COURSE DESCRIPTION
Humans have an amazing capacity to adapt well to adversity—a phenomenon known as resilience. This course uses a resilience framework to explore development across the lifespan, with implications for social work practice. The approach presumes that resilience results from dynamic interactions between individuals and their environments and that every person has the potential to overcome significant challenge at any point in the life course. The construct of resilience has become well-used in social science fields, perhaps as a reaction to deficit models of development, or as part of a renewed focus on human strengths. As a result, greater attention is paid to those who do well “despite the odds,” and on the environmental contexts that support these adaptations. Over the course of the semester, students will examine conceptual, empirical, and applied work on resilience, including new and sometimes controversial applications of resilience theory to social work practice with individuals, families, and communities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
By the end of this semester-long course you will be able to:
1. Understand the key principles of resilience theory and practice.
2. Articulate divergent views on the definition and operationalization of resilience.
3. Define and identify risk and protective factors at each stage of development from birth to late adulthood.
4. Describe personal attributes that influence the odds of resilient functioning.
5. Explain how the contexts in which individuals are embedded may shape their adaptation to adversity.
6. Understand resilience as involving mutually beneficial, reciprocally influential relations between a person and his or her context.
7. Begin to apply a resilience framework to social work practice (clinical and macro) with and on behalf of children, adolescents, adults, families, and communities.

**TEXT AND READINGS**

Class time is used to integrate the reading material through lectures, discussions, experiential learning and/or writing exercises. Therefore, it is essential to come to every class prepared, having acquired a firm grasp of the readings assigned.

**Required:**
Required texts may be purchased in the BU Bookstore or mail ordered from Barnes & Noble. All articles are available online through Mugar Reserve Services.

*The following texts are required for this course:*


**Recommended:**
Several readings (both required and recommended) were selected from the following books. They are excellent resources, but students are not required to purchase them:


**Readings:** All required and recommended readings are available online through Mugar Library, and a hard copy will be available in the library resource room at each of the Off-Campus sites.

Go to: [library.bu.edu](http://library.bu.edu)
1. Click on “Course Reserves”
2. Enter ssw hb720 and click on “Search”
3. Click on the title link
4. To search for a reading by author, click on “Author” to alphabetize all the readings by last name
5. Enter the password – ssw (in lower case) – and click on “Submit”
6. If you wish to save a copy of the article, click on the small disk image (Save a Copy) on the command bar directly above the article and save it to your hard drive or to a disk/CD/flash drive. It is often helpful to create folders on your personal computer to organize your course readings, e.g., “HB720 Readings.” Creating folders will allow you to save articles in one location so that you can read or print them at a later date.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week Date Content Assignment Due
1) 4/29/11 Introduction/Course Overview
   Defining & Operationalizing the Construct of Resilience

2) 4/30/11 Individual Processes Assignment 1: Brief
   Assignment #1: Reflection Paper Due

3) 5/06/11 Ecological Factors, Part I: Family
    Ecological Factors, Part II: Neighborhood and Community

4) 5/07/11 Sociocultural Factors, Part I: Race/Ethnicity, Culture, and Class
    Sociocultural Factors, Part II: Gender and Sexual Orientation
    Assignment #2: Short Paper on The Glass Castle Due

5) 5/13/11 Infancy and Early Childhood
    Middle Childhood

6) 5/14/11 Adolescence

7) 5/20/11 Early and Middle Adulthood Student
    Late Adulthood

8) 5/21/11 Policies and Programs
    Integration and Evaluation

CLASS #1 4/29/11

Part 1. Introduction/Course Overview
“The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places.”
--Ernest Hemingway

Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Begin to understand basic concepts inherent to a resilience perspective and its application to development across the lifespan.
2. Recognize divergent definitions of resilience.
3. Understand the expectations and requirements of the course.

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Part 2. Defining & Operationalizing the Construct of Resilience**
“The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places.”
--Ernest Hemingway

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Understand different perspectives on resilience processes among individuals and their developmental contexts.
2. Begin to recognize how measurement of resilience varies by life stage.
3. Recognize the import of examining interactions between individuals and their environments to the assessment of resilience.

**Required Readings:**
TEXT (Peters et al.): Preface (pp. ix-xii); and Part I, The conceptual and empirical framework for linking resilience to intervention and policy (pp. 3–61).


