant section headings.

6. The required writing style is that of the American Psychological Association (APA) Publications Manual (7th ed.).
7. The assignment should not exceed 5-7 pages, including the cover page and the references page(s) but excluding the genogram.
8. Review scholarly articles (not less than 3) published within the last 5 years. Further details (if needed) will be provided via email to individual students or to the class who need further clarification. The total number of references should not be less than 4 (including the textbook). APA format (7th ed.) is required throughout the assignment.
9. ***Please note that assignments that do not meet the criterion in terms of the required number of sources (including peer-reviewed journals) will be given a "C" grade.**
10. Review carefully the rubric given below:

Criteria	Unsatisfactory	Struggling	Good	Proficient
Clarity	0-3 Ideas confusing, disconnected, and purpose is unclear.	3-6 Ideas somewhat clear, somewhat connected, and purpose is somewhat clear.	6-10 Ideas fairly clear, fairly connected, and purpose is fairly clear.	10-15 Ideas clear, well connected, and purpose is clear.
Content	0-5 Less adequate or inadequate; citations are not connected or connected poorly	5-10 Somewhat adequate; citations are connected somewhat well	10-20 Adequate; citations are connected well	20-30 Comprehensive; citations are connected very well
Relevance	0-5 Sources are not relevant. Poor connection has been made between the sources and the points made by the writer(s).	5-10 Relevance of the sources is not obvious. Fair connection has been made between the sources and the points made by the writer(s).	10-15 Relevance of the sources is somewhat obvious; good connection has been made between the sources and the points made by the writer(s).	15-20 Peer-reviewed journal articles are within the last 5 years; relevance of the sources is obvious; excellent connection has been made between the sources and the points made by the writer(s).
Logic	0-5 The transition between ideas is extremely weak.	5-10 There are several weak transitions between ideas.	10-15 There are very few weak transitions between ideas.	15-20 There are clear and effective transitions between ideas.
Writing Mechanics	0-3 4 or more violations of APA format, grammar or punctuation.	3-6 No more than 3 violations of APA format, grammar or punctuation.	6-10 No more than 2 violations of APA format, grammar or punctuation.	10-15 Appropriate use of APA formatting and appropriate use of grammar and punctuation.

Grading:

Table 1:

Assignments	Points
Exam 1	30
Assignment # 1	100
Assignment # 2	100
Final Exam	30
Weekly discussions (10x100)	1000
Total	1260

GRADING SCALE

The total grade for the course is an accumulation of the points earned on each assignment. **The following letter grades are used:**

- A=90% of available points
- B=80-89% of available points
- C=70-79 % of available points
- D=60-69% of available points
- F=0-59% of available points

Social Work Program Grade Policy (this is *ONLY for social work majors):

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**.

Note: This grade policy is in effect since the Fall of 2020.

Homework:

For ten weeks, there will be weekly discussions posted on D2L Discussions Board. The discussion board is a mandatory component. Students are expected to participate in the weekly discussions actively during those ten weeks. Students are expected to write formally (no shorthand or text messaging abbreviations) and use APA format and

referencing where appropriate. 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. ***If anyone fails to do the initial posts and fails to respond to peers' posts for any two weeks during the course will be dropped from the course.**

Late Work

If there is a legitimate reason, then late work may be accepted. But, unless there is an emergency, the instructor should be informed ahead of time.

Important Dates

Final Deadline for May graduates to file for graduation: February 20, 2023.

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" March 27, 2023

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

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.

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 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 which 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 helpdesk 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](#).

Instructor Class Policies

In weekly discussions, please be respectful of one another's views. If you want to provide feedback to classmates' posts, please be constructive in your feedback.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Student Life - Disability](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the 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 which prohibits 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.

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#)

Notice

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule

<i>Weeks</i>	<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
Week 1- Week 3 January 17, Tuesday- February 6, Monday, 2023	The Context of Family Therapy Read chapters 1-3: The evolution of family therapy Basic techniques of family therapy The fundamental concepts of family therapy	
Week 4- Week 7 February 7, Tuesday- February 27, Monday, 2023	The Classic Schools of Family Therapy Read chapters 4-6: Bowen family systems therapy Strategic family therapy Structural family therapy	Assignment # 1 due by 11.30 pm on February 18, Friday (to be submitted in D2L DropBox)
Week 8- Week 9 February 28, Tuesday- March 12, Sunday, 2023 *Spring Break- March 13-18, 2023	The Classic Schools of Family Therapy contd... Read chapter 7: Experiential family therapy	First Exam (chapters 1-6) on March 5, Saturday (exam will open at 12.00 am and will close at 11.30 pm on the same day)
Week 10- Week 14 March 20, Monday- May 5, Friday, 2023 *Holiday Break- April 6-8, 2023	The Classic Schools of Family Therapy contd... Read chapters 8, 9, & 11-12: Psychoanalytic family therapy Cognitive-behavioral family therapy Solution-focused therapy Narrative therapy	Final Exam (chapters 7-9 & 11-12) on April 29, Saturday (exam will open at 12.00 am and will close at 11.30 pm on the same day) Assignment # 2 due by 11.30 pm on May 2, Tuesday

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bitter, J. (2009). *Theory and Practice of Family Therapy and Counseling*. Brooks/Cole, Belmont, CA
- Bowen, M. (1985). *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*. New York: Jason Aronson Chang
- Muy, F. and Congress, E. (2009). *Social Work with Immigrants and Refugees: Legal Issues, Clinical Skills and Advocacy*. Springer Publishing Company, New York, NY
- Collins, D. & Coleman, H. (2007). *An Introduction to Family Social Work: Second Edition*. Brooks/Cole, Belmont, CA
- Goldenberg, H. & Goldenberg I. (2008). *Family Therapy: An Overview: Seventh Edition*. Brooks
- Mattaini, M. (1999). *Clinical Interventions with Families*. NASW Press, Washington, D.C.
- McGoldrick, M., Giordono, J. & Garcia Preto, N. (1998). *Ethnicity and Family Therapy, Third Edition*, Guilford Press
- Minuchin, S. (1971). *Families and Family Therapy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Minuchin, S. (1974). *A Family Model: Therapeutic Implications of a Structural Approach*
- Pipher, M. (2002). *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community*. Hartcourt, Inc., Orlando, FL
- Satir, V. (1988). *The New People Making*. Mountain View, CA: Science and Behavior Books
- Thomlison, B. (2007). *Family Assessment Handbook: An Introduction and Practical Guide to Family Assessment, Second Edition*. Thomson Brooks/Cole, Belmont, CA
- Walters, M., Carter, E. & Silverstein, O. (1988). *The Invisible Web*. New York: Guilford Press
- White, M. & Epstein, D. (1990). Chapter 1: Story, Knowledge and Power. In *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*. New York: W.W. Norton