

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**  
**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

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**HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**  
SW 327 (#63050)  
**SEMESTER:** FALL 2014  
**MEETING TIME:** MON AND WED 11-12:30  
**MEETING PLACE:** SSW 2.118

**INSTRUCTOR:** BETH GERLACH, PHD, LCSW  
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**TA:**

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**HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**  
(W- FULFILLS THE WRITING FLAG REQUIREMENT; REQUIRED BSW COURSE)

**I. Standardized Course Description**

This course explores the biopsychosocial and cultural functioning of human beings across the life span using an ecological-systems lens and major developmental theories as a framework to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation. Using the generalist social work lens, this course integrates content from other human behavior courses. The students will gain an understanding of what physical, mental, social and economic justice hazards can adversely impact an individual's growth and development during his or her lifetime. Frameworks incorporating an eco-systems/developmental perspective, including systems/ecological and psychosocial (life span development) frameworks, are used to conceptualize stages of human growth and development, with a primary focus on adolescence, early adulthood, the middle years, and the aged adult within an intergenerational family context. The impact of the family, social groups, organizations, communities, and society on individuals during these stages of the life span are also discussed. This course emphasizes empirically based research reflecting a risk and resilience perspective in making client assessments and recommending appropriate interventions. This contributes to a social worker's ability to understand and critically analyze the interactions among individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Students will be able to understand how personal values are reflected in socio-cultural contexts, such as culture, race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, and religion, and how they can influence human behavior. Increasing access to resources, reducing risks, and considering ethical dilemmas involved in dealing with human behavior are also considered.

**This course carries the Writing Flag.** Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise two assignments, and to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Course prerequisites include Social Work 310, 312, and either Psychology 304 (Child Psychology) or Child Development 313 (Child Development). Social Work 325 (Foundations of Social Justice) is also required

as part of this curriculum area and is taken concurrently with SW327.

## II. Standardized Course Objectives

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

- 1) Explain the unique perspective that social work has in viewing the relationship between the individual person and environment in comparison to other helping professions **(PB24)**;
- 2) Explain and apply basic principles of learning theories and the systems/ ecological and psychosocial frameworks and analyze individual, family, group, organizational, community, and societal dynamics from each of these perspectives **(PB24)**;
- 3) Describe biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual aspects of adolescent, early adult, middle adult, and older adult developmental states within the context of the broader environment **(PB24)**;
- 4) Describe the dynamics of social groups, organizations, communities, and societies, and the ways that they can impact individual development and behavior **(PB24)**;
- 5) Explain ways that ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and other factors contribute to human development and their implications for social work practice in assessment, intervention, and evaluation **(PB23)**;
- 6) Describe relevant research and identify and conceptualize additional research needs relating to human behavior and the social environment;
- 7) Apply information and theories related to human behavior and the social environment to life situations in a manner consistent with social work values and the promotion of social and economic justice **(PB24)**.
- 8) Use critical thinking skills in writing an academic literature review on a human development question of interest.
- 9) Explain and apply basic principles of learning theories and the systems/ ecological and psychosocial frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, interventions, and evaluation **(PB23)**.
- 10) Apply information and theories related to human behavior and the social environment to life situations in order to determine the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being **(PB24)**.

The School of Social Work has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952. In order to maintain our accreditation status, we engage in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE's Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Several required courses in our curriculum are part of this ongoing assessment, including this course. Below is a list of the specific Educational Policies (EP) and Practice Behaviors (PB) that are assessed in this course. The complete EPAS can be optioned from your Student Handbook.

### **E.P. 2.1.7 Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.**

**PB23** Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation.  
Objectives 5, 9

Assignment: Case Analyses and Case Presentations

**PB24** Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10

Assignment: Case Analyses and Case Presentations

### III. Teaching Methods

This course is designed to provide the student with a meaningful learning environment to acquire skills and knowledge in the area of human behavior in the social environment. The instructor believes in an active learning approach, an approach asserting that the learning process is one in which reciprocity between the instructor and students is a necessity. Teaching methods include a combination of lecture, group discussion, small group critique, case study analysis and readings. Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to each class period. Class instruction is designed to encourage student participation and input.

### IV. Required Readings

#### Textbooks:

Hutchison, E. D. (2011). *Dimensions of human behavior: Person and environment* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Sage Publication, Inc., CA.

Scales, T. L., & Wolfer, T. A. (2006). *Decision cases for generalist social work practice: Thinking like a social worker*. Thompson: Brooks/Cole, CA.

