

ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
BSW PROGRAM

SYLLABUS

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

**Course number:** SOWK 340-W01  
**Course title:** Human Behavior and the Social Environment  
**Class time:** Fall Term, 2009  
Saturday, 1-4:30pm  
**Course location:** Mendel Hall, 102  
**Course value:** One course (4 credits)

**INSTRUCTOR:** Valandra MSW, LISW  
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**Office Hours:** Mondays 10:30am – 11:30am SCU  
Tuesdays 6pm - 7pm UST  
Wednesdays 10:30am – 11:30am

SCU

Saturday 11:30am - 12:30pm SCU  
By appointment

**CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS**

In compliance with the University of St. Thomas/St. Catherine University policy and disability laws, students with a verifiable disability seeking reasonable accommodations should register with disability services to determine appropriate academic accommodations.

Students at SCU are encouraged to contact the St. Catherine's O'Neill Center for Academic Development at 690-6563 or go directly to the Center, located in the lower level of CDC room 021, M-F, 8:30-4:30. The web site is <http://minerva.stkate.edu/offices/academic/oneill.nsf>.

Students at UST can register with the Enhancement Program-Disability Services office for disability verification and for determination of academic accommodations. Please do so within the first two weeks of the term. Appointments can be made by calling 651-962-6315 or 800-328-6819, extension 6315. Telephone appointments are available as needed. You may also make an appointment in O'Shaughnessy Educational Center, room 119. For further information, you can locate the Enhancement Program on the web at <http://www.stthomas.edu/enhancementprog/>.

**REQUIRED TEXT:** *Human Behavior in the Social Environment.*

Jose' B. Ashford, and Craig Winston LeCroy,  
4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Brooks/Cole, 2010.

*Human Behavior, Communities, Organizations & Groups in the Macro Social Environment: An Empowerment Approach.* Karen Kirst-Ashman, Brooks/Cole, 2008.

**PREREQUISITE:**

PSYCH 202

**COREQUISITES:** BIO 112, SOWK 281

## **II. COURSE DESCRIPTION, OUTCOMES AND OUTLINE**

### **Course Description:**

The primary focus of this course is to provide students with knowledge and understanding of human behavior and development across the life span from a social systems approach examining biological, psycho-spiritual, and social factors. Emphasis is on the role of and interaction between various systems including: the individual, family, small group, organization, community, and society. Each stage of the life cycle from prenatal/birth through old age/death will be examined relative to the three levels of practice (micro, mezzo and macro). Typical strengths/assets, risks, and strategies/interventions are considered for each life stage. Multiple dimensions of diversity including gender, race/ethnicity, age, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status are stressed.

### **Course Objectives:**

#### **A. Knowledge of the following concepts:**

1. Theories of human bio-psycho-social development throughout the life cycle from prenatal/birth through old age/death.
2. Systems theory related to the uniqueness of the interaction of each individual and their environment, including families, groups, organizations, institutions and communities.
3. The impact of social and economic forces on individual and systems with emphasis upon populations at risk, distinguished by gender, race/ethnicity, age, ability, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
4. The relationship between human diversity (gender, race/ethnicity, age, ability, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status) and variations in the human development processes.

The impact of personal and professional values and ethics on the helping process and the potential for value conflicts.

Perspectives of empowerment at the micro, meso, and macro levels.

Human behavior research studies.

**B. Skills in the following:**

1. Assessing behavior of individuals across the life span, families (including intergenerational factors) and other systems in order to develop understanding for interventions.
2. Observing and understanding the functioning of communities and assessing the extent to which communities meet the needs of diverse groups of residents.
3. Recognizing the interface between biological, psychological-spiritual, social and cultural determinants of behavior across the life span.
4. Appreciating the environmental forces, which impact upon an individual's growth and development across the life span to promote or deter the attainment of health and well being.
5. Applying systems concepts to life crisis situations experienced by clients throughout the life cycle and across generations.
6. Responding to human diversity from a strengths perspective by recognizing, respecting, and accepting the needs and preferences of members of diverse groups, distinguished by gender, race/ethnicity, age, ability, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
7. Becoming aware of personal attitudes and bias about individuals and groups at each life stage and beginning to deal with these attitudes regarding self and clients.
8. Understanding and applying wellness and prevention strategies to enhance coping and wellbeing during each stage of the life span.
9. Evaluating and applying theory to client situations at the individual, group, and community level.

**Content Outline:**

**Human Behavior in the Macro Social Environment**

What is the macro environment?

