COURSE DESCRIPTION

Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) is designed to help you chart a knowledgeable course through the complexity of human experience. We will explore a select set of theories that help us understand how individuals and communities develop and interact. Because empathic and skillful interventions with individuals, groups, and communities require understanding ourselves as well as others, the course provides an opportunity for increased self-awareness. At the beginning of the course, we focus on the key theories that help us understand the dimensions and expression of human behavior in the social environment. This discussion is followed by an examination of how dimensions of culture and cultural contexts can shape individual values, beliefs worldviews and identities and therefore play a role in the helping process. Through discussion and analysis, we will explore areas of universality and difference in the context of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, spiritual beliefs, and socioeconomic class, as well as the realities and influence of multiple forms of oppression. Finally, we will examine human development throughout the lifespan, considering the developmental scientific knowledge base regarding opportunities and vulnerabilities present during the different stages of the lifecycle and the biopsychosocial and cultural factors that can influence individual development. The ability to analyze human behavior in the social environment is essential for all methods of social work practice, whether the primary focus is clinical or macro.

HB 720 constitutes the foundation course in the human behavior department and is the underpinning of all courses in the HBSE sequence.
The goal of the course is to enable students to develop a culturally competent framework for analyzing human behavior in order to create empathic, empowering relationships with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social work theory and practice has a unique perspective that articulates the interconnection between an individual and his or her environment. The framework draws from other disciplines, including anthropology, economics, psychology, biology, and sociology. The course will provide an understanding of the interactions among biological, social, psychological, and cultural systems. Forces that facilitate optimal growth and development will be contrasted with forces that impede development. The course will build on your undergraduate knowledge of basic human behavior theories, adding theoretical breadth, critical contextualization, and professional application. It will also help you articulate your unique framework for practice within social work.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Understand key theories that describe human behavior in an ecological context.
2. Describe how cultural beliefs and values, as well as oppression, may shape perceptions of self and others and influence the worker-client relationship.
3. Understand and articulate the interactional dynamics of individual growth and development within an ecological context.
4. Understand and articulate the complexity of individual growth and development throughout the life span within key domains: biological, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual.
5. Identify the internal and external forces that promote and challenge development.
6. Critically evaluate theories.
7. Integrate theories and differentially apply these in conjunction with the empirical knowledge base regarding human development in the service of constructing theoretically and empirically informed understandings of individuals and systems.
TEXTBOOK and READINGS

Class time is used to integrate the reading material through lectures, discussions, and experiential learning. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss, analyze, and critique all assigned readings.

Textbook: The textbook listed below is required and may be purchased in the BU Bookstore or mail ordered from Barnes & Noble. A copy of this text will be placed on reserve in Mugar Library and at each OCP campus library resource room.


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

- Click on “Course Reserves”

- Enter ssw hb720 and click on “Search”

- Click on the title link
  - To search for a reading by author, click on “Author” to alphabetize all the readings by last name

- Enter the password – ssw (in lower case) – and click on “Submit”

- 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.
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Session 1. Course Overview, Social Work Values, and Lifespan Perspective (Date: x/x/09)

Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Understand the purpose and expectations of the course and its grounding in social work values.
2. Understand the strengths-based perspective and its application to human behavior theories and social work practice.
3. Understand the inter-relationships between historical time, public issues, and private troubles.

Required:


Recommended:


Session 2. Introduction to Social and Environmental Contexts: Ecological and Systems Theories (Date: x/x/09)

Objectives: The student will be able to:
1. Understand the ecological and systems perspectives used in examining human behavior in the social environment.
2. Apply ecological and systems theories to understanding and assessing human behavior.

Required:


**Recommended:**


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<th>Session 3.</th>
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**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Recognize cultures as potential sources of strength, risk, and identity.
2. Understand and apply concepts of resilience theories.
3. Identify internal and external sources of resilience.
4. Understand multiple pathways to resilience.

**Required:**


6


**Recommended**


**Sessions 4–7. Social and Environmental Contexts**

**Overarching Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Understand the importance of multiple group memberships with regard to race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, and spirituality.
2. Examine issues of diversity using the ecological and systems perspectives, as well as a risk and resilience framework.
3. Enhance awareness of one’s own background, values, assumptions and potential biases related to diverse group memberships, and how these may affect one’s worldview and professional practice.

**Session 4. Race and Ethnicity (Date: x/x/09)**

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Understand the concept of ethnicity, its multiple manifestations, and the varying degrees to which it shapes human behavior.
2. Understand the basic concept of acculturation and multiple group memberships.
3. Define and recognize privilege, racism, and ethnocentrism.
4. Recognize, respect, and effectively work with racial and ethnic differences in social work practice.

