

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

**Syllabus: SW540 – General Topics in Social Work:  
Child Abuse and Neglect: Theories and Issues Across Social Work Practice  
Spring 2008**

**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, 2007).

**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 RATIONALE AND DESCRIPTION**

Intervention with abused child and adult victims, families, and perpetrators is embedded within a sociocultural and sociohistorical context that not only affects how the maltreatment is conceptualized, but also how interventions and policies are developed. Knowledge of the context within which the conceptualization of child maltreatment is embedded, as well as an excellent command of the knowledge base, is fundamental for practicing accountably on either the macro or clinical level as well as for policy analysis and development. The goal of this course is to immerse students in the theoretical and clinical knowledge base of child maltreatment as well as the multiple issues surrounding the identification, assessment, evaluation, disposition, and treatment of victims, offenders, and their families. By doing so, students will be better trained to work within an imperfect system in the best interest of the victim while also recognizing and negotiating the complexities of child maltreatment.

The course is organized around essential bodies of knowledge for practicing accountably. The first portion of the course reviews the knowledge base on the different types of child maltreatment. This portion of the course explicates what we know, what we think we know, what we don't know, and what we need to know. The second half of the course moves to the level of intervention, focusing on the processes of disclosure, reporting and substantiation of abuse, assessment, adjudication, and treatment, with an emphasis on empirical and theoretical frameworks for guiding these intervention

processes. Throughout the semester a central theme is the method and rationale for the ways in which our knowledge of child maltreatment is constructed. Another important consideration throughout the semester is issues that social workers must face in the highly charged environment in which they work. These issues will also be embedded within the larger sociocultural and sociohistorical framework. Because the professional response to child maltreatment is embedded within social institutions, knowledge of how cultural and systemic discrimination by race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and class is paramount for social workers working with these vulnerable populations. All work will maintain a strengths perspective.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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

1. Demonstrate understanding of the strengths, deficits, and biases of the child maltreatment knowledge base.
2. Demonstrate ability to critically assess and develop an informed opinion in specific areas of knowledge within the child maltreatment knowledge base.
3. Demonstrate understanding of the effect of the sociocultural and sociohistorical environment on the child maltreatment knowledge base, treatment issues, policies, and statutes.
4. Demonstrate ability to embed issues of assessment, evaluation, treatment, adjudication, and prevention within a theoretical and empirical knowledge base.
5. Demonstrate ability to critically analyze theories of child maltreatment and apply them to issues of assessment, treatment, prevention, and policy.
6. Demonstrate ability to critically analyze theories and models for treatment of child maltreatment and to recognize their appropriateness for different types of interventions.
7. Demonstrate familiarity with personal, professional, policy, cultural, and ethical issues for working with abused or neglected victims, their families, and perpetrators.
8. Demonstrate ability to explicate and assess age-specific risk factors for child maltreatment and consequent developmental pathways.
9. Demonstrate understanding of areas of potential discrimination in the professional and institutional response to child maltreatment, methods for intervening in child maltreatment in a culturally sensitive manner, and methods for advocacy should discrimination occur.