Designed for use with Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 2nd ed.,
by Anissa Taun Rogers

Draft Course Syllabus (MSW, 1 – Semester Course)

Course Description

This course analyzes theories of human behavior in the social environment from a life span developmental approach. The content of this course is designed to increase students’ potential for effective generalist social work assessment and interventions with individuals, families, groups, social systems, and communities. The course also strives to build students’ appreciation for and understanding of the ramifications of the “person-in-environment” principle that primarily takes into consideration the social, biological, and psychological influences of the environment. Students will examine the effects of social structures, social policies, and cultural patterns on individuals at all stages of life.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Explain and apply basic principles of learning theories and the systems/ecological and psychosocial frameworks and analyze individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and societal dynamics from each of these perspectives. (EP 2.1.3; 2.1.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.7)
2. Describe biological, psychological, social, and cultural aspects of childhood, adolescent, adulthood and older adult developmental states within the context of the broader environment. (EP 2.1.4; 2.1.9)
3. Describe the dynamics of social groups, organizations, communities, and societies and the ways that they can impact on individual development and behavior. (E.P 2.1.4)
4. Explain ways that ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and other factors contribute to human development and their implications for social work practice. (EP 2.1.2; 2.1.4; 2.1.5)
5. Apply information and theories related to human behavior and the social environment to life situations in a manner consistent with social work values and the promotion of social and economic justice.
6. Apply standards of professional social work practice. (EP 2.1.2; 2.1.4)

Required Text


Exercises in the text direct students to interactive cases on the companion website (www.routledgesw.com/cases). Going through the cases provides the opportunity to “learn by doing,” enriching the students’ experience of the course and mastery of the content in an applied format.

Companion readings listed in the Topical Outline can be downloaded by the course instructor from www.routledgesw.com/hbse.
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<td>Rogers Chapter 1, Imre: <em>The nature of knowledge in social work</em>, Blom: <em>Knowing or un-knowing? That is the question: In the era of evidence-based social work practice</em></td>
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<td>The Sociocultural Dimension</td>
<td>Rogers Chapter 4, Hall, Neitz, &amp; Battani: <em>Culture, self, and society</em>, Van Wormer: <em>Restorative justice for victims of gendered violence: A standpoint feminist perspective</em>, Gentlewarrior, Martin-Jearld, Skok, &amp; Sweetser: <em>Culturally competent feminist social work</em></td>
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<td>Rogers Chapter 6&lt;br&gt;Simonds &amp; Katz Rothman: <em>Laboring on: Birth in transition in the United States</em>&lt;br&gt;Longhurst: <em>Maternities: Coming out as pregnant at work</em>&lt;br&gt;Alzate: <em>The role of sexual and reproductive rights in social work practice</em>&lt;br&gt;Ely &amp; Dulmus: <em>A psychosocial profile of adolescent pregnancy termination patients</em></td>
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<td>Oliver: <em>The Times of Our Lives: Temporality and the Life Course</em></td>
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<td>Perz &amp; Ussher: “The horror of this living decay”: Women's negotiation and resistance of medical discourses around menopause and midlife</td>
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<td>Calasanti &amp; Slevin: <em>Age Matters: Age As a Basis of Inequality</em></td>
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<td>Werth, Gordon, &amp; Johnson: <em>Psychosocial issues near the end of life</em></td>
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Sample Assignments

Weekly journal

These journals will be used for class discussion. Before 9:00 AM Monday morning, you will email a journal entry to the Instructor for comments and review. First, you will read the readings for the coming week and then respond to several of the following questions where relevant:

- What most struck you in each reading, and why?
- What you learned from this reading, and how it is relevant to your current or future work?
- What are the implications for your personal or professional development?
- Were there any questions, issues, and concerns you have about the content?
- Synthesis of key concepts and emerging themes that are appearing in the course readings, class sessions, and your journal entries.

Cultural Experience

Attend a cultural event in the community and write a 2-3 page (minimum) reflection paper describing this event and your reactions to what you experienced. You should select a culture to experience that is different from your own.

Book Assignment

1. Students will select and read one the following novels:
   a. *Finding Fish: A Memoir* by Antone Fisher,
   b. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, or
   c. *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri

2. Start by providing a 1-2 paragraph overview or synopsis of this book.

3. Then, from the perspective of one of the main characters’ social worker, explain how the following theories or perspectives could be used to assess/evaluate the main character of the book:
   a. Strengths perspective (Chapter 2)
   b. Systems theory or ecological theory (Chapter 2)
   c. Create a diagram depicting the main character in his/her environment (i.e., micro, mezzo, and macro levels) See page 24 in textbook.