**Recommended Readings:**

CLASS #2 4/30/11

Individual Processes

“It’s not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”
--Charles Darwin

Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Understand the role of individual attributes in resilience across the lifespan.
2. Recognize the contributions of neurobiology to risk and resilience processes.
3. Identify psychological traits associated with risk and resilience processes.
4. Understand how social work practice can promote adaptive individual functioning.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

Gopnick, A., Meltzoff, A. N., & Kuhl, P. (2001). What scientists have learned about...


**CLASS #3 5/06/11**

**Part 1. Ecological Factors: The Family**

“Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children in their families and relationships, and in their communities.”

--Ann Masten

**Objectives: The student will be able to:**

1. Understand how family processes impact resilient functioning across the life span.
2. Identify risk and protective factors within the family that decrease or enhance the likelihood of resilience.
3. Apply a resilience framework to strategies for supporting family protective processes.

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Part 2. Ecological Factors: The Neighborhood and Community

“The strongest oak of the forest is not the one that is protected from the storm and hidden from the sun. It's the one that stands in the open where it is compelled to struggle for its existence against the winds and rains and the scorching sun.”

--Napoleon Hill

Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Recognize the influence of neighborhood and community context on resilience over the lifespan.
2. Identify specific risk and protective factors within neighborhoods and communities that influence human development and adaptation to risk.
3. Identify social work practice strategies that promote protective forces within neighborhoods and communities.

Required Readings:
TEXT (Peters et al.):

Chapter 8, The social transformation of environments and the promotion of resilience in children (pp. 119−135).

Chapter 9, Promoting resilience in the inner city: Families as a venue for protection, support, and opportunity (pp. 137−155).


Recommended Readings:


**CLASS # 4  5/07/11**

**Part 1:. Sociocultural Factors: Race/Ethnicity, Culture, and Class**

"If we are to achieve a richer culture...we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place."
--Margaret Mead

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Recognize the relevance of race/ethnicity, culture, and class to the identification and promotion of resilience across the lifespan.
2. Identify how psychosocial factors shape an individual's experience of risk, adaptation, and resilience.
3. Understand how social workers can incorporate an awareness of and sensitivity to race/ethnicity, culture, and class into practice aimed at promoting resilience.

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Reading:**
Part 2: Sociocultural Factors: Gender and Sexual Orientation

“How important it is for us to recognize and celebrate our heroes and she-roes!”
—Maya Angelou

Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Describe gender and sexual orientation within a resilience framework.
2. Recognize protective processes that support positive development in the face of discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation.
3. Understand methods of social work practice that may limit the impact of risk and promote strengths associated with gender and sexual orientation.

Required Readings:


Recommended Reading:


**CLASS #5  5/13/11**

### Part 1: Infancy and Early Childhood

“There is no such thing as a baby.”
--*Winnicott*

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”
--*Frederick Douglass*

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Identify risk and resilience processes in the first five years of life.
2. Understand the importance of early relationships to resilience across the lifespan.
3. Identify strategies for intervening with young children at risk, their families, and their environments that facilitate successful navigation of developmental tasks.

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Part 2:. Middle Childhood**

“Children’s talent to endure stems from their ignorance of alternatives.”

--*Maya Angelou*

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Understand processes of positive adaptation despite adversity particular to middle childhood.
2. Identify individual attributes and characteristics of family, peers, schools, communities, and larger social and cultural systems associated with resilience.
3. Apply principles of resilience to social work practice with and on behalf of school-age children and their families.

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Reading:**


CLASS #6 5/14/11

Adolescence
"In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery and death."
-- Anne Frank

Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Understand multi-level protective processes in adolescence that support positive development despite exposure to risk.
2. Recognize common risk factors in adolescence that challenge healthy growth and development over the lifespan.
3. Apply a resilience framework to social work practice with and on behalf of youth experiencing hardship.

Required Readings:
TEXT (Peters et al.): Chapter 6, Dating relationships among at-risk adolescents: An opportunity for resilience? (pp. 83–100).


Recommended Readings:


**CLASS #7 5/20/11**

**Part 1: Early and Middle Adulthood**
"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."
--Confucius

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Recognize individual assets and risk factors that impact the likelihood of positive adaptation in early and middle adulthood.
2. Understand contextual influences on adjustment to adversity during adulthood.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of how social workers can promote resilience through diverse pathways in adulthood.

