THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

SW 513 Lifespan and Neurophysiologic Development in a Cultural, Ecological, and Transactional Framework (4 credit hours)

and

Social Work 317 (Honors) - Human Behavior in the Social Environment (4 credit hours)

Instructor: Shannon Cain, MSW, LCSW
Contact: scain7@vols.utk.edu and Course Canvas Q&A Discussion Board
Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:00noon to 1:00pm at The Golden Roast & By Appointment
Response Time: 48 hours
Class meetings: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:25pm-3:20pm
Room: Henson Hall 322

Code of Conduct
It is the student's responsibility to have read the College of Social Work Ethical Academic and Professional Conduct Code that is in the College of Social Work MSSW Handbook (http://www.csw.utk.edu/mssw/docs/MSSWHandbook.pdf). Students are also expected to sign and adhere to the Social Work Field Placement Code of Conduct.

The Honor Statement
An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity. (Hilltopics).

University Civility Statement
Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other’s well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: https://civility.utk.edu/

Disability
If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact The University of Tennessee Office of Disability Services at 100 Dunford Hall (865) 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

Dimensions of Diversity
The College of Social Work and the University of Tennessee welcome and honor all people. In accordance with the U.S. National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the U.S. Council on
Social Work Education (CSWE 2015 Educational Policy Statement), “the dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, mental or physical disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, gender identity, immigration status, marital status, national origin, political ideology, race, regionality, religion and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. The College values intellectual curiosity, pursuit of knowledge, and academic freedom and integrity. “A person’s diverse life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim” (CSWE 2015 Educational Policy Statement). The College of Social Work promotes social justice and social change, and strives to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.

Course Description
This is a required Foundation course. Course content includes: theories, frameworks, and research that address culturally sensitive understanding of human development and behavior; effects of risk/protective factors, culture, and other environmental effects, such as poverty, on developmental milestones; neurophysiologic development across the lifespan, starting with early childhood, the profound influence of the environment on these processes, and implications for early prevention, treatment, policies, and services; identification, assessment, and treatment of developmental delays and neurodevelopmental disorders. Processes critical to understanding human behavior and community risk and resilience for vulnerable populations are emphasized.

This course examines frameworks, theories, and research that address a culturally sensitive understanding of human development and behavior. Lifespan and neurophysiologic development in an ecological and transactional framework provides a foundation for understanding the processes of human development and how these processes are influenced by culture and the environment. The course examines the effects of risk and protective factors at various ecological levels, such as attachment, poverty, and culture on developmental milestones. It includes neurophysiologic development across the lifespan, starting with early childhood; the profound influence of the environment on these processes; and implications for early prevention, treatment, policies, and services. Typical development will be covered as well as atypical developmental patterns that are consistent with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Processes critical to human behavior and risk and resilience for vulnerable populations are emphasized to understand individual or family behavior. Content in this course will be illustrated and centered around a case study approach in which students read case studies that are paired with theoretical and research material. Class discussion about the theoretical and research material will be linked to case studies, and students will use theory and research to construct hypotheses about individual or family adaptation to the environment. In addition, students will practice forming research questions and going to the literature to assess what is known about their questions.

Course Rationale
To practice accountably and effectively, social workers must be able to understand their clients and their presenting issues within their clients’ environmental, cultural, and developmental contexts. In supportive environments, individuals flourish as they progress through developmental stages and stage-salient tasks. Other environments, because of risk factors associated with them, are less supportive of wellbeing. Even so, brain plasticity provides humans with an amazing capacity to adapt to these less supportive and sometimes frankly maladaptive environments, although sometimes at great cost to themselves. Especially for young children, the costs to the developing brain of less adaptive
environments are profound because their brains actually become organized around repeated experiences within these less adaptive environments. Neurophysiological changes and behaviors resulting from these earlier less adaptive environments are often conceptualized by clinicians as psychopathology or presenting problems of clients.

