I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course examines selected contemporary social and behavioral science theories that seek to explain and predict the nature of human development and human behavior within micro, mezzo, and macro environments. The positivist paradigm that guided knowledge development of the Classical Social and Behavioral Theories in SSS 930 will be expanded to include the post-positivist paradigms that facilitated the development of contemporary frameworks for practice, policy, and research.

The purpose of the course is to develop critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate social and behavioral theories that are applied to modern-day issues of importance in professional social work. Grounded in scholarly literature, class presentations, and class discussions, this course challenges student to examine each theory’s suitability for knowledge development and scholarly research with a population or problem of interest to professional social work practice.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

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

1. Demonstrate increased knowledge of selected contemporary social and behavioral sciences theories and concepts.
2. Identify the underlying philosophical paradigm of a theory
3. Analyze and evaluate a theory using specific criteria for critical analysis
4. Demonstrate conceptual thinking skills
5. Identify personal values and biases in selecting theories for practice and research
6. Apply selected theories to social work problems, challenges, issues, and needs.
III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts


B. Recommended Texts


C. Other Recommended Resources and Media

D. Course Assignments

The assignments for this course consist of a scholarly comparison of two theories, a scholarly application of a theory to a problem/issue/challenge/need, formal class presentations, weekly notes, and active class participation. See the attached outlines for the scholarly papers, class presentation, and weekly assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment 1</th>
<th>Scholarly comparison of two theories</th>
<th>Due Date: March 2, 2010</th>
<th>35%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Scholarly application of a theory to a problem/issue/need/challenge and a unit of attention</td>
<td>Due Date: April 27, 2010</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>Formal class presentations to guide class discussion</td>
<td>Due Date: As assigned</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 4</td>
<td>Written questions and comments on the readings; identification of the ontology and epistemology of the theory</td>
<td>Due Date: Weekly</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 5</td>
<td>Class attendance and active participation</td>
<td>Due Date: Weekly</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
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E. Grading Policy

Grades for the course are based on the University grading system. Grades for the scholarly papers are based on content (adequacy of the theoretical literature review, understanding of the theories, evidence of critical thinking, and application of the theory to the selected problem for assignment two), presentation (scholarly writing, APA 6th edition formatting), and meeting due dates. Formal class presentations are to be clear, cogent, and robust. Weekly questions and comments are to further your own and your classmates understanding of the theory.

F. Preparation, Attendance, and Participation

Students are required to attend classes and are expected to participate meaningfully in class discussion/exercises. Participation is defined as reading and reflecting upon the required readings prior to class in order to understand the context of the discussion and to speak informatively on the educational topic.

The class participation grade will be determined by the instructor’s perception of the student’s preparation for and contributions to class discussion/activities. Different students will make different kinds of contributions. Some will have an easy time with spontaneous interactions while others will be more comfortable making planned statements about key ideas from the readings or other sources. Both types of contributions are valued.

G. Course and Instructor Evaluation

The NCSSS doctoral program requires evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, an evaluation form will be distributed in
class. Results will not be given to the instructor until grades are submitted. Additional informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements and the appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements (available on the NCSSS web page), including scholastic and behavioral requirements.

A. Scholastic Expectations
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 format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

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.
There is nothing so practical as a good theory. Kurt Lewin
There is no theory that is not beset with problems. Karl Popper

Class Schedule

Unit one: Knowledge development; the course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to the course:</strong> What are the differences between a theory, perspective, model, and paradigm? What are the crucial elements of a theory from a social work perspective?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required reading**


**Recommended Reading**


2 Knowledge building: Philosophical and empirical paradigms of inquiry or many ways of knowing
What is scientific knowledge?
What is constructivist knowledge?
Revisiting ontology, epistemology, and methodology

Required Reading:


Recommended Readings


Unit Two
Intrapersonal and interpersonal factors influencing human behavior and human development

3 Contemporary Ego Psychology and Psychosocial Theory
What are internal and external forces impacting on mental and emotional development? Examining the impact of dynamic, social, and cultural forces on internal development

Required Readings


**Recommended Readings (Background on Drive and Structural Theories)**


**Theories of Object Relations & Self-Psychology**

What is the role of interpersonal relationships in understanding human behavior? Examining processes for individuals to become independent, cohesive persons

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**5 Attachment Theory & Relational Theory**

What are developmental processes that explain human behavior?