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**

Part 2:. Late Adulthood
"In the depths of winter, I discovered in me an invincible summer"
--Albert Camus

Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Identify and apply a resilience perspective to development in late adulthood.
2. Understand individual strengths and challenges that impact developmental trajectories in the last stage of life.
3. Develop an understanding of the sociocultural contexts within which adaptation in late adulthood are influenced and defined.
4. Recognize specific social work strategies to promote positive development in late adulthood.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


CLASS #8 5/21/11

Part 1: Policies and Programs
Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Recognize how a resilience approach can be applied to the development and implementation of prevention/intervention programs and policies.
2. Identify examples of resilience-based programs and policies that target specific risks to healthy development.
3. Understand how social workers can use evidence-based programs and policies to promote positive development among individuals, families, and communities.

Required Readings:
TEXT (Peters et al.):
Chapter 5, Creating effective interventions for pregnant teenagers (pp.65−82).
Chapter 10, A community-based approach to promoting resilience in young children, their families, and their neighborhoods (pp. 157−176).


Recommended Readings:


Part 2: Integration and Evaluation
“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.”
--Albert Einstein

Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Reflect on the content covered and one’s learning during the semester.
2. Evaluate the course.

**Required Readings:**
None

**EVALUATION CRITERIA/GRADING**

You will complete 3 assignments for this course (see assignment descriptions)

**Assignments Percentage of Grade**
1. Brief Reflection Paper 10%
2. Short Paper on The Glass Castle 20%
3. Group Presentation 15%
4. Research Paper 35%

**Class Participation**
Attendance, readings completed, engagement 20%

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance:**
Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to inform the instructor in advance of any absences. Failure to attend class sessions is likely to have a negative effect on your course grade.

**Academic honesty:**
Papers and presentations in the School of Social Work must meet standards of academic honesty and integrity, avoiding any possibility of plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct. For specific information about the BUSSW policy regarding academic misconduct, see *Student Handbook: Ways & Means* (http://www.bu.edu/ssw/current/stud_hb/index.shtml).

**Incomplete Grades:**
A student who cannot complete the assignments for a course must initiate an incomplete grade dialogue with the instructor before the final class. Individual instructors can refuse to grant a grade of Incomplete.
The Incomplete Grade Contract can be found at: http://www.bu.edu/ssw/current/academic/registration/documents/IncompleteGradeContract2010.pdf
A student who does not submit to the Registrar a negotiated Incomplete Grade Contract with the instructor will receive a grade of F for the course. Students must resolve incomplete grades by the agreed upon contract date. An incomplete grade will be changed to a grade of F by the instructor if the student fails to complete work by contract date. A student must successfully complete a pre-requisite course to continue in the next course in the sequence.
**Students with disabilities:**
If you have a disability and want to request reasonable accommodation, the University requires that you consult with Boston University’s Office of Disability Services for information regarding this process (http://www.bu.edu/disability/).

**Writing style and references:**

**Academic writing assistance:**
If you would like academic writing assistance, information can be found at http://www.bu.edu/ssw/current/academic/assistance/index.shtml or contact the BUSSW Office of Student Services.

**Electronic devices in the classroom:**
Computers may be used to support the learning activities in the classroom, with permission of your instructor. These include such activities as taking notes and accessing course readings under discussion. However, non-academic use of laptops and other devices are distracting and seriously disrupt the learning process for everyone. Neither computers nor other electronic devices are to be used in the classroom for non-academic reasons. This includes e-mailing, texting, social networking, and use of the Internet. The use of cell phones during class time is prohibited. Please turn off cell phones and refrain from taking calls unless you are “on call” and have cleared this with the instructor prior to class.

Under such circumstances, please put your phone on vibrate, sit close to a door, and step out of the room to take the call.

**Audiotaping of classes:**
A Massachusetts statute, MGL c. 272 section 99, prohibits the taping of any oral communication without notice to all parties involved. It is important, therefore, that any taping of classroom proceedings (e.g., for the benefit of absent students or as a study aid to all students) occur only with effective prior notice to all. Class lectures at BUSSW are not routinely audiotaped, but occasionally a student or faculty member may wish to do so. In the event that a specific class session is to be taped (e.g., for a student who will be absent for that session), the faculty member should notify students at the beginning of the class that the session will be taped. If a course will be audiotaped throughout the semester (e.g., as an academic accommodation for a student with a documented disability or for other educational purposes) the faculty member will inform students (in the course syllabus or in a written communication) that the class lectures will be taped.

**Religious holidays:**
The school, in scheduling classes on religious holiday, intends that students
observing those holidays be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for canceled classes to be rescheduled.

Other course policies:
**Students should notify instructors by phone or e-mail of any impending absence**, indicating how they will obtain material from the missed session. Because the framework for each class is established in the opening minutes of the session, it is important that all participants arrive on time. A persistent pattern of unapproved lateness may have a negative effect on the student’s course grade.