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Session 5. Social Class** *(Date: x/x/09)*

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Understand the construction of social class in contemporary U.S. society.
2. Increase awareness of how social class may affect one’s worldview and social interactions.
3. Identify the factors that promote and preserve different levels of power and privilege in society.
4. Recognize the influence of poverty and classism on human development and well-being.

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


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**Session 6. Gender and Sexual Orientation (Date: x/x/09)**

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Understand the social construction of gender and gender roles.
2. Identify how gender-based theories inform our knowledge of human behavior.
3. Understand the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of sexual orientation.
4. Define individual and structural forms of heterosexism, homophobia, and transgender discrimination

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


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**Session 7. Spirituality & Death and Dying (Date: x/x/09)**

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Understand the implications of religion and spirituality in the context of social work practice and social justice.
2. Understand religious and spiritual diversity from a multicultural perspective.
3. Understand theories of loss and mourning.
4. Contextualize experiences of loss, death and dying within ecological, developmental, and cultural perspectives.

**Required:**
**TEXTBOOK:** Feldman, Chap. 9


**Recommended:**


**Sessions 8–13. Development Across the Lifespan**

**Overarching Objectives:** For each developmental stage, students will be able to:
1. Apply critical thinking skills to human behavior theories as they relate to development.
2. Recognize the influence of sociocultural contexts on human behavior and development.
3. Apply ecological and risk and resilience perspectives to human development and behavior.
4. Apply developmental theory to practice situations at the clinical and macro levels.

**Session 8. Birth to Three (Date: x/x/09)**

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Identify and apply multiple theoretical perspectives for understanding development of infants and toddlers.
2. Describe the relational and neurobiological processes related to the development of attachment and self-regulation and their implications for healthy development and resilience.
3. Understand the role of temperament in the context of infant development.

**Required:**
TEXTBOOK: Feldman, Chap. 2


regulation in early infancy. [full citation information is forthcoming]


**Recommended:**


**Session 9.  Preschool and Middle Childhood  (Date: x/x/09)**

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Identify developmental milestones associated with physical, cognitive, and emotional development in preschool and middle childhood.
2. Articulate and apply an understanding of the influence of the family as well as larger systems, including day care, on development in preschool.
3. Articulate and apply an understanding of the influence of family, peers, schools, communities, and larger social and cultural systems on children’s behavior and diverse pathways of development in middle childhood.
4. Recognize the relationship between the developmental science knowledge base and social policy development related to children.

**Required:**
TEXTBOOK: Feldman, Chaps. 3 and 4


Recommended:


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<th>Session 10. Adolescence  (Date: x/x/09)</th>
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**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Identify developmental milestones associated with physical, cognitive and emotional development in adolescence.
2. Articulate and apply an understanding of the influence of family, peers, schools, communities, and larger social and cultural systems on adolescent behavior and diverse pathways of development.
3. Identify how attachment relationships with primary caregiving adults shift and change in adolescence.
4. Identify how economic disadvantage can influence the parent-child relationship and may contribute to adultification in adolescence.
5. Understand the influence of immigration on adolescent development.

**Required:**
TEXTBOOK: Feldman, Chap. 5


**Recommended:**


**Session 11. Early Adulthood** *(Date: x/x/09)*

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Identify developmental milestones associated with physical, cognitive, and emotional development in early adulthood.
2. Understand human behavior in early adulthood including knowledge of developmental crises and assets, psychopathology, and environmental factors that affect both normal and abnormal behavior.
3. Identify the impact of sociocultural contexts, including issues of social and economic
justice, on the ways young adults assume adult roles and negotiate developmental tasks.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of how developmental tasks and processes can influence the development of risky behaviors such as substance abuse.

**Required:**
TEXTBOOK: Feldman, Chap. 6


**Recommended:**


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**Session 12. Middle Adulthood (Date: x/x/09)**

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

1. Identify developmental changes associated with physical, cognitive and emotional development in middle adulthood.

2. Recognize the unique opportunities and challenges of middle adulthood related to family and peer relationships, work, health, and stress.

3. Describe the multiple ways in which individuals negotiate the tasks of this developmental period, while recognizing the differential availability of internal and external resources.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the new and continuing
development in key arenas such as intimate relationships, employment, and parenting/caregiving.

**Required:**
TEXTBOOK: Feldman, Chap. 7


**Recommended:**


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**Session 13. Late Adulthood (Date: x/x/09)**

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Identify developmental changes associated with physical, cognitive and emotional development in late adulthood.
2. Develop an understanding of the sociocultural contexts within which late adulthood is defined and assigned meaning.
3. Recognize the unique opportunities and challenges of late adulthood related to family and peer relationships, employment, health, sexuality, stress, and cumulative loss.
4. Identify the assets and resilience of aging within a socio-cultural context.

