I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course is the first of two Foundation year courses on Human Behavior and the Social Environment. Providing a multidimensional approach, the course examines theory, research, and contemporary challenges that relate to the biopsychosocial-spiritual dimensions of human behavior. Focus is given to particular theories that are used by the social work profession to explain and assess functioning at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of interaction, with the recognition that theory evolves out of a historical and cultural context. Strength and resilience, all forms of diversity and oppression, and the impact of social and economic forces are emphasized as salient influences on human behavior. Required readings, class assignments, and group activities will be used as educational methods.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

At the completion of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the differences between a “perspective” and a “theory” and the connection between theory, research, and social work practice.

2. Demonstrate knowledge of the multidimensional approach of looking at human behavior through recognizing the complex interconnection of person,
environment, and time.

3. Demonstrate knowledge of micro, mezzo, and macro theories used to explain, assess, and intervene at multiple levels of interaction and within a multicultural society.

4. Demonstrate knowledge of the complex and reciprocal interactions among individuals, dyads, families, small groups, organizations, social institutions, and communities.

5. Demonstrate how biological, psychological, socio-cultural, spiritual, and physical forces affect individual, family, group, organizational, and community functioning.

6. Demonstrate an understanding and critique of particular theories within eight perspectives presented (systems, conflict, rational choice, social constructionist, psychodynamic, developmental, social behavioral, humanistic perspectives).

7. Demonstrate knowledge of particular theorists and their contributions to theory construction within a socio-historical context.

8. Demonstrate knowledge of the values underlying human behavior theories and their consistence with social work values and principles.

9. Demonstrate knowledge of biases, omissions, and cultural limitations of individual theories.

10. Develop an understanding of cultural differences and similarities in the experiences, needs, and beliefs of people.

11. Demonstrate knowledge of stratification, oppression, and inequality as they relate to sociopolitical contexts and to theoretical perspectives.

12. Demonstrate mastery of reading material and an ability to think critically as evidenced in weekly class discussions and in scholarly writing.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts


B. Recommended Readings

See attached bibliography for recommended supplemental readings.

C. Course Assignments

1. Read Fadiman’s book—Due class #1
2. Introductory essay—Due class #2
3. Concept Test 1 – Class #4
4. Concept Test 2 – Class #8
5. Concept Test 3 – Class #13
6. Scholarly paper—Due class #14
   a. Paper topic—Due class #6
   b. Micro Theory Section Draft with References—Due Class #9
   c. Macro Theory Section Draft with References—Due Class #12
   d. Final paper—Due Class #14

Assignment #1: Read Fadiman book—Due class #1

Prior to the first class, you are expected to have read the anthropological story by Anne Fadiman (2000), *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. This book will be used as a point of discussion throughout the semester to demonstrate the complex and multidimensional aspects of human functioning. Human behavior within this story will be viewed through the multiple theoretical perspectives covered in this course, and your scholarly paper will focus on the application of theory to this book.

Assignment #2: Introductory essay—Due class #2

Context:
During this first semester of Human Behavior, we explore how **biological**, **psychological**, **socio-cultural**, and **spiritual** factors affect individual behavior, and we examine factors that influence interactions in the **family** and in **small groups**, as well as the wider social world of **organizations** and **communities**. We recognize that all human behavior is created through a reciprocal, complex relationship of these multiple factors, and we give special focus to **race**, **ethnicity**, **class**, **gender**, **sexual orientation**, **religion**, and **physical ability** as influential variables in shaping behavior. In addition, we stress the importance of personal knowledge of one’s own development and behavior as a foundation for understanding clients and their environment.

Assignment:
Write a 3-4 page essay in which you reflect on two factors that you think could be most influential in developing your professional self as a social worker. Obviously, the factors that influence us are numerous and complex. However, for this assignment select the two factors from the 15 bolded variables in the first paragraph to write your essay. Be as specific and descriptive as possible.

Grading for essay:
The paper should be 3-4 pages (maximum), typed and double-spaced. It will be graded as follows: (1) Analysis of these two factors in terms of their connection to professional behavior (40%); (2) Clarity of description of the two variables (40%); (3) Organization, style, and mechanics of writing (20%).