Class Participation:
**Students are expected to participate actively in class**, and in a manner that is respectful of each other's contributions, of clients and client confidentiality, and of the instructor and the shared process of learning.

Full participation creates an effective learning environment. We expect that each student will contribute to the in-class learning experience by actively listening, speaking, and sometimes leading class discussions.

Each student is a learning resource for other students and faculty. The common foundation for discussion rests with the readings. We believe that both verbal and written skills are important to social workers. You will have the opportunity to participate in small groups as well as in larger class discussions.

**Class participation counts for 20% of your grade** and is evaluated on the following criteria: attendance, level of preparation demonstrated in oral questions and comments in small and large group discussions, and active listening to the instructor and your classmates.

Late Assignments
It is your responsibility to submit assignments on time. If you are unable to submit an assignment by the date and time indicated on this syllabus, you must inform me at least 48 hours prior to the time the assignment is due. If you submit an assignment after the due date and time without informing me, 10% of the total assignment point value will be deducted automatically. For example, if an assignment is worth 25 points, 2.5 points will be deducted prior to grading. Another 10% of the total grade will be deducted for each additional week, or fraction thereof, that the assignment is late. You can avoid the late deduction(s) by planning ahead and contacting me to make alternative arrangements.
ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1
BRIEF REFLECTION PAPER
Due: 4/30/11
Assignment Description:
Resilience has been described as “ordinary magic,” meaning that it is a common phenomenon arising from basic systems of human adaptation (Masten, 2001). With this in mind, answer the following questions about resilience in your own life:

1. **How do you define resilience?**
   a. What definition(s) from the readings and lectures made the most sense to you and why? (Cite at least one source for the definition you choose.)
   b. Did you disagree or were you uncomfortable with any definition? If so, why?

2. **In what ways do you think resilience has been evident in your own life?**
   a. What evidence of resilience can you identify in your own life or in the life of a person close to you?
   b. What were the particular challenges you/this person faced?
   c. Did you expect that you/this person would respond to adversity in the way that you/this person did? Why or why not?
   d. Were there ways in which you/this person did not adapt well to the adversity? Describe.

3. **What do you think accounts for your/this person’s resilient functioning?**
   a. What individual factors (e.g., temperament, problem-solving skills, intelligence, mental health) might have played a protective role?
   b. What ecological factors (e.g., family, friends, schools, neighborhood, culture, religion, social networks) do you think played a protective role?

4. **How might this example of resilience relate (or not relate) to your/this person’s capacity to adapt well to stress in the future?**

**General Paper Guidelines**
Length: 2-3 pages
Format: 12-point, Times New Roman font; 1-inch margins (top, bottom, right, left); include page numbers.
References: Follow American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for citation.

Assignment 2
SHORT PAPER on THE GLASS CASTLE
Due: May 7, 2011
Assignment Description:
For this assignment, students are required to read the book, The Glass Castle, a memoir by Jeannette Walls. Students will then write a short paper (4–6 pages) applying concepts learned in the first half of the course. There are two parts to the paper: 1) an analysis of risk and resilience (80% of paper grade), and 2) a proposal for an intervention (clinical or macro) (20% of paper grade).

**Part 1. Analysis of Risk and Resilience** (3–4 pages)
Please address the following questions in your paper:

1. What do you believe are the primary threats to Jeannette Walls' development (e.g., individual, family, school, neighborhood, cultural, societal risk factors), and do they change over time?

What definition did you use to define and identify risk in the Walls family? (Use at least two articles and/or chapters to explain your answer.)

2. The first story Jeanette tells of her childhood is that of burning herself severely at age three, and her father abruptly taking her out of the hospital. Why do you think she opens with this story, and how does it serve as a metaphor for her childhood?

3. Rex Walls often asked his children, "Have I ever let you down?" Why was this question—and the "No, Dad" response—so important for him and for his children? In what ways did he actually come through for the children?

4. Despite many hardships Jeanette faced growing up, as an adult she leads a life that could be characterized as "successful." What factors might account for her success?

What are the central mechanisms of protection in Jeannette’s life (e.g., individual, family, school, neighborhood, cultural, societal protective factors)?

How do the course readings/lectures inform the definition and identification of protective factors? (Use at least two articles and/or chapters to support your appraisal.)

5. What character traits (good, bad, or in between) do you think Jeannette inherited from her parents and how do you think those traits shaped her life?

