

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

<b>Course Number:</b>	SW 393R30	<b>Instructor's Name:</b>	Jack Nowicki, LCSW
<b>Unique Number:</b>	62090	<b>Office Number:</b>	SWB 3.104-A
<b>Semester:</b>	Fall, 2011	<b>Office Phone:</b>	Nowicki: 659-1465 Nowicki: 892-6888 (LM)
		<b>E - Mail</b>	jnowickisfbt@gmail.com
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b>	M 5:30-8:30 @ Rm 2.132	<b>Office Hours:</b>	Monday @ 5 or by appt.

**SOLUTION FOCUSED BRIEF THERAPY (SFBT)**

**I. Standardized Course Description**

This course is designed as a seminar to provide students with a basic understanding in solution-focused brief therapy. The content will include the history of the SFBT approach within the framework of systems and cognitive approaches, research related to the approach with different populations, as well as heavy emphasis on skill development and practice.

**II. Standardized Course Objectives**

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

1. Compare strengths-based and deficit-based approaches to working with clients, including understanding the impact of the ecological and social environments in which diverse families live.
2. Demonstrate understanding of similarities and differences among strengths-based theories and critically assess their theoretical perspectives, value bases, and the role of gender in family dynamics.
3. Integrate and demonstrate the application of procedures, techniques, and methods of SBFT that reflect best practices for problem areas or helping diverse client groups.
4. Understand and integrate research information on the effectiveness of SBFT within an evidence-based framework.
5. Understand and integrate research information of effectiveness of empirically based practice for SBFT on problems frequently seen in practice such as: chemical dependency, child maltreatment, and crisis intervention with youth and families.
6. Demonstrate skill in applying knowledge of the impact of policy and social justice issues to interventions with families of diverse cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, family structure, national origin, ability, or other manifestation of diversity.
7. Demonstrate skill in applying knowledge concerning multi-level policies and their impact on SBFT interventions with families of diverse culture, socioeconomic background, race, sexual orientation, and ability.
8. Demonstrate skill in using strengths-based theory to assess family problems in the context of the larger community and target systems within and outside the family for change.

**III. Teaching Methods**

This class provides opportunities for both theory and skill development. SBFT will be presented through a combination of lectures, demonstrations of the practice interventions, experiential skill-building exercises, and class discussions integrating the course readings, and an essay exam testing students' knowledge and ability to communicate.

#### **IV. Safety Policy**

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 practice related to agency and/or community safety. Students should also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.

#### **V. Required Text**

- Greene, G. & Lee, M. (2011) *Solution-oriented social work practice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

#### **Required Online Readings:**

- All additional readings are available on **Blackboard**.

#### **VI. Course Requirements**

The grade for the course will be based on the student's ability to demonstrate knowledge and methods from the evidenced-based models of family therapy and effective interventions for solving family problems. Class attendance, participation, and promptness in completing assignments are considered when assigning the grade. There are three major assignments. This is a professional practice class and each student is expected to demonstrate behavior that meets the criteria of the National Association of Social Workers code of ethics and meets the standards for professional practice of social work.

#### **VII. Class Policies**

Students are expected to read the assigned readings (some students use study groups), attend each class meeting, contribute to class discussions, and participate in skill-building exercises. Failure to attend class regularly (missing more than two 2 class sessions) may result in a lower grade for the course, at the instructor's discretion. As soon as students know that they will not be able to attend class, they should e-mail or call the instructor. See section VIII.4 for grading details.

No late assignments will be accepted except in extreme emergencies and then only with permission of the instructor. If students are in an emergency situation they contact the instructor and negotiate a new due date. All late assignments will be assessed point penalties at a rate of 5 points a day.

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>).

The University of Texas at Austin provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY. Please notify the professor of any special accommodations that you may need prior to the end of the second week of class.

#### **VIII. Course Assignments**

1. **Essay Exam: (30% of your grade):** There will be an essay exam based on the readings, lectures, and discussions. The exam will be given as scheduled on the course outline. Make-up exams are not given unless there are unusual extenuating circumstances.

A note about essay exams: My intent in giving essay exams is for students to learn to manage information (readings, class discussion, etc.), improve their ability to communicate, and to test students' application of knowledge and skills in practical situations. A goal of graduate education is to integrate and apply your education, and essay exams are a practice in which this can occur. As practice for this, we often will engage in discussion groups related to the readings at the beginning of class. Exams also challenge and encourage students to the high standards of a graduate education: students have a chance to demonstrate their knowledge of family therapy and explain their individual understanding by use of examples, comparisons, and critiques.