Understanding human development as a series of processes mediated by the brain within an environment-dependent context profoundly reframes not only our understanding of our clients and their presenting problems, but also how to intervene appropriately with clients and their environments. This different understanding of human development also suggests the critical importance of effective prevention programs and social policies that promote wellbeing, as well as interventions directed at changing the larger environments of individuals. Thus, knowledge gained in this course will allow social workers not only to better understand, contextualize, and assess clients and their presenting problems, but also to develop more appropriate interventions, prevention programs, or policies for working with or for the benefit of clients and for the necessary environments to support human wellbeing.

Course Competencies (and related Social Work 2015 EPAS Competencies)

By the completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

1. Articulate, critically analyze, and apply an ecological, transactional theoretical framework (risk and resilience) and developmental perspective of adaptive and maladaptive human development and behavior across the lifespan to the understanding and assessment of and engagement with client systems and to reciprocal relations at the micro, mezzo and macro levels (among individuals, families, groups, neighborhoods, local organizations and large organizations, communities, and societies.) EPAS 6.1, 7.2 (content: neurophysiology, attachment theory and other theories of human behavior and the social environment; risk and resilience; cultural similarities and differences in development and behavior.)

2. Assess the validity of historically significant theories of human behavior and development for current social issues and problems at the micro, mezzo and macro levels that clients/client systems experience. EPAS 4.2, 7.2 (content: brief comparisons and contrasts of major historical theories as appropriate, including psychoanalytic theory, Piaget, Kohleberg, Erikson, Vygotsky, and others to inform practice).

3. Evaluate and apply evidence-based theories of human development and behavior that are sensitive to gender, class, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, family structure, disability status, and worldview. EPAS 2.1, 4.2, 4.3 (content: evidence for application of attachment theory and neurophysiology with specific attention to gender, class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, family structure, disability status, and worldview and capacity to improve practice and service delivery).

4. Explain the roles of neurophysiology, adaptive and maladaptive environments, and experiences, including the effects of trauma and chronic stress, on brain development and the role of genetics and epigenesist in development during the sensitive period of the first three years of life and across the life span. EPAS 4.3, 7.2 (content: basic introduction to Mendelian genetics and the Human Genome Project; epigenesist and gene expression; effects of stress and trauma on hormones, brain development, and gene expression; effects of early deprivation and parenting on brain development and gene expression; major developmental disabilities across the life span; ACEs study and
neurophysiology of exposure to toxic stress; impact of adverse childhood experiences on development).

5. Apply theories of human behavior in the social environment to practice in the micro, mezzo and macro arenas. Understand the application of empirical evidence and theory to address questions about human development and behavior across the lifespan. EPAS 4.2, 6.1, 7.2, 8.2, 9.2 (content: use and application of theories; how theories are applied to practice; application of theories in the engagement, assessment, intervention and evaluation of practice).

**Required Texts**

There are no required textbooks.

**Contact**

All electronic communication will take place through and by university emails and the class Canvas page. Please post any general questions or clarification (for example, you cannot find an article or a website link isn’t working) to the Canvas Q&A Discussion Board. I will monitor and respond to the Canvas Q&A Discussion Board every 24 hours. You may also help each other using this tool. If your question is personal or unique to you individually then please email me directly at scain7@vols.utk.edu.

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### Class Schedule and Required Readings

**Wednesday, August 21**

**Preparing for the Semester**

Before class:

1) Review of syllabus, course expectations. *Students should study the syllabus and the Canvas website before class, and you are responsible for all information in this syllabus.* Bring any questions you have to class.

