I. COURSE PURPOSE

This advanced elective provides an overview of the research and conceptual framework of attachment theory as it pertains to new directions in clinical practice and to social work policy. It describes the evolution of attachment theory from the original works of Bowlby and Ainsworth to the expansion of contemporary theory based on neurobiological research. The course emphasizes the importance of attachment and right brain affect regulatory functioning as basic to healthy development across the lifespan. Findings from a wealth of clinical and longitudinal research studies document the importance of attachment security in the prevention of relational and behavioral disorders in individuals, couples, families, and groups. Attention is placed on appreciating the role of secure parenting and the development of attachment relationships within the context of diverse cultures. Special emphasis is given to the implications of attachment research for policy formulation, analysis, and implementation, particularly to child welfare policy and the prevention and sequelae of child maltreatment. This course introduces students to attachment-based treatment models for child and adult disorders and examines the evidence for an attachment-based social work practice. Prerequisite: SSS 571-572.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

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

1. Demonstrate understanding of the historical roots of attachment theory as an evolutionary, universal, continuous, and motivational system.
2. Articulate the linkage between the infant’s emotional experience, caregiver-child reciprocity, brain development, and ongoing affective regulation.

3. Demonstrate knowledge of the longitudinal studies documenting the influence of attachment on the neurobiological, behavioral, cognitive, relational, and physiological development of individuals across the lifespan.

4. Critically evaluate the cultural differences of attachment patterns validated through empirical cross-cultural research.

5. Analyze the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect, separation and loss, foster care, and adoption on child development.

6. Evaluate the ethical dilemmas inherent in child welfare placement decisions due to disruption of attachment relationships between children and caregivers.

7. Demonstrate understanding of the role of adult attachment in caregiving, friendship, and adult romantic relationships.


9. Develop understanding of attachment-based models of clinical intervention for children, adults, couples, and families, including adoptive and foster parents.

10. Critically analyze the widespread policy implications of attachment and neurobiological research and the need for early intervention and prevention.

11. Identify and formulate recommendations for policy and social work practice based on knowledge and evaluation of research on attachment and neurobiology.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts

B. Recommended Texts (for recommended readings)
C. Other Strongly Recommended Resources

Books:


Journals:
*Attachment and Human Behavior*
*Infant Mental Health Journal*
*Clinical Social Work Journal, Special Edition on Attachment*

Websites:  
http://www.education.umn.edu/icd/parent-child/default.html  
http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/attachment/  
http://www.zerotothree.org/vol20-2.html  
http://www.psych.uiuc.edu/~rcfraley/lab.htm

D. Course Assignments
There are three graded assignments for this course (two objective quizzes and a 10-page paper), plus a grade for class participation. See the last page of this syllabus for details.

E. Grading Policy and Weights of Assignments
Grades will be based on the CUA Grading Policy as described in the *Graduate Announcements*. Full credit will not be given for assignments that are submitted late. The following provides weights for the various course assignments:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
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<td>Quiz 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Grading System

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<td>C</td>
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<td>F</td>
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F. Preparation, Attendance & Participation
Students are required to attend classes and are expected to participate meaningfully in class discussion/exercises and online forums as required. 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
NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations using your CUA username and password. 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, or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements (http://ncsss.cua.edu/courses/index.cfm), including scholastic and behavioral requirements.

NCSSS is committed to creating an open and inclusive learning environment where all members - including students, faculty, administrators, and staff - strive to listen to and learn from one another. We recognize that in a multicultural society, it is inevitable that issues or tensions relative to diversity and different life experiences will arise. It is how we handle these events that matters. Therefore, when such issues occur – inside or outside of the classroom - we agree to engage in respectful and productive discussion with one another until learning is enhanced and understanding is deepened by all involved.

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, v.6 format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

B. 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.
C. **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 ([http://graduatestudies.cua.edu/currentstudents/academintgrt.cfm](http://graduatestudies.cua.edu/currentstudents/academintgrt.cfm)) and appropriate Program Handbooks.

D. **Confidentiality**
Each student is expected to adhere to the Confidentiality Agreement that is signed at the beginning of every semester. This agreement covers “practice materials” in classes, supervisory sessions, case conferences, seminars, and other educational settings within the NCSSS BSW or MSW programs are for **professional learning purposes only** and are subject to strict professional standards of confidentiality. These same standards of confidentiality also extend to various forms of written communication and peer consultation.