Assignments #3, 4 & 5: Class #4, #8 & #13
Designed to test the student’s knowledge of the critical theoretical concepts from the theories covered in the course. The tests will be given at the end of the discussion group time. The tests will be comprised of objective questions.

Assignment #6: Scholarly paper—Interim Due Dates (see below) with Final Version Due class #14
Purpose:
The scholarly paper is designed to integrate theory with knowledge about human behavior and the social environment. Choose one micro theory and one mezzo or macro theory (you may not use systems theory as both a micro and macro theory). Apply each of these theories to the Fadiman book, The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down. For example, you might apply psychodynamic theory to discuss Nao Kao’s behavior in his interactions with the doctors and then apply conflict theory to explain the difficulties that emerge with the doctors and the medical system regarding their interactions with the Hmong community.

Due dates for scholarly paper (total of 100 points):
1. Paper topic (identify two theories and, in general, how you will apply them to the Fadiman book) - Due class #6 (5 points)
2. Final paper: Due class #14 (75 points)

Outline for final scholarly paper:
Write the final paper using the following headings to structure your writing:
1. Introduction: A brief statement about the focus and purpose of the paper.
2. Literature Review: Review the literature on each selected theory. Discuss the basic premise of each theory and the underlying assumptions of the theory about the nature of human development. Include the theory’s historical context and the contemporary developments. For each theory, use a minimum of three original sources and three contemporary scholarly sources (1995-present) from professional literature other than class materials. (8 pages, 30 points) (Do not use your text books as sources; the
3. **Application**: Apply these theories to a situation or a character’s actions or behaviors discussed within the Fadiman book. Clearly identify and define a minimum of three key concepts for each theory and demonstrate how they help you understand the human behavior you are exploring (4 pages, 25 points)

4. **Critique**: Discuss in general terms the strengths and weaknesses of these theories for micro and macro application. Be sure to utilize the criteria outlined in course texts. Specifically address the usefulness of each theory. (2 pages, 20 points)

5. **Conclusion**: Summarize the findings of your paper and make concluding remarks about your findings (was one theory more helpful than another?).

**Grading for scholarly paper**:

Intermediate assignments preparing for the final paper will be given points as listed above. The final paper (worth 75 points) will be given a grade for the adequacy of the literature review (30%), understanding of the theory and application to the book (25%), critical thinking (20%), and APA formatting and writing style (20%).

**D. Grading Policy for Course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Essay</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept Tests</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholarly Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation &amp; Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Class participation grade will be determined by the instructor’s perception of the student’s preparation for, and contribution to, class discussion, particularly during the group discussion and application times. Different students will make different kinds of contributions to class discussion. Some will have an easy time with spontaneous interactions, and others will be most comfortable making a planned statement about a key idea from the readings or other sources. Both types of contributions are valued. Unexcused absences beyond one will lower the participation grade. More than three unexcused absences will result in a grade of F for participation. In addition, assignments are to be submitted to instructor on the date due. *Unless you have prior permission from the instructor, five points will be deducted for each day the assignment is submitted late. Extensions will not be granted the day an assignment is due.*
E. **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](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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Course Orientation: Thinking Critically About Human Behavior Theory</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hutchison, Chapters 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Themes Presented</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Overview of course and the place of HBSE in SW education</td>
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<td>SW’s approach to micro-mezzo-macro practice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Overview of 8 SW perspectives on human behavior</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The presence of “time” in “person-in-environment” and “biopsychosocial-spiritual” perspectives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The importance of viewing human behavior through the lens of SW values and ethics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The “social construction” and critical analysis of theories</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Understanding and Utilizing Theories for Generalist Social Work Practice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robbins, Chapters 1 &amp; 13</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Themes Presented</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Differences between “perspectives” and “theories”</td>
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<td>Definitions and roles of “human behavior theory”</td>
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<td>The importance of empirical research</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td><strong>An Introduction to the Strengths Perspective &amp; Empowerment Theory</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hutchison, Chapter 13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Robbins, Chapter 4</td>
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<td><strong>Themes Presented</strong></td>
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Revised 6/2009
Use of theory in the social work profession
Explanation of the strengths perspective
Use of the strengths perspective in social work
Introduction to theories of empowerment
The importance of understanding power dynamics
Recognizing the various definitions of community
Exploring contemporary issues in social work community intervention
Viewing communities through previously explained theories