2) In addition, read this short article: https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/four-student-misconceptions-learning/?utm_campaign=Faculty%20Focus&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=54623916&hsenc=p2ANqtz-__ODNT2LftQJ5jvzKPRchYy1DdR4p8AM47v5JDF3bpp1IFlXxB2SqA27RckPqLvBeZ_f0UjUgxl50N0tN_jXAPvONfg&hsmi=54623916

**Monday, August 26 and Wednesday, August 28**

**Unit I: Genetics and Epigenetics**

CTE #1 due by 6:00pm EST on Sunday, August 25

This unit includes lots of material and vocabulary with which many of you are not familiar. It is also one of the densest units of the semester. Don’t worry about the complexity of this material, but put in a little extra time on this unit and it will pay off in the future.
Articles


Websites

Genetic Science Learning Center. (2014, February 15) Genetic Disorders. (link on CANVAS page) http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/disorders/

Shall We Have Pie or Stew?
http://blogs.cdc.gov/genomics/2011/08/11/shall-we-have-pie-or-stew/

Monday, September 2: Labor Day
No Class! Enjoy the Holiday!

Wednesday, September 4 and Monday, September 9
Unit II: Brain and Behavior

CTE #2 due by 6:00pm EST on Tuesday, September 3

This unit builds on the first one, as we think about how genes and experience guide brain development and functioning.
Articles


Wednesday, September 11, Monday, September 16, and Wednesday, September 18

Unit III: Stress, Trauma, and Hormones

CTE #3 due by 11:59pm EST on Saturday, September 14

This unit again builds on previous learning. It is the third and last “heavy science” unit. We will go back over all of the material in these first three units as they apply to each life stage.

Articles


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**Monday, September 23 and Wednesday, September 25**

Unit IV: Sex, Gender and Sexual Orientation

CTE #4 due by 11:59pm EST on Saturday, September 21

*Our development and behavior are influenced so strongly by sex, gender, and sexual orientation that it is important to think about this topic separately.*

**Articles**


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**Monday, September 30 and Wednesday, October 2**

Unit V: Pregnancy & Birth

CTE #5 due by 11:59pm on Saturday, September 28
Articles


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**Monday, October 7 and Wednesday, October 9**

**Unit VI: Prenatal Substance Abuse & Its Effects**

**CTE #6 due by 11:59pm EST on Saturday, October 5**

Articles


**Monday, October 14 and Wednesday, October 16**
**Unit VII: Infancy**

**CTE #7 due by 11:59pm EST on Saturday, October 12**

**Articles**


**Monday, October 21 and Wednesday, October 23**
**Unit VIII: Childhood**

**CTE #8 due by 11:59pm EST on Saturday, October 19**

**Articles**


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**Monday, October 28 and Wednesday, October 30**

**Unit IX: Adolescence**

**CTE #9 due by 11:59pm EST on Saturday, October 26**

**Articles**


Monday, November 4 and Wednesday, November 6
Unit X: Transition to Young Adulthood

CTE #10 due by 11:59pm EST on Saturday, November 2

Articles


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Monday, November 11 and Wednesday, November 13
Unit XI: Adulthood

CTE #11 due by 11:59pm EST on Saturday, November 9

Articles


Monday, November 18, Wednesday, November 20, & Monday, November 25
Unit XII: Physiological and Social Aspects of Aging

CTE #12 due by 11:59pm EST on Saturday, November 16

Articles


Website


Wednesday, November 27
No Class! Happy Thanksgiving!

Monday, December 2
XIII. Digital Media and The Brain & Course Wrap-Up

No readings, but attendance is required.
Wednesday, December 4

TBD

Grades and Assignments

This course provides information that is crucial to the rest of your MSSW studies. You can expect to devote 12-15+ hours per week to the class, including in-class time, readings, preparation of papers, and communication with the professor and your fellow students. There is no short-cut; class attendance and readings are necessary for you to learn this material, which is truly a foundation for the rest of your studies.

The instructor reserves the right to subtract up to 10 points from your final average for excessive absences. The professor also reserves the right to lower your final letter grade in cases of unprofessional behavior in class (including using your phone or using your computer inappropriately). I will notify you that you are at risk before this happens. Your grade may be lowered more than once.

Your grade in this class is based on:
** Weekly critical thinking exercises (90%)
** In-class small or large group activities (10%)

The good news: There is no final exam or final paper, and your last CTE is due on November 16.