Adherence to these standards means all students refrain from communicating beyond the classroom setting about practice material that is presented in class. I will also refrain from using social media outlets (blogs, twitter, Facebook, etc.) or email to discuss practice settings, program responsibilities and projects with individuals who are not in teaching or supervision roles directly related to the situation.

E. **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, you must present that documentation to your instructors and arrange a meeting with as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.

F. **Use of Electronic Devices**
**No laptops or other electronic devices are permitted in the classroom**, unless you have a specific documented learning disability. Please turn off all cell phones or other devices that would disrupt the learning environment of the classroom and put them away and removed from the classroom environment.
Class Schedule

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

PART I: ATTACHMENT THEORY AND NEUROBIOLOGICAL RESEARCH: OVERVIEW OF BASIC CONCEPTS

1

**Introduction to course; Historical context of attachment theory**

Bowlby and the Secure Base of attachment

**Themes**
- Significance of neurobiology for understanding affect regulation and attachment
- Historical context of attachment theory and Bowlby’s earliest influences
- Exploration of Bowlby’s secure base concept
- Relationship of the child’s attachment system to the exploratory system
- The universality and continuity of attachment

**Required Readings**

**Recommended Readings**

2

**Mary Ainsworth and the Strange Situation (SS)**

**Internal Working Models (IWM) of attachment**

**Themes**
- Bowlby’s theories regarding the child’s adjustment to separation and loss
- Ainsworth’s empirical contribution, developed from studies of mothers and babies in Uganda and Baltimore
- Home visitation and the SS observational measure
- Exploration of IWM of attachment: secure, insecure avoidant, and insecure resistant attachment
- Mental representations of attachment
Required Readings

Recommended Readings

3 Mary Main and the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

Themes
- The theory and concepts underpinning Main’s AAI
- States of mind with respect to attachment
- Meta-analysis and validity of AAI as predictive of child attachment
- The impact of unresolved trauma and loss on adult attachment security
- Solomon’s and Main’s conceptualization of disorganized attachment

Required Readings

Recommended Readings
4  
**Fonagy and the concept of mentalization**

**Adult Attachment Styles as viewed through social psychology**

**Cultural context and attachment**

**Themes**
- Fonagy’s view of reflective functioning and mentalization in adults
- Self-report research on adult attachment styles
- The correlation between SS and AAI in cross-cultural studies
- Cross-cultural studies of IWM in European and non-Western cultures

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


5  
**The neurobiology of attachment and affect regulation**

**Themes**
- Understanding the brain’s organization and function
- The neurobiology of short and long-term memory
- Early affect regulation as part of attachment and relational experiences
- Psychobiology of affective attunement and brain development
- The neurobiology of the development of the self

**Required Readings**


Recommended Readings


PART II: ATTACHMENT IN INFANCY, CHILDOOD, AND ADOLESCENCE

6 Secure parenting
Influences of age, class, and culture on caregiving and parenting

Themes
- Understanding the internal world of the child
- The role of caregiver-infant mirroring
- Viewing attachment and exploration as a “Circle of Security”
- Behavioral indicators of infant cues for exploration or safe haven
- Parenting in different cultures and with multiple caregivers
- Individual differences among infant-caregiver dyads

Required Readings


Recommended Readings

Assignment 1: Quiz

7 Abuse, neglect, and trauma leading to childhood disorganization
Longitudinal studies regarding attachment in childhood and adolescence

Themes
- The neurobiology of childhood stress and deprivation
- Assessment of childhood disorganization from trauma, abuse, and neglect
- Assessment of childhood disorganization from parent disorganization
- Resilience and attachment of at-risk children

Revised 01/02/2013
- Viewing attachment in context across the lifespan: The Minnesota Longitudinal Study
- Understanding childhood Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) in comparison to disorganized attachment

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


8

**Foster care, adoption, and daycare**

**Implications of child welfare policies**

**Themes**

- Attachment influenced by daycare and multiple caregivers
- The neurobiology of disrupted attachment
- Permanency planning and its effect on child attachment
- Challenges in establishing new child-caregiver attachments
- Coaching at-risk children and caregivers in the child welfare system
- Organizational challenges in child welfare agencies
- Ethical dilemmas in child welfare placement decisions