**Selected Readings:** Additional readings from other books and journal articles may be assigned. Any additional readings will be available on UT Blackboard.

### V. Course Requirements

Your grade for this course will be based upon 3 case study analyses, 2 exams, weekly in-class assignments and a group case presentation. Students are strongly encouraged to attend all class meetings. Participation is viewed as a necessity for learning through an exchange of information between students and also between instructor and students. Additionally, students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to review their individual progress in the class, ask questions regarding class content, and also discuss their goals and future directions in the social work profession.

1. **Case analyses (PB 23 and 24):** Students are required to complete 3 case analyses. The first two case analyses will be selected from assigned cases in the Scales & Wolfer text. The first two case analyses will provide an opportunity for revision prior to receiving a final grade. The final case analysis will require students to use an autobiographical experience to illustrate theories discussed in class. Each case analysis is worth 15 percent of the final semester grade. Case analyses should be double spaced, 12 pt font, 6-8 pages in length and must adhere to APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition style. **Case analyses are due on the date assigned in the syllabus** at the beginning of class. You may email your analysis to the instructor if you do not plan on attending class on the date the analysis is due. However, the analysis must be emailed by 11:00 am on the day of class. Further description of this assignment will be provided in class.

<b>Case analysis #1:</b>	<b>First Draft due 9/22</b>	<b>Final Draft due 10/15</b>
	Select from cases # 4 or # 8	
<b>Case analysis #2:</b>	<b>First Draft due 10/29</b>	<b>Final Draft due 11/12</b>
	Select from cases # 3 or # 5	
<b>Case analysis #3:</b>	<b>Due 12/5 by 12pm/Noon</b>	
	Autobiographical theory analysis	

- Case study revision (PB 23 and 24):** As required by the Writing Flag component of this course, students must submit a revised paper. Once the first case analysis has been turned in, the instructor will thoroughly review and critique the analysis. The grade for the analysis will be determined on the final draft of the paper. The second case analysis will undergo a peer review process prior to turning in a final draft. The grade for the analysis will also be determined from the final draft.
- Case analysis presentation (PB 23 and 24):** One group will be assigned to lead the case discussion for selected cases from the text. The group will present the ecomap for the case, their analysis and recommendations for the case. This assignment is intended to be an informal presentation. The group will lead a mock team meeting where classmates will contribute to further analysis of the case. Students must be present on the day of their presentation in order to receive credit. Further instructions will be given in class. **Presentations are due on the date assigned on the syllabus.**
- Exams (to assess PB 23 and 24) October 22rd and December 3rd:** There will be a mid-term exam and final exam covering the readings, class lectures, guest speakers and class videos. Exams are not cumulative. If you are unable to take an exam on the assigned date for any reason other than an emergency, you must notify the instructor at least one week in advance of the test date.
- In-class assignments:** There will be 12 in-class assignments. The in-class assignments may include short responses to assigned readings, case study critiques and peer review. The reading response questions will not be announced prior to class and will be given during the beginning ten minutes of class. Students will receive a completion grade of full credit (v) or no credit (NC). Students will have the option to drop 2 of the in-class assignments. There are no make-ups for missed in-class assignments nor will in-class assignments be taken by email. The student must be present in the class to receive full credit.

## VI. **Grading**

A. Case analyses (3 cases, 15% each)	45%
B. Mid-term exam	20%
C. Final exam	20%
D. Group case presentation	5%
E. In-class assignments	<u>10%</u>
TOTAL	100%

### Undergraduate Grading Scale

94.0 - 100 = A	74.0 – 76.999 = C
90.0 – 93.999 = A-	70.0 – 73.999 = C-
87.0 – 89.999 = B+	67.0 – 69.999 = D+
84.0 – 86.999 = B	64.0 – 66.999 = D
80.0 – 83.999 = B-	60.0 – 63.999 = D-
77.0-79.999 = C+	Below 60.0 = F

