

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**SW 523 – Clinical Social Work Practice with Families**  
**Spring, 2003**

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**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 ([www.csw.utk.edu](http://www.csw.utk.edu))

**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, 2002).

**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 DESCRIPTION:**

This course focuses on the family as a unit of assessment and treatment in clinical social work practice. Concepts related to understanding and analyzing family dynamics and interactional patterns as understood from the perspective of major family therapy models are presented. Techniques of treatment are considered in terms of their application to families with varied system and individual problems and to families from varied social and cultural backgrounds. Consideration is also given to family-centered practice in different social work fields practice, plus the influence of the therapist's own experiential family on one's intervention style.

**RATIONALE:**

Social work has traditionally emphasized the influence of the environment and interpersonal relationships on human behavior. Clinical practice with families is both a natural extension of this stance and integral to social work practice from an ecological/systems perspective.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Upon completion of the course, a student is able to demonstrate:

1. Knowledge of major concepts used in understanding the dynamics of family interaction and a family-centered approach to social work practice from an ecological/systems perspective.
2. An understanding of how factors such as race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and sexual orientation may affect interactional patterns both within the family and in their exchange with community systems, including agencies and clinical practitioners.
3. Knowledge of selected major approaches to clinical practice with families (intergenerational, structural, strategic, solution-oriented) as well as techniques associated with these approaches.
4. The ability to assess both the strengths and vulnerabilities of families, and establish sound treatment contracts that encourage families to select their own optimal solutions.
5. The ability to develop interventions, based upon sound assessment, that are directed toward achieving the purpose and goals of clinical treatment.
6. An understanding of major ethical issues associated with clinical practice with families, and an ability to formulate decisions consistent with the ethical guidelines of the profession of social work.

7. An understanding of how to evaluate the outcomes of clinical practice with families.
8. An understanding of the study process of one's own family of origin, and the significance of these personal historical data for the enactment of the clinical practitioner role in working with clients from diverse backgrounds.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS/EVALUATION PLAN:**

**Class sessions** will include lectures and discussions to clarify and supplement assigned readings. Additionally, use will be made of role-playing and simulation, videotape review, case summary analysis, and other learning activities designed to amplify the application of concepts and techniques in clinical family practice. Students are expected to attend class and to prepare for the sessions by reading and thinking about assigned materials.

Written assignments, participation, and grades are related as follows

- Class attendance/participation..... 15%
- Assignment 1..... 25% .....Due Wed., Feb. 26
- Student written analysis and evaluative critique of simulated family experience..... 20% .....class family presentation
- Student role in class presentation on simulated treatment process with their contrived "family"..... 40% .....Selected dates April 16, 23, 30.

**Use of or reference to actual case material** in class/simulation settings and written work should be made in a manner that thoroughly disguises the identity of the client(s). Discussion of actual case material must be held in the strictest confidence.

**TEXTS:**

(Required) Dorothy Stroh Becvar and Raphael J. Becvar (fourth edition, 2000). *Family Therapy: A Systemic Integration*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

(Supplemental) Ann Hartman and Joan Laird (1983). *Family-Centered Social Work Practice*. New York: Free Press.

**COURSE CONTENT OUTLINE:**

<b><u>Week</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Class Topics/Readings</u></b>	<b><u>Simulation Family</u></b>
1	Jan. 15	Course Introduction and Overview	Concept Explained
2	Jan. 22	Special Topic: The Genogram. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monica McGoldrick/Randy Gerson, Ch. 2, “Developing a Genogram to Track Family Patterns”</li> </ul>	Selection of “SIMFAMS”
3	Jan. 29	The distinctiveness of relational, or relationship, therapy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 1, “Two different world views”</li> </ul> <p>Fifty years of evolving ideas on the relational perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 2, “The historical perspective”</li> <li>• Hartman/Laird, Ch. 1, “A family focus in social work practice”</li> </ul>	Guidelines amplified.  Discuss preferences for type of family that is to be the focus of future work.
4	Feb. 5	Systems theory: toward the cybernetics of cybernetics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 3, “The paradigmatic shift of systems theory”</li> <li>• Hartman/Laird, Ch. 4, “An epistemological framework”</li> </ul> <p>The challenge of second-order therapy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 4, “Postmodernism and Family Therapy”</li> <li>• Hartman/Laird, Ch. 5, “Family theory for family-centered practice”</li> </ul>	Simulation family groups discuss evolving individual genograms as peer consultants.  Determine individual roles for future work in simulated family.  Inform instructor of decisions (brief written synopsis)
5	Feb. 12	Initial contact with the family: A new context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 5, “Therapeutic Intervention and strategies”</li> <li>• Hartman/Laird, Ch. 7, “Getting started: Contracting and interviewing”</li> </ul>	Practice the initial interview with Simulation family. Amplify problems, goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Each student should get a chance to interview the family</li> <li>◆ Begin construction of simulation family genogram.</li> </ul>
6	Feb. 19	Family strengths and family vulnerabilities at the level of process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 6, “Family process”</li> <li>• Boyd-Franklin, Ch. 1, “Black, Afro-American families in therapy: An Overview”</li> </ul>	Appraise the strengths of the family. Note evidences of family resiliency. Imagine how the family can “invent” its own optimal solutions and emerge hardier.