What are the connections between intra-psychic and interpersonal dynamics within situational, social, and historical contexts?

Examining processes whereby individuals become independent, cohesive persons

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**

What influence does religion and spirituality have on human behavior? Examining the internal and external forces that expand human consciousness and moral development.

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Unit Three  
Learning processes and developmental factors influencing human behavior and human development

7  
**Behavior Theory and Social Learning Theory**  
How do human actions and emotions develop, how are they sustained, how are they extinguished? Examining observable behavior and learned behavior.

**Required Readings**  


**Recommended Readings**  


8 Cognitive Theory & Cognitive Development; Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development & the Feminist Critique of Kohlberg
What is the impact of conscious thinking on human behavior and emotional experiences? Examining the thought processes that take place between the occurrence of a stimulus and the human response. Examining cognitive, moral, and contemporary development models.

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


**Unit Four**

**Interactional and situational factors influencing human behavior**

**9 Role Theory & Labeling Theory**
What are the ways in which expectations of others and social forces guide behavior? Examining the development of the self. Examining deviance as social and cultural processes.

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**

**10 Family Theory & Family Development**
What is the role of the family in understanding human behavior? Examining family roles, generational ties, and family structure.
Required Readings


Recommended Readings


11 Group Theory
What is the role of the social group in understanding human behavior? Examining human behavior in the context of the social psychological environment. Considering how groups influence individual, organizational, and community issues and needs.
Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Unit Five
Structural and social dynamic factors influencing human behavior

12 Conflict Theory
What is the role of the economy, interest groups, and authority in understanding human behavior? Examining conflict, power, domination, and inequality as both an objective material circumstance and
subjectively experienced situation. How does the dominant culture impact well-being, adaptation, and change?

**Required Readings**

**Recommended Readings**


13 **Systems Theory**
What is the role of the environment in understanding human behavior? Using a holistic and contextual view of the person-in-situation and social functioning. Examining linear and non-linearity dynamics in systems.

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Reading**


14 Course review and synthesis
What is a theory supposed to do?
Summarizing the dynamic properties of theories for social work scholarship and research

Required Readings

Recommended Readings


Class Presentation Outline

Introduction
The formal class presentation is an examination of a theory that is used to guide contemporary social work practice. The goal of the presentation is to provide a framework for lively discussion that aids students in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of a theory for knowledge development and scholarly research.

Directions
Develop a synopsis of the course topic for class distribution based on the required readings and additional scholarly literature not found on the syllabus, which analyzes and synthesizes the theory according to the following outline. Be prepared to present your outline to the class, which should take no longer than one hour, and to lead a class discussion of the theory.

Presentation Outline
Additional sections may be added by the student when they bring depth and richness to the presentation and help stimulate critical thinking about the theory.

Introduction
Discuss the basic premise of the theory and its underlying assumptions about human behavior.

Background
Discuss the development of the theory by examining its
- origins and historical context
- principle proponents and their seminal scholarship
- social work scholars who are building on the original theory
- view of human nature

Philosophical Base
Discuss the knowledge base of the theory including its
- ontology
- epistemology
- methodology

The Theory
Discuss how the theory describes
- the nature of normal development and normal change
- the origins or nature of problems/challenges/issues/needs
- the key concepts that explain human behavior or social functioning
- the key concepts that guide change
- the goal of change or intervention
- its evidence of empirical support

Variant Forms and Contemporary Issues
Discuss different pathways derived from the theory and modern topics including
- perspectives, models, or paradigms drawn from the theory
• contemporary questions and debates
• issues of gender and race
• issues of power and oppression

**Congruence with Social Work Practice**
Discuss the strengths and limitation of the theory in relation to
• the mission, values, and ethics of professional social work
• the person-in-environment perspective
• the strengths perspective
• the bio-psycho-social-spiritual nature of well-being
• the impact of social, cultural, and economic forces
• differential needs of varying cultures, ethnicities, races, genders, and sexual orientation
Scholarly Paper Assignments

Students are required to submit two scholarly papers to fulfill requirements for the course. Through a robust review of the literature in social work and related disciplines, the papers will analyze and synthesize theoretical and empirical literature.

