Course Title: Human Behavior in the Social Environment I  
Course-Section Number: BSW SOWK 305 or MSW SOWK 500  

Prerequisites:  
BSW: Junior Standing or Permission of SSW Advisor or BSW Program Director  
MSW: None  

Semester/Year:  
Class Time: TBA by section  
Class Location: TBA by section  
Instructor: TBA by section  
Office Location: TBA by section  
Office Hours: TBA by section  
Phone: TBA by section  
Email: TBA by section  

COURSE DESCRIPTION  
This course studies the life cycle of the individual from in utero through old age and death from a bio-psycho-social-spiritual perspective, via multiple theoretical frameworks. Individual growth and development is studied in the context of culture, race, ethnicity, social class, gender, families and other social systems. Attention is also given to the impact of trauma, loss, and environmental stressors on the individual and the family.  

This foundation course considers human behavior and the social environment in order to provide students with a basis from which to understand behavior and development over the course of the life span. A variety of theories are utilized to assist students in understanding the complexity of human behavior, including psychodynamic, psychosocial, family systems, cognitive, and neurobiological theories, among others.  

Course content is sensitive to human diversity, specifically including materials on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical challenges, spirituality, and socioeconomic factors as they affect human behavior and life span development. Students are required to utilize this material as a background for assessing strengths, limitations, risk, resilience and protective factors that affect clients’ social functioning. The course aims to examine human behavior in the social environment with attention to structural factors (e.g., poverty, racism, etc.) as well, that contribute to challenge and success in human development.  

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COURSES  
This course is the first in the Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) sequence. It focuses on understanding the role of theory and development across the life span.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES & EPAS RELATED COMPETENCIES

Through course materials and assignments, students are expected to demonstrate mastery of the following objectives, all of which are at the basic, foundation level. At the conclusion of this course, each student shall demonstrate competency in:

2.1.3 Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
   **PB:** Critically appraise and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and evidence-informed practice wisdom.
   **PB:** Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues
   **Assignments:** Paper 2 Client Stressors, Life Stages & Theory; Paper 3 Older Adults, Aging & Theory

2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice
   **PB:** Recognize the ways in which a culture’s structure and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or enhance privilege and power.
   **PB:** Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences.
   **PB:** View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants
   **Assignments:** Paper 1 Self Reflection & Theory Paper or Crisis Paper; Paper 3 Older Adults, Aging & Theory

2.1.5 Advance human rights and social and economic justice
   **PB:** Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination
   **Assignments:** Paper 1 Self Reflection & Theory Paper or Crisis Paper; Paper 2 Client Stressors, Life Stages & Theory; Paper 3 Older Adults, Aging & Theory

2.1.7 Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment
   **PB:** Integrate conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation.
   **PB:** Critique and apply knowledge to understand the reciprocal interactions between people and their environments
   **Assignments:** Paper 2 Client Stressors, Life Stages & Theory; Paper 3 Older Adults, Aging & Theory

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1 The identified EPAS/PBs for the course may not be varied among sections for the same course. Assignments attached to specific EPAS/PBs are considered the standard assignments across all sections of the same course. Section Instructors may add additional topics/materials/assignments to their section, but they may not change the basic course topics/materials/assignments.
CRITERIA FOR GRADING
Grades are based upon criterion-referenced grading. The Description of Assignments section of this document reviews the specific points for each assignment. In general, letter grades are assigned using the criteria below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Grades and Values</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Overall performance is Exceptional</td>
<td>A  4.00 96-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A-  3.67 92-95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Overall performance is Good</td>
<td>B+  3.33 88-91%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B  3.00 84-87%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>B-  2.67 80-83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Overall performance is Acceptable. Work meets basic expectations set by Instructor. A grade of C- requires that BSW and MSW students retake the course.</td>
<td>C+  2.33 76-79%</td>
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<td>C  2.00 72-75%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C-  1.67 68-71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Overall performance is Poor - student must retake course.</td>
<td>D+  1.33 64-67%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D  1.00 60-63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Overall performance is Unsatisfactory - student fails course. See Student Handbook.</td>
<td>F  0.00 Below 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>At the discretion of the section Instructor a temporary grade of Incomplete may be assigned to a student who, for a reason beyond the student’s control, has been unable to complete the required work in a course on time. The request signed by the student and the faculty member must be on approved and on file with the BSW or MSW Program Director when grades are submitted. See Student Handbook.</td>
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READING ASSIGNMENTS
All reading assignments are listed in the “Course Schedule.” It is expected that students will come to class having read the materials and are prepared to discuss them. Students are encouraged to explore other resources if certain concepts are not understood. Supplemental readings may also be listed so students may explore the topic further.

Required Text(s)

Recommended Texts


DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS
[Section Instructors will indicate EPAS/PBs for relevant assignments as well as due dates, points and methods of submission for all assignments.]