2. **Group Demonstration of SFBT Techniques (40% of your grade):** The class will divide into groups for preparation and presentation of experiential practices from SFBT. The group's purpose is to experientially model one or a few specific intervention practices of SFBT in a client(s)/counselor format. The modeling may be "live" or captured on video. Members of the group will act as producers, writers, researchers, and actors. If there is a live production, the group will be available to discuss and answer questions about their demonstration. If the demo is on video, the group may choose to stop, discuss, start their demonstration. In addition, the group will develop and provide a written protocol for using the intervention practice, developed like a DTP ("a means of publishing reports, advertising, etc, to typeset quality using a desktop computer"<sup>1</sup>) and shared with the class during or after the presentation. Possible intervention topics include miracle questions, exploring exceptions, goal setting, scaling, or using reflecting teams. Of course, the demos will be presented on the dates the interventions correspond to on the class schedule.

As the group progresses in developing their demonstration, they must schedule at least one planning session with the instructor. The group is responsible for scheduling this meeting. (I suggest the group meet with me early in the development process.) All group members will be assigned the same grade for their presentation, so it should reflect equal responsibility on all members' parts. (If all members of the group are not sharing the burden of the work, please notify the instructor.)

3. **Class Participation (30% of your grade):** This course is practice related. Each class includes "Group Discussion Activities" and/or "Skill-building Exercises" as opportunities for students to share what they are learning or practice the attendant skills. There are opportunities for students to use their own family history and life experiences in these activities and exercises; therefore, we will discuss class personal sharing and make agreements about keeping our stories confidential if necessary.

Students are graded on the following aspects of participation: active class involvement and discussion, demonstrating an understanding of family therapy techniques, and evidence of having read the readings. Class involvement is graded based on the student's self-evaluation and the instructor's observation of class participation. The class participation grade is not only determined by the quantity of participation behaviors (utterances, arm waving, etc) but also on the quality of the participation; i.e. having salient contributions, reflecting

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<sup>1</sup> Definition retrieved online from Dictionary.com at <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/desktop+publishing>

preparation and knowledge of the material, and raising thought-provoking and/or salient contributions.

### Course Grades

A note on Grading: “I do not *give* grades; I record students’ *achievements!* Students *earn* grades.”<sup>2</sup> From my vantage point, what matters is *learning*. In the study of SFBT, there is no way students can learn everything about this approach in 13 weeks. My goal is to push students’ knowledge base beyond the level they brought into the class (unusually high grades lead me to think I am not pushing hard enough, just as low grades indicate that I am pushing too hard). My goal is for the truly industrious and motivated students to stand out and the average students to recognize that they get out of the class what they put into it. Finally, grades, I think, should be viewed as a measure of understanding, integrating, and applying the course materials. I start the semester imagining that the whole class are “B” students and it is up to students to earn their way out of that grade.

Definitions	Grading scale:
<u>Superior work:</u> The assignment significantly exceeds expectations listed in the syllabus. Student does more than is required in the assignment and demonstrates a high level of in-depth critical thinking and analysis (i.e., coherence and integration of ideas).	90-100=A
<u>Good Work:</u> The assignment meets <u>all</u> the requirements and demonstrates evidence of in-depth critical thinking and analysis.	80-89=B
<u>Average Work:</u> The assignment meets the requirements or has <u>minor</u> gaps but lacks evidence of in-depth critical thinking and analysis	70-79=C
<u>Poor Work:</u> The assignment has important gaps, both in terms of not meeting the requirements and lacking in-depth critical thinking and analysis.	60-69=D Below 60=F

The final course grade will be calculated as follows:	Points
Essay Exam	30
Group Demonstration	40
Class Participation	<u>30</u>
	100

## VIII. Course Schedule

<sup>2</sup> Miller, S. (2000) Thoughts about lessons and grades. Sue Miller’s Homepage. Retrieved online August 20, 2010 from <http://academics.hamilton.edu/biology/smiller/lessonsgrades.html>