Grading values:

A  = 95-100
A- = 91-94
B+= 88-90
B  = 85-89
B- = 80-84
C+ = 77-79
C  = 74-76
C- = 72-73
D/F = <72

Critical Thinking Exercises (CTEs)

Each week, students will complete a critical thinking exercise (CTE) demonstrating understanding and application of that week’s readings. Each unit's exercise will appear on the "Critical Thinking Exercises" link at the bottom of the unit on Canvas the week before it is due. Please note carefully when CTEs are due. Since class starts on a Wednesday and we have Labor Day right after that the first two CTEs are due on different times/dates than the rest of the CTEs. The rest of the CTEs are due by 11:59pm on Saturday night before that unit starts.
Every CTE tests your competence on each of the competencies listed above in this syllabus.

Course Competencies: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Social Work EPAS Competencies: 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9

Dimensions of measurement: Cognitive & affective processes, knowledge, skills, values

Your CTE grade will be calculated from your best 11 writing grades. Thus, you may skip one if you wish, or you may do all 12 CTEs.

**Note: You may NOT skip the Genetics/Epigenetics CTE or the Aging CTE. You must complete those two.

Each CTE is worth 100 points.

Even if you miss class, you still must complete the critical thinking exercise within the required time frame. Each day late a 10% deduction will be made, and late work cannot be turned in more than 3 days late, and then the grade will be recorded as a zero (0).

**Purposes**

The weekly critical thinking assignments are designed to accomplish five purposes:

1. Assure that you come to class ready to discuss the material in an informed, critical way. I do not repeat everything that is important in the readings in lectures. Rather, I build on it.

2. Demonstrate that you read and understood the readings (and therefore your answers should integrate important points from the readings). Use the important constructs found in the glossary appropriately. Don’t just use the terms; integrate them into your papers in ways that clearly demonstrate your understanding.

3. Demonstrate your critical thinking about the material (and therefore your answers should not just regurgitate what you read, but should integrate and synthesize the material in a meaningful way and be critical, analytical, and thoughtful). Do not summarize the articles.

4. Guide me in planning class sessions to clarify, elaborate, and discuss the material based on class members’ levels of understanding. If I note common misunderstandings or shallow understanding of important issues, we will spend more time on those issues in class. In cases where it is clear that all students understand important material, I may present more advanced material.

5. Enhance your abilities to write critical scholarly papers. Therefore, I provide extensive feedback, and I expect to see my comments reflected in future papers.
As you write your CTE paper, think of 2 overarching goals:
(1) to address the question I ask
(2) to demonstrate conclusively that you read and understood the readings

Format

Papers must be written in the American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition style in academic language. After the first two weeks you will lose significant points for failing to adhere faithfully to the style. Szuchman and Thomlinson (available on Amazon) is a good reference for the style, and there also are many www links to guide you, as well. See my hints for writing good papers under “CTEs”. (Please note: APA style is complicated. You can’t fake it, so use the book.) Also see the Purdue OWL/ Purdue Writing Lab resource link on our Canvas course page.

Each question will ask you to use and synthesize material from the readings and sometimes to apply those readings to scenarios, social work applications, or your personal life. Think of each answer as a formal paper (in terms of writing and presentation), though it is shorter.

All papers must be no more than 250 words, not counting references. (This is not a suggested maximum; do not go over, as I will quit reading at 250.) You do not need to write an abstract. There is no minimum length, but you need to fully answer the question as well as you can within 250 words. Your references in text, for example (Combs-Orme, 2013), do not count in the total. Yes, I know it's hard to say what you want to say in 250 words. You have to be clear and concise. Remember that I don't expect you to provide as much info as you could in 1000 words.

Hint: When you finish your paper, go back through to look for unnecessary words. Wordiness just obscures your meaning. Very and the often add nothing.

IMPORTANT: Papers must be submitted on Canvas, and I will demonstrate how to do that during the first class session.