The macro environment and generalist social work practice

Human diversity and empowerment in the macro environment

Ecosystems theory and the macro environment

People's involvement with multiple systems in the social environment

**Communities in the Social Environment: Theories and Concepts**

Defining communities

Theoretical perspectives on communities

Non-geographical communities

- Geographical communities
- Membership in multiple communities

### **C. Human Behavior, Power and Empowerment in Communities**

People and power in communities

- Citizen participation
- Social Networks
- Empowerment and communities
- Community strengths
- Community building
- Dimensions of empowerment in community environment

#### **Neighborhood Empowerment**

Defining neighborhoods

- Functions of neighborhoods: promoting health and well-being
- Types of neighborhoods

Neighborhood centers, empowerment and promotion of health/well-being

- Settlement houses: a response to changing social and economic forces
- Neighborhood centers today

#### **Empowerment of People with Developmental Disabilities in Community and Organizational Environments**

Defining developmental disabilities

- History of treatment: quest for social and economic justice
- Generalist practice with people with developmental disabilities
- Positive legislation: empowerment through social and economic justice
- Community support and empowerment
- Legislative empowerment for people with visual impairment
- Community empowerment for people with cognitive disabilities

#### **Diversity, Populations-at-Risk, and Human Behavior in the Macro Environment**

Empowerment in macro environment for people of color

- Empowerment in the macro environment for lesbian and gay people
- Empowerment in the macro environment for women

### **G. A Multidimensional Framework for Assessing Social Functioning**

1. Social Work's Social Competence Model
2. The Person-in-Environment System
3. The Biopsychosocial Interaction
4. Applying the Multidimensional Framework using Strengths and Resilience Theory
5. Values and Ethics

### **H. Pregnancy, Birth and the Newborn**

Biophysical Dimension

Psychological-Spiritual Dimension

Social Dimension

- Role and Impact of larger systems
- Multicultural/Diversity Considerations
- Application to Values and Ethics

Applying the Multidimensional Framework using Strengths and Resilience Theory

**I. Infancy**

Biophysical Dimension

Psychological-Spiritual Dimension

Social Dimension

Role and Impact of larger systems

Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk

Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro)

The Role of Values and Ethics

Applying the Multidimensional Framework using Strengths and

Resilience Theory

**J. Early Childhood**

Biophysical Dimension

Psychological-Spiritual Dimension

Social Dimension

Role and Impact of larger systems

Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk

Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro)

The Role of Values and Ethics

Applying the Multidimensional Framework using Strengths and

Resilience Theory

**K. Middle Childhood**

Biophysical Dimension

Psychological-Spiritual Dimension

Social Dimension

Role and Impact of larger systems

Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk

Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro)

The Role of Values and Ethics

Applying the Multidimensional Framework using Strengths and

Resilience Theory

**L. Adolescence**

Biophysical Dimension

Psychological-Spiritual Dimension

Social Dimension

Role and Impact of larger systems

Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk

Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro)

The Role of Values and Ethics

Applying the Multidimensional Framework using Strengths and

Resilience Theory

**M. Young Adulthood**

Biophysical Dimension  
    Psychological-Spiritual Dimension  
    Social Dimension  
Role and Impact of larger systems  
Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk  
    Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro)  
    The Role of Values and Ethics  
    Applying the Multidimensional Framework using Strengths and Resilience Theory

**N. Middle Adulthood**  
Biophysical Dimension  
    Psychological-Spiritual Dimension  
    Social Dimension  
Role and Impact of larger systems  
Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk  
    Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro)  
    The Role of Values and Ethics  
    Applying the Multidimensional Framework using Strengths and Resilience Theory

**O. Late Adulthood**  
Biophysical Dimension  
    Psychological-Spiritual Dimension  
    Social Dimension  
Role and Impact of larger systems  
Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk  
    Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro)  
    The Role of Values and Ethics  
    Applying the Multidimensional Framework using Strengths and Resilience Theory

*The following methods and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances or by mutual agreement between the instructor and the students.*

### **III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

Methods used in the course of study will include: lectures and discussions, reading, identification of practice issues in assessment, examination of current research, use of small groups, and applications to generalist practice with diverse populations. Since the integration of theory and practice can be best learned by following the scheme of experiential learning, i.e., experiencing, reflecting, thinking and doing, students are expected to be active learners using all modes to master the knowledge and skills presented in the course.

#### **A. Attendance and Preparation – 10%**

Professional education involves experiential and collaborative learning and the development of high standards of personal and professional responsibility. Each student is a valuable resource in the learning experience. Course content and class activities are fundamental to effective social work learning. Students are expected to attend class, arrive on time, be prepared, and participate. Because attendance is so important, it will contribute to the final grade (10%). Students who demonstrate excellent attendance will be rewarded for their effort.