<b>(1) August 29</b>		<b>Course Overview and Introductions</b>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Class introductions</li> <li>2) Course (syllabus) review; class structure, assignments, readings, etc.</li> <li>3) Communications: Use of Blackboard, printed handouts, emails, "office hours", etc.</li> <li>4) Open frame for questions and discussion.</li> </ul>	
<b>(2) September 5</b>		<b>Labor Day Holiday</b>	
<b>(3) September 12</b>		<b>Systems Theory &amp; Clients' Theories of Change</b>	
Text		Greene & Lee (2011): Introduction; Ch 1-2	[45]
Readings		De Jong & Berg (2008): Preface, Ch 1	[17]
Recommended		Duncan, B., Miller, S., Sparks, J., et.al. (2004) The client's theory of change. In Duncan, B., Miller, S., Sparks, J., <i>The heroic client</i> . San Francisco: Jossey-Bass	[27]
		Hubble, M., Duncan, B., & Miller, S. (1999) Learning and honoring the client's theory: Practical guidelines. In Hubble, M., Duncan, B., & Miller, S., <i>The heart &amp; soul of change: What works in therapy</i> . Washington, DC: The American Psychological Assn., pp 119 - 146	
		➔ <i>Group Discussion Activity or Skill-Building Exercise</i>	
<b>(4) September 19</b>		<b>SFBT "101" ~ If it ain't broke, don't fix it.</b>	
Texts		Greene & Lee (2011): Ch 3	[11]
Readings		De Jong & Berg (2008): Ch 2,3	[39]
		O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis (1989) The evolution of psychotherapy: From explanations and problems to solutions. <i>In search of solutions</i> , Needham Hts. MA: Allyn & Bacon, pp 10-25.	[15]
		Blundo, R. (2006) Shifting our habits of mind: Learning to practice from a strengths perspective. In, Saleebey, D., <i>The strengths perspective in social work practice, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.</i> New York: Allyn & Bacon, pp 25 - 44	[19]
		Walter, J. & Peller, J. (1992) Assumptions of a solution-focused approach. In <i>Becoming solution-focused in brief therapy</i> . New York: Brunner/Mazel, Ch 2	[25]
		Trepper, T., McCollum, E., DeJong, P, et.al. (2008) Solution focused therapy treatment manual for working with individuals. SFBTA Research Committee. Retrieved online December 2010 from <a href="http://www.sfbta.org/researchDownloads.html">http://www.sfbta.org/researchDownloads.html</a>	[15]
		➔ <i>Group Discussion Activity or Skill-Building Exercise</i>	
<b>(5) September 26</b>		<b>Client-centered Work ~ Assessment of Strengths &amp; Resources</b>	
Texts		Greene & Lee (2011): Ch 4	[12]
Readings		De Jong & Berg (2007): Ch 4	[23]
		Berg (1994) <i>Family based services</i> . New York: Norton, Ch 2-3	[33]
		Murphy & Duncan, (2007) Assessment 1: Recruiting the heroic client, in <i>Brief intervention for school problems, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.</i> , New York: Guilford	[29]
		Dermer, Hemesath, & Russell, (1998) A feminist critique of SF therapy. <i>American Journal of Family Therapy</i> , pps. 239-249	[10]
		➔ <i>Group Discussion Activity or Skill-Building Exercise</i>	
<b>(6) October 3</b>		<b>The Miracle Question &amp; Use of Language</b>	

Texts	Greene & Lee (2011): Ch 5 [17] De Jong & Berg (2008): Ch 5 [26]
Readings	Baker, M. & Steiner, J. (1996) Solution-focused social work: Meta-messages to students in higher education opportunity programs. In Gualt, Freeman, et.al. <i>Multicultural issues in social work</i> . Washington, DC: NASW Press, pp 300-308 [8] Berg, I.K. (1994) Useful questions and other interviewing techniques. <i>Family based services: A solution-focused approach</i> . New York: W.W.Norton, Ch 6 [26] Berg, I.K., & Dolan, Y. (2001) What dreams may come: stories of miracles and solution building. <i>Tales of solutions</i> . New York: Norton, Ch 2 [33] Corey, G., Schneider-Corey, M., & Callanan, P. (2011) Multicultural perspectives and diversity issues. <i>Issues and ethics in the helping professions</i> . Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Ch 4 [43]
→ Group Discussion Activity, Skill-Building Exercise, or Group Demonstration	

<b>(7) October 10</b>	<b>Exceptions &amp; Building on Client Strengths &amp; Resources</b>
Texts	De Jong & Berg (2008): Ch 6 [23]
Readings	Berg, I.K., & Dolan, Y. (2001) Sorting the wheat from the chaff: Finding exceptions. <i>Tales of solutions</i> . New York: Norton, Ch 3 [23]
→ Group Discussion Activity, Skill-Building Exercise, or Group Demonstration	

<b>(8) October 17</b>	<b>Feedback and Action Planning: Goaling</b>
Texts	Greene & Lee (2011): Ch 6-7 [55]
Readings	Walter & Peller (1992) Ch 4: Well defined goals. [10] Berg & Dolan (2001) "Wow. How did you do that?" <i>Tales of solutions: A collection of hope-inspiring stories</i> . New York: W.W.Norton, Ch 5: [16] Berg & Dolan (2001) The not-knowing posture: Stories about leading from behind. Ch 6: [24]
→ Group Discussion Activity, Skill-Building Exercise, or Group Demonstration	