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Class Topics/Readings</u>	<u>Simulation Family</u>
7	Feb. 26	<b>Assignment 1 Due.</b> Behavioral/Cognitive approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 12.</li> </ul>	Discuss findings of assignment with group.
8	March 5	Intergenerational theory and techniques. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 7, “Psychodynamic approaches” NOTE: Emphasis will be on Bowenian intergenerational theory</li> <li>• Boyd-Franklin, Ch. 7, “Major family therapy approaches and their relevance to the treatment of Black families.</li> <li>• Hartman/Laird, Ch. 10, “Assessment in time: The intergenerational perspective”</li> <li>• Hartman/Laird, Ch. 11, “The intergenerational family system as a resource for change”</li> </ul>	Evaluate suitability of Bowenian approach for work with one or more members of the simulation family.  Practice interpreting genograms of the simulated family.  Discuss practice intervention possibilities.
9	March 12	Family structure and functioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 9, “The structural approach”</li> <li>• Hartman/Laird, Ch. 12, “Inside the family: Inner system assessment”</li> <li>• Hartman/Laird, Ch. 13, “The family unit as a resource and target for change”</li> </ul>	Evaluate suitability of structural approach for work with simulation family.  Construct the structural map of the simulated family. Interpret the meaning of the map, in terms of intervention Possibilities, and practice these.
10	March 19	SPRING BREAK (no classes)	
11	March 26	Is “manipulation” unavoidable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 11, “Strategic approaches and the Milan Influence”</li> <li>• Hartman/Laird, Ch. 14, “Persistence, coherence, and paradox”</li> </ul>	Evaluate the suitability of the strategic approach for work with simulation family Develop strategic intervention(s) possibilities, and practice these.
12	April 2	Review of newer models of intervention. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nichols/Schwartz, Ch. 11 NOTE: Emphasis will be on Solution-focused approach</li> </ul>	Evaluate suitability of solution-Focused approach for work with simulation family.  Practice solution-focused therapy.
13	April 9	Monitoring Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becvar/Becvar, Ch. 15, “Assessment and Research”</li> <li>• Boyd-Franklin, Ch. 15, “Conclusion and implications for future clinical work and research”</li> </ul>	Develop a measurement plan for the simulation family re: a single major intervention.  Discuss the single case evaluation design.

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Class Topics/Readings</u>	<u>Simulation Family</u>
14	April 16	Simulation family presentations: NOTE: <b>Written analyses</b> of the simulated family experiences due on the date of the in-class presentations.	
15	April 23	Simulation family presentations	
16	April 30	Final Class Summary Session Written analyses returned. Student evaluation of course.	

**CRITERIA FOR COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

1. This assignment is related to the first few sessions of your family group. It should, however, be done by each individual student. After the assignment is turned in to the instructor it is suggested you share your ideas with the group to enhance planning for your continued family interviews. Prior to the first family interviews, select and read 4 journal articles or book chapters about family therapy with the topic or problem selected by your family group. These should be in addition to course assignment. Following the first two interviews develop a paper which covers the following topics.
  - a) Identify the patterns within the family system which should be addressed in treatment.
  - b) Identify family strengths (system and individual).
  - c) Suggest a plan of treatment with emphasis on system changes and the way your plan will address the presenting problem. (The problem should clearly be linked to the systemic patterns, i.e. rules, boundary issues, family of origin issues, etc.)
  - d) What are some techniques you think might work in helping the family achieve goals and that you would like to try in your “family” group. Give the rationale for your choices.
  - e) Discuss and relate your plan to the major points in your reading on the topic to your discussion.
  - f) Finally, identify and discuss some specific aspects of the treatment process you would like to work on in your role play and discussions with your family group (for example skills, transference/countertransference issues, etc.).

**Paper should be at least 3 pages but no more than 5 pages in length. A separate bibliography should also be attached. (25% of course grade, double spaced, APA format).**
  
2. **Student analysis of simulated family experience:** Each class member will participate in an ongoing process, “simulation family group.” This experiential component will assist with the integration of theory and technique by affording students the opportunity to design and study a contrived “family” over the span of several weeks. “Family members” will determine their family composition and presenting problem(s), and will utilize weekly in-class opportunities to assess and “treat” the system/individual problem(s) through role play and role reversal of both therapist(s) and family member(s). There will be opportunity to “try out” intergenerational, structural, strategic, and solution-focused assessment and treatment options.  
**A 5-page analysis** of one’s individual experience in the group, in terms of preparation to do clinical work with families as a differentiated therapist, is due on the date of the in-class simulation family presentation **(20% of course grade, double spaced, APA format).**
  
3. **Group class presentation:** Simulation family groups are to prepare and present to the class a “family interview” (or excerpts from several interviews with the family and/or subsystems). Presentations should clearly demonstrate the application of techniques of intervention selected to facilitate the therapeutic process, and be based on an assessment of “the problem” (both system and symptom) and the interaction and dynamics of the simulated “family.” The class

presentation should include discussion of an analysis of the interactional process which identifies clearly the approach(es) to family therapy utilized in assessment and intervention, plus any significant ethical or technical issues which were dealt with (for example: membership, co-therapy relationships, worker role, countertransference, cultural/racial/gender/sexual orientation factors, young children in the interview, resistance, confidentiality, multigenerational factors, etc.).

**Presentation and discussion** should be **approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes** in length.

Groups should distribute a specialized **topical bibliography**, and may use explanatory handouts. **Videotaping (VHS format)** the interview(s) for in-class review is strongly encouraged. Presentations are scheduled for April 16 and 23, plus April 30 (**40% of course grade**).

4. Class **attendance/participation**: It is imperative that class members be prepared for, attend, and actively participate in class sessions. This is especially important since the simulation family groups will regularly meet during class time to discuss and practice clinical techniques (**15% of course grade**).