**Required:**
TEXTBOOK: Feldman, Chap. 8


**Recommended:**


**Session 14. Integration and Evaluation  (Date: x/x/09)**

**Objectives:** The student will be able to:
1. Reflect on the content covered and learned during the semester.
2. Evaluate the course.

**Class Activity:**

Students will distribute copies of their Resource Sheet (see assignment 3) to their classmates, and provide a brief (2–3 minute) presentation of the key information listed on this sheet.
ASSIGNMENTS

You will complete three written assignments for HB720. Students are expected to utilize both course readings and additional peer-reviewed professional journal articles and scholarly texts for these assignments. LIMITED use of website information is permissible.

DUE DATES

Assignment 1: Reaction Paper (x/x/09)
Assignment 2: Culture Paper (x/x/09)
Assignment 3: Research Paper (x/x/09)

HB 720 Assignment 1
Due: x/xx/09

REACTION PAPER

In a brief paper, i.e., no more than two double-spaced pages using a 12-point font, apply C. W. Mills' concept of public issues/private troubles to a current social situation of your choice, e.g., homelessness, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, elder abuse. (Please see the recommended readings in Session 1 for examples.)

Discuss areas in which you might agree and/or disagree with this theory and how you might find it useful in your role as a social worker.

The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your ability to understand and critique a theory and to think about how theory can inform macro and clinical practice.

Also, it is intended to give me an opportunity to identify any possible writing concerns and underscore assignment expectations.

Please use APA format (5th ed.) when referencing articles in the text and include a reference list at the end of the paper. See the BUSSW Student Services website for detailed information on APA format:

http://www.bu.edu/ssw/current/academic/style_guide/index.shtml
ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN CULTURAL CONTEXTS

The goal of this assignment is to deepen your understanding of how culture and oppression influence your sense of identity, as well as your interactions with and perceptions of others in personal and professional contexts. Specifically, the assignment provides you with an opportunity to analyze and reflect on your personal development and how this influences your professional practice in relation to the following:

1. how specific cultures have influenced your beliefs, values, and behaviors, and
2. how “dominant” cultures support or create challenges for acting on these beliefs and values.

Further, it is an opportunity to think, clarify, and explore your ideas about yourself and your work in a professional context.

Assignment Guidelines:

Begin your paper by identifying two cultures that have influenced your sense of identity and place in the world. Then discuss, using appropriate examples, each of the following:

1. Within these cultures, what two or three values, beliefs, or norms have significantly influenced your development and sense of identity?

2. How were these values and beliefs conveyed or transmitted to you? Start by identifying the institutions and relationships that were important in this process (e.g., parents, extended family members, schools, peer groups, spiritual leaders), and then describe how they specifically influenced your development and identity.

3. How are the values, beliefs, and norms of the two cultures you identified consonant or dissonant with those of the dominant culture in the United States? How are they consonant or dissonant with the culture(s) of the community(ies) with which you affiliate? How has your development, identity, and comfort and/or discomfort in daily life been influenced by this congruence or incongruence?

4. Awareness of your personal beliefs, values, and biases is an essential component of ethical and effective social work practice. Please discuss how the norms, values, and beliefs associated with the two cultures you identified are likely to influence you and your work as a social work practitioner. Please offer specific examples.

This paper requires much reflective thought prior to writing your analysis. Please plan ahead and leave time for both the reflective and writing processes. Also, rather than beginning your reflective process by identifying the cultures you wish to focus on, you may
find it easier to approach this paper by first considering the major values and beliefs you hold and then identifying their cultural roots. Regardless of whether you begin your reflective process by focusing on the specific beliefs or the two cultures, the presentation of your analysis in the final version of your paper should be organized around two specific cultures.

**Paper Format:** 5–7 page paper, double-spaced, 12-point font

- Please cite a minimum of four references in your paper, at least two of these from the syllabus.

- Your paper should be an "integrated" written statement, with appropriate introductory and concluding paragraphs, not simply a list of discrete answers to questions 1–4.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 30% of your course grade.

Please remember you will not be graded on your life experience. However, you will be graded on the clarity of your analysis and application of the concepts discussed in the course. Specifically, the following will be considered:

1. How accurately and thoroughly you address the paper's topic, and discuss each of the questions posed. This includes not simply recounting parts of your life story, but rather examining a specific set of your experiences in light of how cultural influences have shaped your own personal beliefs and behaviors.

2. How clearly you present your overall analysis, state your individual points, and support them with relevant examples.

3. How accurately you draw on and cite appropriate references using APA style (5th ed.).

4. How well you present your ideas in written form (i.e., grammar, editing).
Assignment 3
RESEARCH PAPER
Due: To be determined by the instructor

Defining the Topic

You will write a research paper and prepare a resource sheet on a topic of your choice. Your topic must correspond to a particular life cycle stage that is discussed in class, e.g., birth to three, adolescence, late adulthood. Listed below are sample topics from previous years.

