

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Syllabus: SW-514 and SW-515 -Human Behavior in the Social Environment I & II  
Fall 2003 - SW-514**

**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/>)

**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*, 2003).

**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 191 Hoskins Library (865-974-6087). This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

**Course-Sequence Description**

This two-semester course-sequence (SW 514 and 515) examines the major social science theories that inform the social work profession's understanding of human behavior in social systems. An ecological/systems framework together with a developmental approach is used to provide an interactional understanding of human behavior. The course-sequence opens with an overview of ecological/systems theory, social constructionism, and critical theory with an introduction to the diversity perspective. Social systems are examined across the course-sequence looking at community, organizations, groups, families, and individuals within both traditional and alternative perspectives. Social and economic influences that are addressed include poverty, racism, sexism, and homophobia. Development across the life span is conceptualized as the interplay between nature and nurture where biological and psychosocial risks influence individual resiliency and environmental competence. A biopsychosocial perspective is used throughout the course to inform and examine the interaction between biological, social, psychological, and cultural systems.

HBSE I examines the life cycle, using an ecological perspective from, infancy through adolescence. HBSE II continues this examination from young adulthood through senescence. Both units consider the influence of different systems on the life cycle.

### **Course-Sequence Rationale**

The content in this course-sequence focuses on human behavior in communities, organizations, groups, families, and life span development in the context of social structures, such as race, ethnicity, social class and gender roles. Because no one theory is adequate to encompass the human experience, students need to understand the explanatory power of various theories of human behavior within an ecological/systems framework. An ability to both critique and apply theory is a precursor for professional assessments of clients and client situations, as a guide for interventions, and for increasing client empowerment in their environments.

### **Course-Sequence Objectives**

Upon completion of the course-sequence students are expected to be able to (through course activities, assignments and/or exams):

1. Understand and use a social systems/ecological framework to analyze human systems at different levels of organization from communities to individual;
2. The ability to critique selected social theories from a diversity perspective;
3. The ability to compare historical and traditional perspectives of community and organizations with emerging alternative manifestations of community and organizations;
4. Knowledge of the similarities and differences in various types of family organization and their effects on the life course;
5. Knowledge of risk and protective factors in the development of resiliency across the lifespan;
6. The ability to identify the effects of ethnic, racial, cultural, economic, sexual orientation, and gender variables on individuals and families over the life span;
7. Knowledge of the interactive influence of biological, psychological, and social factors, including families, groups, organizations and communities, on human development and behavior;
8. Knowledge of the impact of environmental conditions such as class, poverty, oppression and discrimination on the promotion and inhibition of behavior and development.