I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course will prepare student social workers to assess and intervene with the families of persons-at-risk. Assuming the value that individuals grow and thrive best within the social environment of their families and communities, students will pursue the goal of strengthening families to prevent unnecessary placement of the person-at-risk in foster care, residential treatment, juvenile detention, shelters, psychiatric hospitals, inpatient medical facilities, nursing homes, or other “more restrictive” environments. Students will become familiar with practice theories and models consistent with a social constructionist paradigm and the strengths and ecological perspectives. They will learn to work with families to mobilize internal strengths and organize external resources to meet their own needs and solve their own problems. Through experiential exercises and work with case material, students will apply theoretical concepts to help families of diverse populations, especially poor and vulnerable ones, to change thinking patterns, learn new skills and more adaptive interactional patterns, and mobilize environmental support. This course will help students to redefine individuals and families from being “at-risk” to being “at-promise.”

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able:
1. To ground practice on a paradigm of strength and solution, rather than one of deficit, disorder, and disease.

2. To conceptualize the client system as family both challenged by and supported by a social, natural, and built environment.

3. To apply knowledge and skill to a broad range of populations, especially vulnerable populations and presenting problems with families of persons-at-risk.

4. To develop an awareness of the use of self in maintaining professional boundaries within a collaborative helping relationship, while working in the clients’ homes and communities.

5. To demonstrate skill in interviewing to seek the impact of cultural, ethnic, and gender differences in socially constructed stories of help-seeking and help-receiving among a diverse range of clients.

6. To demonstrate competence in solution-focused interviewing and the narrative therapy models to seek family strengths and solutions, rather than deficits and problems - focusing on what clients can do, rather than what they cannot do.

7. To demonstrate skill in applying ecological concepts in discovering and mapping client families’ networks of informal natural systems as well as formal institutional systems.

8. To demonstrate skill in identifying family needs within concrete, medical/physical, psychosocial, and spiritual domains.

9. To demonstrate skill in applying theory and organizing client system data to match strengths and resources from within families and their environmental networks to client-identified needs.

10. To articulate clear and discrete behavioral and measurable goals with families.

11. To demonstrate competence in application of theory through a range of strengths-based techniques with individuals and more than one.

12. To demonstrate mastery of required reading, lecture, and experiential material.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts


B. **Recommended Texts**

C. **Course Assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1 Family Assessment</th>
<th>Completion of take-home strengths-based family assessment and ecomap of familiar family</th>
<th><strong>DUE: Class #6</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#2 Interview questions</td>
<td>Completion in class of strengths-based questions based on in-class video interview</td>
<td><strong>DUE: Class #9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Final Exam</td>
<td>Process oriented take-home, based on observation of in-class video of family interview</td>
<td><strong>DUE: Class #13</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. **Grading Policy**

| Assignment 1 | 20% |
| Assignment 2 | 20% |
| Assignment 3 | 40% |
| Attendance & participation | 20% |

E. **Preparation, Attendance & Participation**

Students are required to attend classes and are expected to complete required readings prior to the class assigned and to participate meaningfully in class discussion and exercises. Class participation is particularly important in a practice class. The class participation grade will be determined by the instructor’s perception of the student’s preparation for and contributions to class discussion and 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. Some students find role play and interview exercises to be comfortable immediately; others need more time to warm up; but all are expected to demonstrate their growing practice skills. Absences will lower the attendance and participation grade. More than three unexcused absences will result in a grade of F.

F. 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

A. Scholastic Expectations
Please refer to NCSSS Announcements or appropriate Program Handbook 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 format, and should be carefully proofread 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.

Use of Laptops and other Electronic Devices: Students may use laptop computers for note taking only as long as their use does not distract other students. Use of all other electronic devices, including cell phones and smart phones, is prohibited
within the classroom. Electronic devices should be silenced and put away so that they are not disruptive to the learning environment.

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 1  **Introduction to the Course**  
Coming from a “Culture of Strengths” with family as the unit of change. Practice as assisted change. The strengths model of change rather than the medical model

- Ms. Farney pretest

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Reading**


Class 2  **Family Centered Social Work Practice:** Coming from a perspective of resilience to understand theory and model of practice; Family-in-environment model; introducing questions as intervention

- Ecomapping
- Rosie

**Required Reading**

Recommended Reading

Class 3

**Joining and Assessment of Family:** Coming from a perspective of not-knowing, non-expert to form the therapeutic alliance; Assessment from strength; Common factors in change; privileging the family’s theory of change; more on questions

- Family theory of change

Required Reading

Recommended Reading

Class 4

**Getting Started:** Introduction of the model of Solution-Focused Brief Family Therapy

- Solution-focused questions
- Video: “I Love My Kids” (Insoo Kim Berg)
Required Reading

Recommended Reading

Class 5
Social Constructionism and Change: confrontation v. cooperation; framing and reframing, enactment, patterns of communication with more than one

- Beth
- Relationship and circular questions

Required Reading

Recommended Reading

Class 6
Goals and Measurement: Being pulled by goals rather than pushed by problems; Evidence informed practice; Post Traumatic Growth

- Outcome and session rating scales
- PTG inventory

**FAMILY ASSESSMENT DUE**
Required Reading

Recommended Reading

Class 7 Story: Introduction of model of Narrative Therapy

- Narrative Questions
- Externalization
- Video “Narrative Therapy” (Steve Madigan)

Required Reading

Recommended Reading

**Class 8**

**Co-Constructing a Preferred Story:** Subjective reality; thinking in terms of story

- Reflection
- Reflection on the state of the class

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Reading**


**Class 9**

**Motivation:** Motivation as readiness to change; The mandated client; Rejecting resistance; embracing motivation; stages of change

- Returning to Beth
- Video: “Interviewing for Solutions” (Peter DeJong)

**INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN CLASS**

**Required Reading**


Recommended Reading

Class 10

Application to Families with Young Children: Locus of risk to family integrity is child behavior; incorporating developmental and dynamic theories with strengths and solutions; using play techniques with families from a strengths perspective. Encouraging and reinforcing success

- Adam and the Stealing Lifestyle
- Video: “Solution-Focused Child Therapy” (John Murphy)

Required Reading

Recommended Reading
Class 11

Application to Families with Adolescents

- Stories that strengthen
- Continuing Dialogue with Rick

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Reading**


Class 12

**Consolidating Strengths-Based Theory and Practice:** Concepts and skills; Why is this family doing what it is doing?; What is this family capable of doing well?; Why are we doing what we are doing to enhance strengths and access resources?; observing a family with new eyes. More on reflection

- Final Exam Video: “No More Lectures” (Insoo Kim Berg)

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Reading**


Class 13

Application to Diverse Families: Difference; return to client’s theory of change; client group’s reality; solution focused and narrative questions

- Hollie and all five narrative questions
- Ms. Farney post test

*** TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE ***

Required Reading

Recommended Reading

Class 14

Ending Work from a Strengths Perspective: Transfer of Skills; Maintaining Gains; Ending the Collaborative Relationship; reflecting on your own success

- Ruby Slippers

Required Reading

Recommended Reading