For each class attended, each student will earn one (1) point. For those that attend 8/8 classes, two (2) bonus points will be awarded to their cumulative point total.

Attendance will be recorded in each class. If a student misses two classes they may be asked to drop the course. Instructor will not differentiate between “excused and unexcused absences” and will solely rely upon physical presence in class when computing total points. Students who do not attend all classes are not eligible for a final grade of “A” for the course

Every absence results in a drop in your final grade by 1 letter grade (e.g., your grade will drop from an A to a B).

Any absence from class exceeding 20 minutes will count as a one-half absence.

Students absent from class, regardless of the reason, are responsible for *initiating* a dialogue and plan with the instructor and/or classmates for making up missed readings, and assignments within 24 hours of the missed class.

While this attendance policy is stringent, it is also understood that emergencies can happen requiring your presence elsewhere. Students are expected to notify the instructor immediately under such circumstances.

## **B. Readings**

Class activities and discussions are planned with the assumption that readings have been completed prior to the class session for which they are assigned.

## **C. Written Assignments**

All written assignments must follow APA (Edition 6) style guidelines, must be typed, written in gender-fair English, and printed single-sided. Assignments are expected to be professionally presented. Typographical or grammatical errors and assignments that are poorly written or otherwise of an unprofessional quality will be graded down.

There will be two (2) written assignments. The first will assist you in assessing a community you are a part of or one that is important to you. The second will examine a specific stage within the life span, common assessment and ethical considerations, and how social and economic justice and diversity may influence growth at that stage of life.

In completing these assignments read each question carefully. If asked to “describe” be sure your answer gives a complete and thorough description. Full points will not be given for listing your ideas/responses.

**Assignment One – Communities and Empowerment-30% Due Oct 3, 2009 Pages 7-9**

Choose your community of origin (where you grew up), the community where you presently live, or a community you are a part of e.g., a faith community, the LGBT community, your work community, the Somali community to complete sections 1 & 2 of this assignment.

**Section I: Defining Your Community**

Write a descriptive paragraph about that community using the concepts discussed by Kirst-Ashman in Chapter 9. Include the following concepts: population, population density, size category, heterogeneity/homogeneity (ethnic/racial, socio-economic, family structure, etc. diversity), bedroom/reservation/ institutional. Discuss how this community has changed in the last five to ten years?

Describe your community using **one** of the following theories: structural, human ecology, functionalist, social-psychological, empowerment, symbolic interactionist, or social systems.

Reflect on how your chosen theoretical perspective has enhanced your understanding of your community and describe the following:

What issues of social/economic justice face your community? Are there groups, which experience oppression and/or discrimination? Are there subgroups in your community that could be considered populations-at-risk? What is being done to address the needs of these groups?

Identify at least three of your community's strengths/assets and three problems/needs.

What new insights have you learned about your community by applying these perspectives?

**Section II: Empowerment in Your Community**

Describe the power structure of your community using the following topics discussed by Kirst-Ashman in Chapter 10; (1) social interactions, (2) information, (3) social status, and, (4) decision-making, law and politics. Write a paragraph about each concept providing descriptions and examples from the community.

Describe **three** opportunities for citizen participation/ empowerment your community provides or could provide to help it manage the negative effects of the problems/needs you identified above.

Identify at least **two informal and two formal** social networks in this community.

Include a brief description of bonds shared by those in each network.

Describe **two** examples of community building in your community: working together, new alliances and cooperation, targeting neighborhoods, or building on neighborhood strengths.

Assess the community strengths and problems identified earlier using the following dimensions of empowerment: investment, family development, education, health, human resources development, and spirituality/life meaning.

Describe community responses to **four** of the following groups, giving an example for each. Consider the extent to which each of the four groups experience community inclusion or exclusion.

- Women
  - New immigrants/refugees
  - Seniors
  - People with disabilities
  - People of color
  - Persons who are LGBT
  - People living in poverty

***Assignment Two – Stages in the Life Span-35%      Due Dec 5, 2009***  
***Pages 5-6***

Select one stage in the lifespan – infancy to late adulthood and answer the following questions clearly and completely.