<b>(9) October 24</b>	<b>Scaling</b>
Texts	Greene & Lee (2011): Ch 9 [13]
Readings	Franklin, Corcoran, Nowicki, et.al. (1997) Using self-anchored scales to measure outcomes in SF therapy. <i>Journal of Systemic Therapies</i> [17] Berg (1994) Scaling questions. <i>Family based services</i> . New York: Norton, [Ch 6] pps. 102-111 [9]
→ Group Discussion Activity, Skill-Building Exercise, or Group Demonstration	

<b>(10) October 31</b>	<b>Essay Exam &amp; Later SFBT Sessions</b>
Exam Preparation	Bring a blue book for your essay exam
Texts	Greene & Lee (2011): Ch 9 (same as last week) [13]
Readings	Walter & Peller (1992) Ch 9: What do we do next? [18] Zimmerman, J. & Dickerson, V. (1996) Things are closer than they seem. <i>If problems talked: Narrative therapy in action</i> . New York: Guilford, Ch 5 [22]
→ Possible Skill-Building Exercise (depending on time)	

<b>(11) November 7</b>	<b>Special Populations</b>
Readings	Diller, J. (2011) What it means to be culturally competent. <i>Cultural diversity: A</i>

	<p><i>primer for the human services</i>. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole. Ch 2 [24] George, E, Iveson, C., &amp; Ratner, H. (1999) Smoke gets in your eyes: A case of depression. <i>Problem to solution: Brief therapy with individuals and families</i>. London: BT Press. Ch 3 [9] Sahily de Castro, (2008) Solution-focused therapy for families coping with suicide. <i>Journal of Marital and Family Therapy</i>. Retrieved online November 2008 from <a href="http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3658/is_200801/ai_n24392892/print?tag=artBody;col1">http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3658/is_200801/ai_n24392892/print?tag=artBody;col1</a> [13] Zamarripa, M. (2009) Solution-focused therapy in the south Texas borderlands. <i>Journal of systemic therapies</i>. 28:4, pp 1-11 [10]</p> <p>➔ <i>Group Discussion Activity or Skill-Building Exercise</i></p>
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<b>(12) November 14</b>	<b><i>Loose Ends 2: SF Groups, Reluctant Clients, Reflecting Teams</i></b>
Readings	<p>Chang, J. (2010) The reflecting team: a training method for family counselors. <i>The Family Journal</i> (18)36-44 [8] Metcalf, L. (1998) Changing directions in group therapy. <i>Solution-focused group therapy</i>. New York: Free Press, Ch 1 [16] Selekman, M. (1999) The solution-oriented parenting group revisited. <i>Journal of Systemic Therapies</i> (18)1, pp 5-19 [14] Tohn &amp; Oshlag (1996) SF therapy with mandated clients. In Miller, Hubble, &amp; Duncan, <i>Handbook of solution-focused brief therapy</i>. San Francisco: Josey Bass Publishers. Ch. 5 [31]</p>
Recommended	<p>Becvar, R. &amp; Canfield, B. (1997) Second-order cybernetics/constructivism, social constructionism, and group work. <i>Group work: Cybernetic, constructivist, &amp; social constructionist perspectives</i>. Denver, CO: Love Publishing, Ch 6 [18]</p> <p>➔ <i>Group Discussion Activity, Skill-Building Exercise, or Group Demonstration</i></p>

<b>(13) November 21</b>	<b><i>Outcomes</i></b>
Readings	<p>Kim, J., Smock, S., Trepper, T, et.al. (2010) Is solution-focused brief therapy evidence-based? <i>Families in Society</i> (91)3, pps 1-7 [6] Kim, J. (2008). Examining the effectiveness of solution-focused brief therapy: A meta-analysis. <i>Research on Social Work Practice</i>,(18)2, pp. 107-116. [9] Gingrich &amp; Eisenhart, (2000) SFBT: A review of the outcome research. <i>Family Process</i>, 20:4, pps. 477-496 [18]</p>
Review	<p>Trepper, T., McCollum, E., DeJong, P, et.al. (2008) Solution focused therapy treatment manual for working with individuals. Research Committee of the SFBTA. Retrieved online December 2010 from <a href="http://www.sfbta.org/researchDownloads.html">http://www.sfbta.org/researchDownloads.html</a> [15]</p> <p>➔ <i>Group Discussion Activity or Skill-Building Exercise</i></p>

<b>(14) November 28</b>	<b><i>Last Class ~ Evaluations</i></b>
	<p>Reflections Evaluations</p>