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 (3 credit hours)

Instructor: Terri Combs-Orme, Ph.D., Urban Child Institute Endowed Professor
Office: Rm. 312
Class meetings: Monday and Wednesday, 1:25-3:20 Rm. 322
tcombs-orme@utk.edu

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). 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: http://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**
By the completion of this course, the 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.) 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. 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. 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. 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 explain how this research can impact practice and service delivery, ACEs study and related literature describing lifelong impact of early adverse experiences, including implications for individual and population health outcomes and ACEs as a public health framework; Neurophysiology of toxic stress, trauma, and the cycle of adverse childhood experiences within families and communities, including related policies and practices such as trauma-informed care; Impact of ACEs on child development and importance of fostering resilience and healthy “serve and return” behaviors in infancy (i.e. attachment) and how toxic stress and ACEs can impact a child’s “air traffic control” system (i.e. cognitive 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. 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).

Class Schedule and Required Readings

August 23 (Wed.)
Preparing for the Semester

Before class:

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. 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-__ODNT2LtQj5jvzKPRchYy1DdR4p8AM47v5JDF3bpp1lFlXxB2SqA27RckPqLvBeZf0UjlUgx150NOtN_jXApYONfg&_hsmi=54623916](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-__ODNT2LtQj5jvzKPRchYy1DdR4p8AM47v5JDF3bpp1lFlXxB2SqA27RckPqLvBeZf0UjlUgx150NOtN_jXApYONfg&_hsmi=54623916)

August 28, 30
Unit I: Genetics and Epigenetics
CTE 1 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, August 27

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.

Websites on course site

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

Shall We Have Pie or Stew?

Articles


**September 4: Labor Day**
No class

**September 6, 11, 13**
Unit II: Brain and Behavior
CTE 2 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, September 10

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

**Articles**


**September 18, 20**
**Unit III: Stress, Trauma, and Hormones**
**CTE 3 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, Sep 17**

*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**


**Sep 25, 27**
**Unit IV: Sex, Gender and Sexual Orientation**
**CTE 4 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, September 24**

*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**
development. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, 7*, 53-60.

sex, gender, and sexuality in sociological research on gender stratification. *Sociology
Compass, 11*(4), 1-16.

Neuroscience, 34*, 69-88.

Savin-Williams, R. C. (2016). Sexual orientation: Categories or continuum?
Commentary on Bailey et al.(2016). Psychological Science in the Public Interest,
17(2), 37-44.

*Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care, 21*(3), 192-206.

Wilz, K. (2016). Bernie Bros and Woman Cards: Rhetorics of sexism, misogyny, and
constructed masculinity in the 2016 election. *Women's Studies in Communication,

**October 2, 4**
**Unit V: Pregnancy & Birth**
**CTE 5 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, Oct. 1**

**Articles**


October 9, 11
Unit VI: Infancy
CTE 6 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, Oct. 8

Articles


Oct. 16, 18
Unit VII: Childhood
CTE 7 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, Oct. 15

Articles


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**Oct 23, 25**

**Unit VIII: Adolescence**

**CTE 8 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, Oct 22**


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**Oct 30, Nov 1**

**Unit IX: Transition to Young Adulthood**

**CTE 9 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, Oct 29**


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**November 6, 8**
**Unit X: Adulthood**
**CTE 10 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, November 5**


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**November 13, 15**
**Unit X: Physiological Aspects of Aging**
**CTE 11 due 8:00 AM, Sunday, November 12**


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<td>Unit XI: Social Aspects of Aging</td>
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<td>CTE 12 due 8:00 AM, Nov 19</td>
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**Articles**


**Website:**
The Fantastic Plastic Brain. The Kavli Foundation.

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No readings, but attendance required.

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No readings, but attendance required.

**Grades and Assignments**
This course provides information that is crucial to the rest of your MSSW studies. You can expect to devote about 10-12 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 (100%)

The good news: There is no final exam or paper.

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

CTEs

Each week, students will complete a critical thinking exercise 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 page the week before it is due. CTEs are always due at 8:00 AM on the Sunday before the first class on the topic (with one exception noted—Labor Day weekend).

Note: Every CTE tests your competence on each of the competencies listed above in this syllabus. Dimensions of measurement: Cognitive and affective processes, knowledge, skills, values.
(Your grade will be calculated from your best 10 writing grades. Thus, you may skip two if you wish, or you may do all 12 CTEs and all in-class writing assignments and I will use your highest 10 grades.

*Note: You may not skip both Aging CTEs. You must do at least one of them.

Even if you miss class, you still must complete the critical thinking exercise within the required time frame. Late work cannot be turned in more than 5 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 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 the instructor 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 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 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) 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
Writing Lab resource on Blackboard.

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 (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 article from the literature that you find yourself.** Your grade will reflect the relevance, timeliness (with this material, articles from 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 my 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 under "Resources" on this Online@utk web site.

**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 in the readings. 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.

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!!! *This is especially important this semester with the campus such a mess.* 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!! And traffic is especially awful now. Expect it!

**Class discussion**

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: study the vocabulary before each class and be ready to define the terms for the class.