**Please note that this stage must be different from your assigned chapter presentation**

1. Describe **five developmental issues** that a person works on at this life stage. (5)
2. Explain what **three things a person of this age contributes to family life** AND what **three things they need/receive from living in a family group**. (6)
3. Describe **two support systems beyond the family of origin** that you would expect this person to be involved in and **one thing they contribute and one thing they need/receive from this support system**. (4)
4. Write **five questions** you would use in your social work practice **to assess** this client and **give the purpose of each question**. (5)
5. Describe **three protective factors** and **two risk factors** a client may experience in their micro or mezzo environment at this stage in the life span? (5)
6. Discuss the impact of **race, ability, and gender** at this stage in the life span. (3)
7. Discuss **two social or economic justice considerations** that might impact development at this stage in the life span both here in the United States and in the global community. (2)
8. Name **two agencies** in your community that offer direct services to this population describing those services. Name **one agency** in your state that does advocacy for their needs and describe the efforts of that organization. (3)

9. Describe **two ethical conflicts** you might face in providing social work services to a client or their family at this stage of development. (2)

**G. Chapter Presentations - 25% Ongoing min**

**40 - 45**

During the first class, small groups will be formed and each group will be responsible for reviewing and presenting assigned chapters on stages of the lifespan. Students will be expected to address the following dimensions and areas when examining their specific lifespan stage:

Biophysical (4)

Social (4)

Psychological (4)

Developmental Themes (3)

Strengths/Risks (3)

Practice Implications (4)

Handout (1)

Presentation style (2) (engaging, visuals, vocals, quality, organization, etc.)

ASSIGNMENT	DATE DUE	POINTS	% OF FINAL
Attendance	All	10	10%
Chapter Presentations	Ongoing	25	25%
Community Paper	October 3	30	30%
Lifespan Paper	December 5	35	35%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

**IV. GRADING AND EVALUATION**

**Grade Ranges are assigned as follows:**

A	93% - 100% of points	Excellent/superior work exceeding stated requirements
A-	90% - 92% of points	
B+	87% - 89% of points	
B	83% - 86% of points	Good work; stated requirements have been met and exceeded
B-	80% - 82% of points	
C+	77% - 79% of points	
C	73% - 76% of points	Work meets but does not exceed stated requirements
C-	70% - 72% of points	
D	60% - 69% of points	Work does not meet stated requirements



logically, well edited.

ζ  
3)

Minor grammatical or spelling errors (1-

ζ

Typed, double-spaced, one-inch

margins, printed in 12-point font (APA format).

ζ

Meets minimum page requirements but

does not exceed them.

ζ

Turned in on due date; not late.

Assignments **meet the minimum requirements** for the successful completion of the assignment. The student has sufficiently dealt with the question or purpose of the assignment, demonstrates a minimum knowledge and understanding of the topic and has made adequate use of references. The content of the assignment is best characterized as **descriptive**.

#### **Below Average Work: D (69% or below)**

ζ Does not meet minimum requirements of the stated assignment.

ζ

Parts of the assignment are not

addressed; work is incomplete.

ζ

Does not demonstrate knowledge and

understanding of course concepts and content.

ζ

Poorly written, does not make sense,

flows illogically, unedited.

ζ

Major (3+) spelling and grammatical

errors.

ζ

Hand written, single-spaced if typed,

does not meet APA format guidelines

ζ

Does not meet minimum page

requirements.

ζ

Turned in after due date; late.

**NOTE: Social work majors must receive a grade of C or better to avoid repeating this course.**

#### **NOTE: Late Assignments**

Papers and assignments are due in class on the date assigned. Papers handed in 1 to 7 days late will be marked down one letter grade (e.g., from an A to a B). Anything handed in 8-14 days late will be marked down two letter grades, and so on. There are several reasons for this policy. First, the class moves along quickly. You do not want to get behind as you may not be able to catch up. Second, to be fair, people need to take the same amount of time on each assignment. If you take a week or two extra, your work should be of higher quality than others". To compensate, your grade will be lowered - no exceptions.

#### **Academic Honest and Professional Accountability:**

The College of St. Catherine expects each student to maintain academic integrity and honesty under all circumstances. Along with these expectations, there are specific codes of conduct that every student is responsible to uphold at all times. As a group of learners, we are responsible for our own actions, while simultaneously contributing to the learning of others. All students are expected to support and comply with these specific standards to support all learning goals and objectives.

Papers for this class are to be original work rather than a recycled version of work from another class. Handing in work other than your own will result in an automatic failing grade. Punctuation and spelling will be included as part of the grade and handwritten work must be legible. If I cannot read your answers, I will not be able to give you maximum credit. Plagiarism will result in an automatic failing grade.