Weighting of class assignments is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Stressors, Life Stages, &amp; Theory Paper</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Adults, Aging &amp; Theory Paper</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

General Guidelines for Papers
Papers will be graded on whether you demonstrate through your writing that you understand materials presented in class and the readings and how to apply it to real problems of relevance to social work. Clarity of thinking and writing are important. Please note: Paper 1 should be approximately 5-7 pages in length. Paper 2 should be approximately 7-9 pages in length. Paper 3 should be approximately 8-10 pages in length. The papers should be double-spaced, paginated, typed in 12-point font, and follow APA format guidelines. Your papers should include an appropriate number of citations (in APA style) for the suggested page length, which may include class readings as well as using the required and recommended texts from the course. You may also use lecture material as references. Students should feel free to consult with the instructor about their ideas as they develop if they need extra assistance, however please do not expect assistance during the week before the paper is due.

Assignment One: Reflection Paper
Consider an event in the life of your family (this may range from a normative event such as the birth of a child to a crisis or stressor, such as the loss of a family member through death). Apply social work theories covered in classes 1-3 to this life event. Specifically:

1. Briefly describe the event and your family’s response to it
2. Identify strengths displayed by your family members during this event
3. Identify cultural influences that affected your family’s experience of the event
4. Indicate the risk and protective factors that either a) affected the likelihood of your family experiencing the event in question or b) affected your family’s response to the event/the event’s outcome
5. Discuss whether oppression was a factor in your family’s experience of the event. If so, how? If not, what prevented that from being a factor?
6. Consider the ways in which your family may have been empowered, and by what systems, during the event
7. Identify relevant systems involved in the event or the response to the event (e.g., extended family, neighbors, religious community, group membership, medical and legal systems, etc.)
8. Describe the interaction of various systems using concepts from systems theory, as covered in class
9. Attach an ecomap as an appendix to the assignment
Assignment Two: Client Stressors, Life Stages, & Theory Paper
Select a psychosocial difficulty that may be experienced by an individual at some point during development (e.g., diagnosis with a learning disability, experience of physical abuse, separation from caregiver, onset of mental illness, etc.). Explore the impact of that event on development at two different stages. Specifically:

1. Offer a brief description of the difficulty, using at least 2-3 scholarly citations to summarize what is generally known about the difficulty and its impact (1-2 pages). Include any relevant sociocultural factors associated with the onset or maintenance of the difficulty.
2. Briefly describe an individual who has experienced this psychosocial difficulty, using a client, acquaintance (not a family member or close friend), or fictional character.
3. Describe normative development (physical, cognitive, moral, emotional, social) during the period in which the psychosocial event occurred. Use course readings to support this (2 pages).
4. Discuss how development was interrupted or altered by the experience of the psychosocial difficulty for the individual you described in #2 (1-2 pages).
5. Instructor Discretion – Choose A or B:
   a. Repeat steps #2-4 for another stage of development OR
   b. Consider how a subsequent stage of development may be affected by the experience of the psychosocial difficulty at the first stage (e.g., if you considered the impact of sexual abuse on a 10 year-old, how might that same individual’s development be different at age 25 as a result of having been abused at age 10?). Briefly summarize the key developmental tasks of the later stage, and discuss how the development of the subject from #2 differs, possibly as a result of the psychosocial difficulty he or she experienced (1-2 pages).

Assignment Three: Older Adults, Aging & Theory Paper
This course covers human development across the life span and emphasizes the interaction between people and their social environments. The purpose of this assignment is to structure 3 one-hour interviews via phone, Skype or face-to-face meetings (face-to-face, at least once, is strongly preferred) with ONE older adult (i.e., 60-65 years old and older) and create one paper that explores those three contacts, theory, and your experience with the older adult and how this all relates to the course material. This written assignment is intended to help you understand the importance of older adulthood and aging issues as relevant to social work practice, theory and public policy.

Students may choose a particular focus to the conversations such as:
- Cultural and ethnic diversity
- LGBTQ issues
- Psychosocial adjustment to aging
- Health and/or mental health issues
- Spirituality and religiosity
The following are suggested questions to assist with the conversation surrounding the general life story section:

- What are some of the most significant accomplishments in your life?
- What have been some of the most significant challenges in your past life development?
- Today, what are some of the most important issues you face as an older adult?
- How are you preparing for your anticipated future needs (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and/or financial)?
- If you were to review your life as a whole, how would you describe the most important meanings you have discovered?
- What wisdom would you like to share with others?
- How would you like to be remembered?