6. Would you characterize this memoir as a story of resilience? Why or why not?

How, if at all, is your answer different for Jeannette than her siblings?

What definition are you using to assess resilience? (Select and present a definition of resilience from the readings/lecture that supports your conclusions.)

7. Discuss the metaphor of the "glass castle" and what it signifies.

Why is it important that, just before leaving for New York, Jeannette tells her father that she doesn't believe he'll ever build it? (p. 238)

**Part 2. Proposing an Intervention (1–2 pages)**

Imagine that you, as a social worker, can intervene with one or more characters at any point in the book. Using a clinical or macro focus, answer the following questions:

1. Based on a resilience framework, what social work intervention would you suggest? Describe the intervention you selected, including the problem(s) you aim to address and the nature (i.e., type, mode, duration, intensity) of services to be provided.

2. What are the potential strengths and limitations of this intervention to promote resilience?

Describe the fit of this intervention with the needs of the client(s). (Use at least one article/chapter from course readings to support your approach.)

What issue(s) will likely remain unaddressed by the intervention? How so?

**General Paper Guidelines**

Length: 4-5 pages

Format: 12-point, Times New Roman font; 1-inch margins (top, bottom, right, left); double-spaced (no extra spaces between paragraphs); include page numbers.

References: A minimum of 6 peer-reviewed journal articles/chapters from scholarly texts required. You must follow American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for citation.
Assignment 3
GROUP PRESENTATION
Due: As assigned
Assignment Description:
This assignment requires students to conduct research on resilience at a single stage of the lifespan and to consider the risks/challenges as well as protective factors associated with this stage of life. You will present your findings during the 5th, 6th or 7th classes. Your presentation will include a 1-2 page summary of your findings WITH REFERENCES to be handed out to each student for their own use after class. This summary as well as a copy of any other handouts/slides involved with your presentation will be handed in to the professor.

Part I. Oral Presentation (15% of course grade)
You will give your oral presentation during the class devoted to the life stage you are assigned for this assignment
1. You will have 30 minutes for your presentation: 20 minutes for a didactic overview and 10 minutes for questions/comments from the audience (Power Point presentations allowed but not required).
2. Please prepare a summary of 1-2 pages in length that includes a list of references you found useful and which will be handed out to each student. You may also use PowerPoint slides, tables, graphs, or any other design that will help you supplement and strengthen your presentation. A copy of these materials should also be given to the instructor.
3. It is important to rehearse and time your presentation to make maximum use of the time allotted to you.
4. Your presentation will be evaluated as follows:
   a. the scholarly content of your presentation;
   b. how well you deliver information and engage with the audience;
   c. how well you organize your presentation; and
   d. how well you answer questions from the audience.

Assignment 4.
Research Paper (35% of course grade)
Due: 6/1/11 (via snail mail or email)
You will write a 10–12 page, double-spaced research paper based on a topic of your choosing. This topic may be related to the subject of your group presentation.

Sample topics include (but are not limited to):
- Abuse and neglect in early childhood
- Homophobia in early adulthood
- Racism in adolescence
- Dementia in late adulthood
- Parental divorce in early childhood
- ADHD in middle adulthood
A hardcopy of your paper is due ten days after the end of class.

Your research paper must:
1. **Describe the topic area** (i.e., recent trends, demographic statistics, and epidemiological data, if available) **and state why this topic is important to understanding resilience** (2–3 pages).
2. **State the relevance of this topic to development at the stage of life you chose** (i.e., neurological, biological, cognitive, social-emotional, physical development) (1–2 pages).
3. **Summarize current scholarship on risk and resilience** with regard to your topic and life stage (5–6 pages).
   a. What specific risk and protective factors have been identified in the literature?
   b. What individual and environmental conditions are associated with resilience?
   c. What interventions appear to have been successful or unsuccessful in promoting resilience to this adversity during this life stage?
4. **Identify limitations in current research** on your topic and life stage (e.g., lack of studies, problems with research methodology, limited applications to social work practice) (1–2 pages).
5. **Discuss implications of extant research for social work research, policy, and practice** (macro, clinical, or both) (1–2 pages).

**General Paper Guidelines**
Length: 10-12 pages
Format: 12-point, Times New Roman font; 1-inch margins (top, bottom, right, left); double-spaced (no extra spaces between paragraphs, please); include page numbers.
Organization: Introductory and concluding paragraphs and section subheadings are strongly recommended to help organize a paper of this length.
References: You must use at least 15-20 peer-reviewed journal articles and chapters from scholarly texts. Follow American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for citation.