## V. COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Date</b>	<b><i>Content/Activity</i></b>	<b>Reading/Activity</b>
<b>Class 1 Sept. 12</b>	Introduction to Colleagues Course purpose and goals Review syllabus and assignments <b>Human Behavior in the Macro Social Environment</b> What is the macro environment? The macro environment and generalist practice Seven Step Planned Change Process Human diversity and empowerment Ecosystems theory and the macro environment People’s involvement with multiple systems in the social environment Empowerment & Strengths Perspective <b>A Multidimensional Framework for Assessing Social Functioning</b> 1. Integrative Model 2. Why Study Human Behavior and the social environment? 3. Multidimensional	<b>Kirst-Ashman-Ch 1</b> <b>Highlight 1.4 Critical Thinking Questions 1.3, 1.4, Ashford, Ch 1 Assign Pairs for Chapter Presentations</b>

	<p>Framework</p> <p>4. Models for Assessing Social Functioning</p> <p>5. Life-Span versus Life-Course Perspectives on Human Development</p>	
<p><b>Class 2 Sept. 19</b></p>	<p><b>Theoretical Perspectives on Communities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social Systems</li> <li>2. Human Ecology</li> <li>3. Social-Psychological</li> <li>4. Structural</li> <li>5. Functionalist</li> <li>6. Conflict</li> <li>7. Symbolic Interactionist</li> <li>8. Empowerment</li> </ol> <p><b>Assessment of Geographic Communities and Empowerment</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People and power in communities</li> <li>2. Citizen participation'</li> <li>3. Social Networks</li> <li>4. Empowerment and communities</li> <li>5. Community strengths and building</li> <li>6. Dimensions of empowerment in community environment</li> </ol> <p><b>Neighborhood Empowerment</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Defining neighborhoods</li> <li>2. Functions of neighborhoods: promoting health and well-being</li> <li>3. Types of neighborhoods</li> <li>4. Neighborhood centers, empowerment and promotion of health and well-being</li> <li>5. Settlement houses: a response to changing social and economic</li> </ol>	<p><b>Kirst-Ashman Ch 8, 9 &amp; 10 Critical Thinking Question 8.5 Work in Pairs (30 min)</b></p>

	<p>forces</p> <p>6. Neighborhood centers today</p>	
<b>Class 3 Oct 3</b>	<p><b>Frameworks for Assessing Social Functioning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biophysical Dimension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological Dimension</li> <li>• Social Dimension</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Spiritual Dimension</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ashford- Ch 2-4 Case Analysis Work in Pairs (45 min) Community Paper Due</b></p>
<b>Class 4 Oct. 17</b>	<p><b>Pregnancy, Infancy, Early, and Middle Childhood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biophysical Psychological-Spiritual Social Dimension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk</li> <li>• Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro)</li> <li>• The Role of Values and Ethics</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Midterm Course Evaluation</b></p>	<p><b>Ashford- Ch 5- 8 Presentations Pairs 1, 2, &amp; 3</b></p>
<b>Class 5 Oct. 31</b>	<p><b>Adolescence - Early Adulthood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biophysical Psychological-Spiritual Social Dimension • <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk •</li> <li>• Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro) •</li> <li>• The Role of Values and Ethics</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Ashford- Chapters 9-10 Presentations Pairs 4 &amp; 5</b></p>
<b>Class 6 Nov. 14</b>	<p><b>Middle - Late Adulthood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biophysical Psychological-Spiritual Social Dimension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considerations related to Diversity and Populations at Risk</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Ashford- Ch 11 &amp; 12 Presentations Pairs 6 &amp; 7</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengths, Risks and Interventions (Micro, Mezzo and Macro)</li> <li>• The Role of Values and Ethics</li> </ul>	
<b>Class 7 Nov.21</b>	<p><b>Diversity, Populations At Risk, and Empowerment in the Macro Social Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♣ Empowerment in the macro environment for African Americans, Hispanics, GLBT and Women ♣</li> <li>Developmental Disabilities ♣</li> <li>History of treatment: quest for social and economic justice ♣</li> <li>Generalist practice serving people with developmental disabilities ♣</li> <li>Legislation empowerment: social and economic justice ♣</li> <li>Community support and empowerment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kirst-Ashman Ch 11 Critical Thinking Question 11.3, 11.5, 11.9,</b></p>
<b>Class 8 Dec.5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Justice and the Global Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty and Economic Inequality</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Poverty-line Cost of living exercise</li> <li>• Homeless Youth - Video (30 min)</li> </ul> <p><b>Final Course Evaluation</b></p>	<p><b><i>Kirst-Ashman</i> Ch 12 Poverty in America Lifespan Papers Due</b></p>