The first paper compares and contrasts two theories selected from two separate units in the syllabus. The objective is to deepen knowledge and expand understanding of the theories.

In the second paper, the student selects one of these two theories and subjects it to a critical analysis of its applicability to a specific psychosocial issue for a specific population. The objective is to increase knowledge of the theoretical and empirical literature on the population and problem/issue/challenge/need related to the student’s area of interest.

The *Doctoral Program Handbook* defines a scholarly paper as one that is a minimum of 15 pages with a reference list that is equal to or greater in number than the number of pages in the paper. If a paper is 25 pages, it must have a minimum of 25 references.

The maximum page limit for the first scholarly paper is 15 pages, excluding references. The maximum page limit for the second scholarly paper is 15 pages, excluding references.
Comparison of Two Theories  
Paper #1

Introduction  
This paper examines a contemporary theory influencing social work scholarship and research. The objective is to deepen understanding of the explanatory and change functions of the theory and to critique its relevance for social work practice. The paper is to go beyond the class presentations and class readings to include a robust review of the literature in social work and related disciplines that elucidates the theoretical and empirical nature of these theories.

Directions  
Review the social work and related professional literature on two theories from different units covered in the course. Critique the theory on the following dimensions.

Introduction  
Discuss the basic premise of the theory and its underlying assumptions about human behavior. Discuss the focus of the theory and its applicability to individuals, families, organizations and communities.

Background  
Discuss the development of the theory by examining its
- origins and historical context
- principle proponents and their seminal scholarship
- social work scholars who are building on the original theory
- view of human nature

Philosophical Base  
Discuss the knowledge base of the theory including its
- ontology
- epistemology
- methodology

The Theory  
Discuss how the theory describes
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Discuss different pathways derived from the theory and modern topics including
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**Congruence with Social Work Practice**
Discuss the strengths and limitation of the theory in relation to
- the mission, values, and ethics of professional social work
- the person-in-environment perspective
- the strengths perspective
- the bio-psycho-social-spiritual nature of well-being
- the impact of social, cultural, and economic forces
- differential needs of varying cultures, ethnicities, races, genders, and sexual orientation
Application of a Theory to a Psychosocial Issue
Paper #2

Introduction
This paper takes one of the two theories examined in the previous assignment and ties it to your professional area of interest. The objective of the paper is to critically analyze the suitability of the theory for application to a specific psychosocial issue with a specific population. The task is to integrate a discussion of the theoretical literature with a review of the empirical literature on the problem/issue/challenge/need and the population.

Directions
Review the literature in social work and related disciplines on a problem/issue/challenge/need. Identify a unit of attention or population affected by this topic. Apply one theory to the problem and population in the following manner.

Discuss the nature and scope of the problem/issue/challenge/need.
- Present the classical and contemporary literature in social work and related fields that elucidates the condition.
- Provide data on the extent or prevalence of the problem.

Discuss the unit of attention or population that is affected by the problem.
- Explain the impact of the problem on this population.
- Provide data on the extent or prevalence of the population affected by the problem.

Analyze the capacity of the theory to explain the nature of the problem and bring about change for the client.
- How does the theory explain this problem for this population?
- How does the theory explain the nature of change and guide intervention?
- What difficulties might arise when applying this theory to the problem and population?

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the theory in relation to this problem and population.
- Does the theory include internal and external factors to explain the problem?
- Is change directed toward the person, the environment, or a combination of these?

Discuss the application of the theory to the problem and population in the context of professional social work’s mission, values, and ethics including
- the mission, values, and ethics of professional social work
- the person-in-environment perspective
- the strengths perspective
- the bio-psycho-social-spiritual nature of well-being
- the impact of social, cultural, and economic forces
- differential needs of varying cultures, ethnicities, races, genders, and sexual orientation

Conclude with a discussion of future directions for knowledge development and scholarly research regarding this topic and population.