References

Each paper must include references to (not just listed, but woven in) a majority of the required readings for that week, including all that are appropriate to the question. In addition, you must select and integrate at least one scholarly journal article from the literature that you find yourself. Your grade will reflect the relevance, timeliness (with this material, articles from before 2000 are old), and quality of the article you select. Just adding an article to your reference section will not help your grade; it should be integrated in a way that demonstrates your understanding and integration of it. It should be clear to me what this reference added to your thinking and understanding of the material, above and beyond the required readings. (Note: I frequently look at these articles to verify your understanding.)

Do not use textbooks or Wikipedia as a reference.

Your paper should include a “References” page as shown in APA format, including class readings used (not just read) and the references you find on your own. The reference section is not included in your word limit.
You would do well to read the exercise instructions before doing the readings, so that you can be alert to meaningful material in the readings. If you do not spend adequate time on this assignment, it will be reflected in your grade.

IMPORTANT: Writing skills are important, including grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, organization, and vocabulary. Please regard these assignments as an opportunity to sharpen the writing skills you will need throughout your time in the MSSW program.

As part of the goal to teach you to write, the University permits professors to require students to work with the Writing Center on their papers. This is a resource in the English Department that provides one-on-one writing tutors, and it has been very helpful to students in the past. If you are required to work with the Writing Center, I will notify you within the first few weeks of class. Even if I do not require you to go to the WC, you may find it helpful if your writing needs improvement. See the UT Writing Center link https://writingcenter.utk.edu/.

### In-Class Small or Large Group Activities

There will be in-class small and large group activities on the second day of most of the units (usually on Wednesdays). As social workers we often work in groups and teams to serve clients so this is a vital part of any social work course. In order to earn full points from these activities you must be physically and mentally present, and participate fully in the activities. Activities will range from collaborative small group team research on a topic with small group presentation, to debates, to watching media clips and discussing them in large group, etc. Feedback may also be obtained from your peers in your small group about your contribution.

There will be 10 of these activities. You may miss 1 without any penalty. Attending for the entire class (not late/leaving early) and participating actively (by your own report, my observation, and, at my discretion- peer assessment) yields full points for that day’s activity.

**Course Competencies:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

**Social Work EPAS Competencies:** 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9

**Dimensions of measurement:** Cognitive & affective processes, knowledge, skills, values

**Your In-Class Small/Large Group Activity Grade will be calculated from your top 9 activity grades.**

**Each Small/Large Group Activity is worth 10 points.**

### Attendance and Participation

There is no substitute for class attendance. Class experiences are not duplicated in the readings, and crucial learning occurs during class. Class discussions will point out the highlights of the reading material, indicating what you should pay particular attention to. Class exercises, videos, or speakers will
provide examples or illustrations of important material; this learning cannot be made up if it's missed. Most importantly, class discussions and contributions by your fellow students make up a majority of your thinking and learning.

I do take attendance, and I reserve the right to lower your overall grade by as much as one letter grade if you miss too many classes (more than 2). Similarly, if you have your cell phone out or your computer open, I reserve the right to see what you are doing and to reduce your grade for inappropriate use (i.e., non-class activities). I should not need to point out to adults that it is rude to be looking at your phone when someone is talking to you. I will make sure to offer a short personal break in the middle of each class period so please be attentive while class is going on!

Please note that these facts apply irrespective of any reason for absence, so I suggest that you save your absences for illnesses and true emergencies. Work-related absences, including court appearances, are not an exception.

It is also important that you be on time to class, as it is disruptive to me and to the class for students to arrive late. Please figure the traffic and parking into the time you leave for class!!! These things are predictable and therefore are not excuses for being late. Don’t act surprised that traffic is heavy and parking is scarce!! This is UT!!

Class Discussions

In a good class, you learn as much from each other as you do from the professor, so students are required to be part of class discussions. This includes asking questions, answering when called upon (which I will do randomly and regularly). You will not be penalized for giving a "wrong" answer, but you will be penalized for not being “present” and indicating you are following the discussion.

This also includes your response to the occasional request to complete informal out-of-class exercises and bring material to class. In the class, I will call on students to provide material about these out-of-class exercises. Note: Please study the vocabulary before each class and be ready to define the terms for the class.