Format
To complete the project, there should be a minimum of 3 one-hour interactions with the same individual. In terms of choosing this older adult, use of family members or close friends is strongly discouraged. Students must seek permission from the instructor if they have a compelling reason to do so. Written expectations include:

1. **Prior to the first encounter:** In approximately 2 pages, please write a description of:
   a. The nature of the interaction you will be having with the older adult(s) – who, what, where. Please do not use the older adult’s real name or other information that makes them readily identifiable, however it is fine to identify the relationship you have with this person.
   b. The goals you have for your own learning about older adults that will promote your personal or professional growth;
   c. Your expectations of the three most challenging aspects of this assignment;
   d. Your expectation of the three most rewarding aspects of this experience;
   e. The strengths you bring to this project;
   f. Weaknesses/stereotypes/biases you will have to address to make this project successful for yourself.

2. **After the first encounter:** In 1-2 pages, please write a description of:
   a. Your first encounter (who was there and the nature of the interaction);
   b. Your feelings and thoughts before, during, and after the visit;
   c. Changes in your plans, goals, concerns, etc. from what you wrote prior to the visit and what accounts for these changes

   Please note, it is a good idea to note your initial thoughts and feelings immediately after the visit. Then let this percolate a few days and then write the final version. If you wait too long to write things down, too many other things dilute the experience.

3. **After the second encounter:** In 1-2 pages, please write a description of:
   a. What, if any, changes have taken place in the perspective you described after the first meeting;
   b. Initial connections you are making between your observations and thoughts and the material covered in class, particularly the reading materials on older adults.
4. **After the 3rd encounter:** In 1-2 pages, please write a description of:
   a. Further connections you are making between the material covered in class and the reading materials on older adults.

   Please feel free to continue meeting with your older adult project partner. These continued interactions can contribute to your final write-up (see #5).

5. **After the final encounter (which may or may not be the 3rd):** In approximately one page, please summarize what you have learned from this experience that will promote your personal and professional growth and thinking about older adults.
### COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of class</th>
<th>by section</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topics/Learning Objectives:</strong> Social work theories</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Theory/model/perspective - definitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strengths perspective</td>
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<td>• Empowerment</td>
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<td>• Oppression</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Required Readings:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Systems theory</td>
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<td>• Ecological perspective (P-I-E)</td>
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<td>• Risk and protective factors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Micro-mezzo-macro lens in social work</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Required Readings:</strong></td>
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</table>
### Topics/Learning Objectives: Social work theories

- Psychodynamic and relational theories
- Attachment theory
- Cultural influences on relationships

### Required Readings:


**Interview with Dr. Terry Northcut**

### Topics/Learning Objectives: Infancy

- Pregnancy
- Pre-natal and social determinants of health
- Cognitive development
- Psychosocial development (Trust vs. Mistrust)
- Neurobiology

### Required Readings:


### Recommended Readings:

Date of class ____________________________________ by section

**Topics/Learning Objectives: Toddlerhood**
- Cognitive development
- Psychosocial development (Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt)
- Social learning theory

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**

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Date of class ____________________________________ by section

**Topics/Learning Objectives: Preschool age**
- Cognitive development (schema, accommodation, etc.)
- Psychosocial development (Initiative vs. Guilt)
- Gender identity development
- Racial identity development

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**

### Topics/Learning Objectives: Latency

- Cognitive development
- Psychosocial development (Industry vs. Inferiority)
- Social learning theory
- Racial identity development

### Required Readings:


### Recommended Readings:


There are a number of interviews with Claude Steele available online of varying lengths.

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### Topics/Learning Objectives: Adolescence

- Cognitive development (neurobiology)
- Psychosocial development
- Peer relationships (group identity)
- Racial identity

### Required Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


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**Date of class** ________________________ **by section**

**Topics/Learning Objectives: Emerging adulthood**
- Cognitive development (neurobiology)
- Psychosocial development (Identity vs. Role Confusion)
- Identity development – individual, sexual, racial

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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**Date of class ____________________________ by section**

**Topics/Learning Objectives: Young Adulthood**

- Psychosocial development (Intimacy vs. Isolation)
- Partner relationships
- Early parenting

**Required Readings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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**Recommended Readings:**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hoffnung, M. &amp; Williams, M.A.</td>
<td>Balancing act: Career and family during college-educated women’s 30’s.</td>
<td>Sex roles, 68(5), 321-334. <a href="http://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-012-0248-x">doi.org/10.1007/s11199-012-0248-x</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Topics/Learning Objectives: Middle Adulthood
- Cognitive development – contextual thinking
- Psychosocial development (Generativity vs. Stagnation)
- Work identity, unemployment
- Health Issues

### Required Readings:


### Recommended Readings:

### Emerging Older Adulthood

**Topics/Learning Objectives:**
- Neurobiology
- Psychosocial Development (Integrity vs. Despair)
- Retirement
- Health issues

**Required Readings:**

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### Older Adulthood

**Topics/Learning Objectives:**
- Loss and Grief
- End-of-life

**Required Readings:**

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### Integration

**Topics/Learning Objectives:**
- Viewing the lifespan as a whole
- Application of course content to assessment and practice
- Course wrap-up

**Required Resources:**