### VI. Class Policies

1. **Class Attendance.** Class attendance is expected every class period for the entire class period. Attendance will be noted each class. Any class material missed due to class absence is the students' sole responsibility.
2. **Class participation.** Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class, and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. As we learn about human behavior, it is important for future social workers to be both self-aware and conscious of group dynamics. Therefore, appropriate contribution means for some, to learn to speak up, add comments or voice questions. For others, it means being sensitive and allowing others to contribute.
3. **General assignment requirements.** All assignments must be typed in double spaced and have one inch margins. References/sources used in papers must be in APA format and be credible (No Wikipedia, etc.). If questions about the credibility of a reference arise, consult with the instructor. Specific instructions will be provided for each assignment. If students are unclear about how to best complete an assignment, please consult with the instructor prior to the due date.
4. **Assignment due dates.** Except under extremely unusual circumstances, assignments must be completed on the due date and turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. Late assignments will result in a deduction of **five points** for each day that the assignment is late.
5. **The University Of Texas Honor Code.** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.
6. **Professional Conduct in Class.** The instructor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor

should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

Professional conduct also means appropriate use of technology. No cell phone use/ipod/tablet or other devices are permitted during class. Computers may only be used for taking notes. Any inappropriate use of phones/computers during class for emailing/texting or internet usage is not permitted.

- 7. Policy on Social Media and Professional Communication.** Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image. Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including **any** information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in **any** way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

- 8. Classroom Civility.** A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social Work deals with complex and

controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues.

9. **Unanticipated Distress.** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the instructor. The instructor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students can contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at [www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/](http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/).
  
10. **Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty.** Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).
  
11. **Documented Disability Statement.** Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.
  
12. **Religious Holidays.** By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
  
13. **Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students.** Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

**Students may use email to schedule an in-person appointment with the instructor, inform the instructor of an absence or to ask a general question that can be answered briefly via email. Otherwise, students need to speak in person with the instructor.**

14. **Safety.** As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.
15. **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL).** If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.
16. **Emergency Evacuation Policy.** Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:
  - a. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
  - b. If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
  - c. In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
  - d. Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.



### VIII. Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Dates	Readings	Due
1	Class introduction	Wednesday 8/27	Syllabus	
2		Monday 9/1	Labor Day <b>No class</b>	
	Case analyses and Writing presentation	Wednesday 9/3	Scales & Wolfer chpts. 1 & 2 Writing handouts	
3	Aspects of human behavior	Monday 9/8	Hutchinson ch.1	
	Perspectives on human behavior	Wednesday 9/10	Hutchinson ch. 2	
4	Case Study exercise	Monday 9/15	Scales & Wolfer- Case #9	
	The biological/ psychological person	Wednesday 9/17	Hutchinson ch. 3 & 4	
5	The psychological person	Monday 9/22	Hutchinson ch. 4	<b>Case Study 1</b> (select from #4, #8,)
	The psychosocial person	Wednesday 9/24	Hutchinson ch. 5	
6	The psychosocial person, continued	Monday 9/29	Hutchinson ch. 5	
	The spiritual person	Wednesday 10/1	Hutchinson ch. 6	
7	The physical environment	Monday 10/6	Hutchinson ch.7	
	Culture	Wednesday 10/8	Hutchinson ch. 8	
8		Monday 10/13	Presentation Prep Day <b>No class meeting</b>	
	<b>Group Case Study Presentations</b>	Wednesday 10/15	Scales & Wolfer <b>Cases #10, #7</b>	<b>Case Study 1 – final revision due</b>
9	<b>Group Case Study Presentations</b>	Monday 10/20	Scales & Wolfer <b>Cases #6, #12</b> Mid-semester evaluations	
	Mid-term	Wednesday 10/22	<b>MID-TERM EXAM</b>	

10	Social Institutions	Monday 10/27	Hutchinson ch. 9	
	Families	Wednesday 10/29	Hutchinson ch. 10	<b>Case Study 2</b> (select from #3, #5)
11		Monday 11/3	<b>Peer Review</b> of Case Studies	
	Small Groups	Wednesday 11/5	Hutchinson ch. 11	
12	Family /Small groups activity	Monday 11/10	Review Hutchinson ch. 10 & 11	
	Formal organizations	Wednesday 11/12	Hutchinson ch. 12	<b>Case Study 2 – final revision due</b>
13	Communities Social movements	Monday 11/17	Hutchinson ch. 13 & 14	
	Social movements and Group Case Study Presentation	Wednesday 11/19	Hutchinson ch. 14 Scales & Wolfer Case #1	
14	Group Case Study Presentations	Monday 11/24	Scales & Wolfer Cases #2, #11	
		Wednesday 11/26	No class THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	
15	Course wrap-up	Monday 12/1	Closing thoughts, review Course evaluations	
	Final Exam	Wednesday 12/3	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	
		Friday 12/ 5	<b>Case Study 3 - Autobiographical Theory Paper Due</b> <b>Paper may be turned in any time the last week of class, but no later than Friday 12/5 by 12:00pm</b>	