**Required Readings**


Recommended Readings

9 Treatment of high-risk children, adolescents, and families

Themes
- The importance of enhancing parental reflective functioning
- The challenges of parenting children with attachment disorders
- Attachment-based intervention with foster children and their caregivers
- Attachment-based intervention with adoptive children and their parents
- Outcome studies and implications of attachment intervention research

Required Readings

Recommended Readings

PART III: ATTACHMENT IN ADULTHOOD

10 Overview of adult attachment in individuals, couples, and families
Attachments in later adulthood and in caregiving relationships

Themes
- What is adult attachment and what does it mean to be attached in adulthood?
- Predictors of stability and change of attachment security in adults
- A systems approach to viewing attachments in families
- Psychobiological perspectives on adult attachment and health
- Loss and bereavement and the nature of detachment in adulthood
- The caregiving behavioral system: Secure base and safe haven caregiving
- Attachment and caregiving within late adulthood
Required Readings

Recommended Readings

11 Relational treatment with individual adults

Themes
- Attachment theory as a bridge between cognitive and psychoanalytic theory and practice
- Attachment-based dynamic relational treatment with individual adults
- The therapist as a “secure base” in clinical treatment
- Understanding attachment patterns within the transference relationship
- Using intersubjectivity in treatment

Required Readings

Recommended Readings

Assignment 2: Quiz 2
12  Attachment-based treatment of couples and families

Themes
• Links between family therapy and attachment research
• Treatment of stress, conflict, and violence in adult close relationships
• Repair of ruptures in partner attunement
• Reshaping early childhood and present-day attachment injuries in couples
• Enhancing the parenting of adolescent mothers

Required Readings

Recommended Readings

13  Trauma and domestic violence

Adult psychopathology as an outgrowth of attachment disorders

Themes
• Enhancement of reflective functioning and mentalization
• Attachment-related trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
• The relationship of attachment to the development of personality disorders
• The relationship of attachment to depressive, anxiety, and dissociative disorders
• Criminality and antisocial behavior viewed as attachment disorders

Required Readings
Recommended Readings

PART IV:  FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

14  Conclusion with focus on adult policy; social work education and research

Themes
• The need for policy changes
• Enhanced practice with an eye on prevention
• Application of theory to organizational and educational domains

Required Readings

Recommended Readings

Assignment 3: Paper Due
Assignments

1. **Objective quizzes (classes 6 & 11)**  
   Brief, 20-minute objective quizzes will examine the students’ knowledge of terms and concepts that underpin the theory of attachment, based on readings and lectures from classes. The first quiz (25%) will cover classes 1-5, and the second quiz (25%) will cover classes 6-10.

2. **Paper (due class 14)**  
   Select one of the following two options for writing a 10-page paper. Grading for both papers will be based on (1) critical thinking about the topic and the material, (2) creativity and thoughtfulness, (3) organization of paper and style of writing, including following correct APA v. 6 format. The options are:

   2a **Critical Review of Research Studies**  
   Choose one of the topics from the syllabus in classes 7-13. Read 8 empirical research articles related to the topic, selecting articles not on the syllabus and not from other classes. The articles should be published between 2006-2013. Write a 10-page, double-spaced paper that includes a 1-page summary and critique on each article. Conclude with a 2-page summary that integrates the overall findings from your readings and discusses how they have expanded and/or contrasted with your knowledge from class. Include a cover sheet and references with the paper.

   2b **Clinical or Policy Application Paper**  
   Write a 10-page double-spaced scholarly paper exploring a specific issue or area of concern as it pertains to attachment processes within a particular age group along the lifespan (e.g., infants, young children, adolescents, college students, adults, or elder adults). For example, you might examine resiliency among at-risk young children, eating disorders among adolescents, separation issues for college students, domestic violence among middle age adults, or caregiving of elder parents. The paper should examine and critique the contemporary theory and research on the topic, including neurobiological research, and the policy and/or clinical implications regarding this theory and research. Attention should be given to issues regarding diversity and social work values and ethics. **Conclude the paper with 1 page of personal and original recommendations for addressing either: (1) suggestions for policy changes, or (2) suggestions for new treatment interventions.**

3. **Class Participation**  
   Students are expected to ask questions and engage in class discussion on a regular basis. The class participation grade will be determined by the instructor’s perception of the student’s preparation for, and contribution to, class discussion, and by evidence that the student has completed the readings.

Revised 01/02/2013