4 Systems Theory and The Biological Person

Required Readings
Hutchison, Chapter 3
Robbins, Chapter 2

Themes Presented
Human biology’s influence on the biopsychosocial-spiritual system
Body systems and the interconnection of physical and mental health
Gender and socioeconomic influences on health and illness
Understanding human behavior through the lens of systems theory

5 Psychodynamic Theory and The Psychosocial Person

Required Readings
Hutchison, Chapter 5
Robbins, Chapter 6

Themes Presented
The role of relationships in development and adaptation
The impact of stress and efforts to master it
The differences in ego defense mechanisms and coping mechanisms

Revised 6/2009
The differences between normal and abnormal coping
Understanding human behavior through the lens of ego psychology and Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development

6 Theories of Cognitive, Moral and Psychosocial Development
Required Readings
Hutchison, Chapter 4
Robbins, Chapters 7 & 8

Themes Presented
Understanding how stage theories impact our understanding of human behavior
Viewing human development on cognitive, moral and psychosocial levels
Understanding human behavior through a developmental lens

7 Transpersonal Theory and The Spiritual Person
Required Reading
Hutchison, Chapter 6
Robbins, Chapter 12
Themes Presented
The meaning of spirituality and religion
The role of spirituality in the human experience and within the US
The role of diversity within spirituality and religious beliefs
Conceptualizing spiritual development
Understanding human behavior through the lens of transpersonal theory
8  **Cognitive Theory and The Psychological Person**

**Required Readings**
Hutchison, Chapter 4

**Themes Presented**
- Definition and etiology of cognition and emotions
- The role of cognition on psychological functioning
- Cognition and the development of symptoms and emotional disorders
- Conceptualizations of “the self”

9  **Behaviorism and Social Exchange Theory – Individuals and Small Groups**

**Required Readings**
Robbins, Chapter 11

**Themes Presented**
- Understanding human behavior through the lens of behaviorism
- The role of social learning theory in individual and small group interactions
- Conceptualizing the role of groups within human development and society
- Understanding the varieties of groups within social work practice
- Understanding the dimensions of group structure, composition, and group process
- Examining sociological theories of small group development
- Viewing small groups through the lens of social exchange theory

10  **Symbolic Interactionism and The Physical Environment**

**Required Readings**
Hutchison, Chapter 7
Robbins, Chapter 9

**Themes Presented**
- The relationship between human behavior and the physical environment
- The significance of the physical environment in shaping one’s role and sense of self
Recognizing the development and power of stigma in shaping human behavior
Viewing the physical world and human behavior through the lens of symbolic interactionism

11 Social Constructionism and Culture

Required Readings
Hutchison, Chapter 8
Robbins, Chapter 10

Themes Presented
The challenge of defining and theorizing about culture
The importance of viewing all human behavior through an understanding of culture
How power inequities are shaped and reinforced through culture
Understanding culture as a socially constructed set of concepts
Viewing culture through the lens of social constructionism

12 Conflict Theory, Social Institutions and Social Structure

Required Readings
Hutchison, Chapter 9
Robbins, Chapter 3

Themes Presented
Understanding societal systems and processes that contribute to inequality
Recognizing the importance of power as a theoretical concept to explain social functioning
Viewing social institutions and structure through the lens of conflict theory

13 Contingency Theory and Formal Organizations

Required Readings
Hutchison, Chapter 12
Themes Presented
Recognizing how organizations are critical influences on human behavior
Differentiating among rational, natural, and open organizational systems
Recognizing hierarchical and interdependent components of the bureaucratic system
Viewing formal organizations through the lens of contingency theory

14 Course Review and Closure
Recommended Supplemental Readings


Revised 6/2009