4. Choose one theory or perspective from:
   a. Chapter 3 (biopsychosocial)
   b. Chapter 4 (sociocultural)
   c. Chapter 5 (social change)
5. Explain each theory, and then Demonstrate how you would evaluate the client using the key concepts of each of these theories and perspectives.

Students will be graded on quality of writing, thoroughness, and depth of critical analysis in applying content discussed in class and in the textbook.

**Life Event Paper**

For this assignment, you are asked to write an 8-10 page Life-event Paper (not including the appendix). This assignment will help students develop a life course perspective. It is based upon utilization of the oral history and qualitative research methods.

**Life Event**

This assignment will require you to identify a life event that will be your primary area of focus. This life event can be a marriage, birth of a child, a divorce, graduation from school, loss of a loved one, surviving a traumatic event (e.g., natural disaster; car accident; violent crime), etc. Life events are circumstances (can be positive or negative) that occur in all of our lives that require us to adapt to them.

For this assignment, choose a life event that impacted at least 3 generations. You can include yourself as one generation if you’d like.

**Generation**

A generation for the purpose of this paper involves people who are in different phases of life. A child, a young adult, and an older adult would represent different stages of development. An adolescent, a middle age adult, and an older adult would also represent different stages of development.

**Oral History Interviews**

You are being asked to identify a life event and to interview three people representing different stages of development about the same event. (Unless you choose to write about this life event from your own perspective, which means you would only interview two people). Thus, the people you interview need to be in different stages of development. Life course theory suggests that where we are in the life course helps to define how we experience life events.

During the interview, you will need to develop questions that help you to understand the individual’s reaction to the event. For example:

- How did the event affect them (their thinking, their behavior, and their attitudes)?
- How did the person react or adapt to the event? (Explore certain coping or adaptive patterns)
- How did the event impact their relationships with others?
Develop a set of questions that will help you obtain more information on these questions. Make sure that your questions are age appropriate if you are interviewing children. Ask the same question to each person you interview to allow for comparison.

During your interview, seek to understand how each person perceived the event and identify the differences in how they reacted to the event. Formulate your interview questions prior to the interview. You should first obtain the permission of each interviewee to interview them. Have them initial a statement indicating their willingness to participate in the assignment. Let them know the information you gather will be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this assignment. Use false or pseudo names in the write-up of the interview.

Example
Katrina was a hurricane that impacted many people in Louisiana and Mississippi. Mary’s Aunt, nephew and grandmother lived in the New Orleans area and had to be evacuated as a result of the storm. There was much disruption in their lives because of leaving their home and losing personal items. Mary, a middle aged adult; Bill, a 19 year old; and Bertha, a 72 year old, were all interviewed about how the storm impacted them to include their thoughts, perspective, behaviors, reactions, and lessons learned.

Writing the Paper
After you have finished interviewing each person and recording their responses, you are ready to write the paper. Use the organizational scheme being described here. These are the major sections of the paper.

- Introduction
  - Describe the life event that will be the focus of your interviews and why you chose this topic.
  - Describe the settings in which these interviews have taken place.
  - Briefly describe the people you are interviewing. No identifying information is necessary other than demographic data such as “a 51 year old Asian woman.”
  - What was your hypothesis about the likely responses of the individuals you interviewed to the life event?
  - How did their responses differ or coincide with what you had expected?

- The Interviews
  - Identify the list of questions that were used in your interviews.
  - Share the responses of your interviewees by identifying the question and a summary response to each question. If you choose to simply write a narrative that reflects the questions asked and their responses, that is also acceptable. It is your choice.
  - This section should include content only from your interviews and not your opinion.
  - Place the responses in an appendix at the end of the paper.
  - What was your experience doing these interviews? What was most challenging? What did you enjoy about this process?

Analysis
The content in this part of the paper is an analysis of your interviews. This is the most important part of the paper.

- Review Erikson the developmental milestones for the developmental stage that your interviewees are in (e.g., middle childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, etc.), and comment on these.
- In addition, you may also want to relate the analysis to some of the other developmental or intergenerational theories that have been discussed in class and your text that you find most relevant (e.g., Fowler’s theory of spiritual development).
- How can these theories explain some of the reactions or forms of coping that were utilized by those you interviewed? What insights did you develop as a result of these interviews?

**Conclusion**

What did you learn about how one’s place in the life course impacts how various life events affect people? What are the implications for understanding human behavior in the social environment? How will this assignment inform your future work as a social worker?

**Critical Theory Analysis Paper**

For this assignment, you are asked to choose 3 theories of human behavior and write an 8-10 page paper (not including the appendix or title page) that critically analyzes them. Additionally, identify when they might be appropriately used in social work practice. This assignment will help students critically reflect upon the various theories of human behavior presented in this course.

**Critical Theory Analysis Presentation**

For this assignment, prepare a 15-20 minute class presentation of your Analysis Paper