I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course introduces students to the military culture and lifestyle, with a focus on stressors and challenges from a family perspective. Special emphasis is placed on family studies and literature emerging from Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) documenting the impact of sustained, overseas efforts on military family functioning. The effects of repeated, extended separation, as well as active duty and veterans’ physical, psychological, and cognitive injury, are examined through the lens of family stress theory. Military-specific stressors are viewed from a strengths-based perspective, underscoring how family members’ internal and external resources may moderate or mediate the effects of deployment-related separation, trauma, or loss. Students will examine the policies, programs, and services that contribute to military and veterans’ family health and well-being and will be introduced to direct practice interventions that are being used with service members, veterans, and their families. Awareness-building assignments are used to enable students to reconcile personal and professional values and principles with the values and principles embedded within the military culture. Students are provided with an historical overview of the critical role that social workers play in serving the military and veteran population. Students are encouraged to consider how the social work profession’s flexible skill-set may be particularly beneficial in responding to the complex and evolving needs of today’s military and veterans’ families.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate awareness and understanding of both the unique challenges and opportunities inherent to the military lifestyle.
2. Demonstrate core, foundational knowledge of the military and veteran systems, institutional structures, programs, and resources in order to optimally prepare students for roles as professional social workers within a military and veteran environment.

3. Recognize, and build on, the unique strengths, characteristics, internal resources, and external resources of military and veteran families.

4. Critically examine relevant scholarly literature in order to engage in informed, evidence-based practice and policy development with, and on behalf of, active duty military and veteran families.

5. Critically analyze policy decisions that have played influential roles in the health and well being of military and veteran families across time and historical context.

6. Articulate family stress theory as a framework for understanding, and responding to, military and veteran families’ psychological health and functioning in the context of deployment- and OPTEMPO (operational tempo as defined by time away from home)-related stress, separation, injury, and loss.

7. Demonstrate foundational knowledge of OIF/OEF engendered issues affecting active duty military service members, veterans, and their families, including post-traumatic stress responses, depression, substance use, traumatic brain injury (TBI), physical injury, chronic pain or disability, suicide risk, and/or traumatic death.

8. Articulate the social worker’s unique role and skill-set in advancing practice and policy to promote the long-term needs and interests of military and veteran families across time, service status, and political landscape.

9. Consider the short- and long-term implications for veterans and their families who no longer have access to military resources and are embedded in civilian communities.

10. Critically examine the ethical tensions or conflicts inherent to advancing social work practice and policy within a system and culture that prioritizes mission and combat readiness.

11. Consider the level of diversity (racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender, religious, branch of service, etc) within the military community and the importance of facilitating culturally competent practice and policy.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Text (All required readings are on the course BlackBoard, CUA library, or in the following texts.)


Recommended Text

B. Course Assignments

The assignments for this course consist of active class participation, an exercise in personal reflection, a formal group presentation to peers, and a scholarly paper. See attached outline for details of the assignments.

C. Grading Policy

Grades for the course are based on the University grading system. The grade is based on content (substance, attention to assignment, attention to page limit), style (scholarly writing style, APA edition 6, format), and timely submission (assignments submitted later than the assigned or agreed upon date will be downgraded). See directions in course assignment above and in scholarly expectations below for further clarification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment #1</th>
<th>Military Social Work: Personal Reflection</th>
<th>Due Class #4</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
<td>Military, Veteran, or Civilian Resource Description (Group Activity)</td>
<td>Due Class #11</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #3</td>
<td>Military, Veteran, or Civilian Resource Group Presentation</td>
<td>Class #11 &amp; 12</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #4</td>
<td>Policy or Practice Issue Paper</td>
<td>Due Class #14</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Course and Instructor Evaluation

NCSSS requires written evaluations of doctoral level courses, and students will receive an evaluation form during the last class. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and welcome. Students and instructor are mutually responsible for ongoing, shared, verbal evaluation of the course in order to meet the learning needs of the students.
IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A. Scholastic Expectations

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook (available on the NCSSS web page) for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA (v. 6) format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading. It is expected that all assignments will be submitted on the due date. **Failure to submit work on time will result in a lowered grade, unless there has been an alternative arrangement with the professor prior to the due date of the assignment.**

**Additional Behavioral Requirements:** Students are expected to maintain accepted standards of professional conduct and personal integrity in the classroom. Students should:

- Attend all classes and contribute constructively to the classroom culture
- Recognize and avoid behavior that jeopardizes the learning/teaching environment of other students or the instructor
- Demonstrate competence in planning academic activities and in following through on those plans
- Reasonably respond to and respect others’ reactions to one’s comments or actions in the classroom
- Use an appropriate level of class time and instructor’s time and attention in and out of class
- Behave in a manner that is consistent with the ethical principles of the social work profession.

B. Academic Honesty

Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and appropriate Program Handbooks.

C. Accommodations

Students with physical, learning, psychological, or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.
Class Schedule

Class | Topics and Readings
--- | ---

Part I: THE MILITARY CULTURE AND SYSTEM: OVERVIEW OF MILITARY VALUES, PRINCIPLES, AND BASIC STRUCTURES

Class 1 Introduction to course; recognizing the military as a culture

Class 2 Military system: Rank, service, status; lifestyle, values, customs, and diversity


Class 3 Role of the social worker in advancing the needs and interests of military families; practice and policy perspectives


**Part II: RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND POLICY ON BEHALF OF MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES**

**Class 4** Examining literature relating to military and veterans’ families, military-specific stressors, and family risk/resilience


**Assignment # 1: Personal Reflection Due**

**Class 5**

*Introduction of family stress theory as a lens for practicing military and veterans’ families social work; Double ABCX Model of Family Behavior*


**Class 6**

*Examining policy decisions and implications for military and veteran family outcomes; current budget cuts and the potential impact on military and veteran families; quality assurance and accreditation within the DoD and VA systems.*


**Part III: RESPONDING TO MILITARY AND VETERANS’ FAMILIES AFFECTED BY PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURY**

**Class 7**

*Physical injury: Implications for family members*


Class 8  
**Psychological injury: Implications for family members; ambiguous loss; moral injury**

Blaisure et al. (2012). The effects of war on service members. Chapter 8.


Class 9  
**Cognitive injury: Implications for family members; ambiguous loss**


Class 10  Additional Issues: Family coping in the face of service member’s injury-related death; increased suicide in the military; military sexual trauma


Class 11  Military family programs and services; installation and community-based resources


**Assignment 2: Overview of military/veteran program/service due class 11; Also due Assignment 3: Presentations of Assignment 2**

Class 12  Military family programs and services; installation and community-based resources (cont’d)


**Presentations of Assignment 2 (cont’d)**
Part IV:  LOOKING AHEAD:  ANTICIPATING THE LONG-TERM NEEDS OF MILITARY AND VETERANS’ FAMILIES

Class 13  The expanding role of the Veterans Affairs (VA) social worker in responding to the ongoing needs and interests of military families across the lifespan; compassion fatigue and professional resilience


Class 14  Building bridges: The importance of military, VA, and civilian partnerships in being fully responsive to military and veteran families; the value of the collaborative social worker


**Final Assignment #4 due:  Policy or Practice Issue Paper**