- Prenatal Exposure to Heroin and Methadone: Effects on Infant Development
- Perinatal Loss and Attachment Theory
- Language Development During Infancy: Symbolic Gesturing as Precursor for Verbal Language
- The Impact of the Foster Care System on Infant and Toddler Development
- Autism Spectrum Disorder: Birth to Three
- Development of Children in Lesbian Families
- The Impact of Witnessing Domestic Violence on Childhood Development
- Art Therapy in Middle Childhood
- The Psychological Impact of HIV/AIDS on African Orphan Children
- Navigating Uncharted Territory: Exploring the Formation of Peer Relationships among Adolescents with Asperger Syndrome
- Juvenile Prostitution in the United States
- The Effects of War on Adolescents
- Resilience in Adolescent Refugees
- Spiritual Development in Adolescence
- The Cutting Edge of Adolescence
- Self-Injurious Behavior in Adolescence
- Parental Loss and Early Adulthood Development
- Occupational Transitions in Middle Adulthood
- Middle Adulthood: The Sandwich Generation
- Late Adulthood and Sexuality: Old People Getting It On?
- Death and Dying: Hospice

Assignment Guidelines:

1. Your research paper must:
   a) describe the topic area—i.e., recent trends, demographic statistics, and epidemiological data, if available—and state why this topic is important;
   b) apply a developmental perspective and make a clear link to human behavior
theory for the particular life stage being addressed;
c) summarize current scholarship from peer-reviewed journals and scholarly texts;
d) outline implications for social work practice—macro, clinical, or both—including relevant field or professional work experience (see description below); and
e) include a resource sheet with your paper (see details below).

2. The number of references for this paper is unlimited. That is, you need to have a sufficient number to substantiate the claims you make in your paper and demonstrate that you have a command of the literature. An estimated range of references for this assignment is 15 to 25.

Field or professional work experience can be any direct engagement with clients or stakeholders that is relevant to the specific population described in your paper. It may be clinical or macro in focus, e.g., individual work with a client, group work, community organizing, legislative efforts. If you do not have any relevant field or professional work experience from which to draw on, you will need to: (a) talk with a person who has first-hand experience with your selected topic, e.g., an individual from the population you described in your paper, program director, practitioner, or community advocate; or (b) read a first-person account written by an individual who is part of the population you discussed in your paper.

Resource Sheet: Please prepare a one-page, double-sided (or two-page, single-sided) resource sheet that contains the following four components:

1. Research Highlights: Bulleted information that describes key points or research findings from your paper.
2. Academic Resources: A list of academic resources (e.g., journal articles and books) that you would recommend to your classmates or social work practitioners.
3. Internet, Popular Press, and Media Resources: A list of materials such as web pages, URLs to videos or podcasts, novels, non-fiction works, and DVDs/videos.
4. Community-based and Professional Practice Resources: A list of organizations, agencies, or community groups that provide services to or advocate for the population described in your paper.

Note: You will distribute copies of the resource sheet to your classmates during Session 14, and provide a brief (2–3 minute) presentation of the key information listed on this sheet.

Paper Format: 10 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font

Grading: This assignment is worth 50% of your course grade: 40% for the paper and 10% for the resource sheet.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Session 1. Social Work Values and Lifespan Perspective


Session 2. Introduction to Social and Environmental Contexts: Ecological and Systems Theories


Session 3. Individuals in Social Environments: Culture and Risk & Resilience


**Session 4. Race and Ethnicity**


**Session 5. Social Class**


**Session 6. Gender and Sexuality**


Session 7. Spirituality & Death and Dying


Session 8. Infancy


Session 9. Preschool and Middle Childhood


Session 10. Adolescence


**Session 11. Early Adulthood**


**Session 12. Middle Adulthood**


**Session 13. Late Adulthood**


COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Attendance
As developing professional colleagues, students are expected to attend all class sessions and participate actively, respectful of each other's contributions, of clients and client confidentiality, and of the instructor and the shared process of learning. Students are expected to inform the instructor in advance of any absences. Failure to attend class sessions may have a negative effect on the student’s course grade.

Students should notify instructors by phone or e-mail of any impending absence, indicating how they will obtain material from the missed session. Since 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 affect negatively a 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 quality of written responses to in-class exercises.

Policy Regarding Academic Misconduct
Pages 64–68 of the BUSSW Ways & Means Handbook (distributed to all entering students) describes forms of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, that can result in a student's referral to the School's Status Review Committee for review of the student's overall performance and readiness to continue in professional social work education. Plagiarism (p. 64) "is the act of representing someone else's creative and/or academic work as one's own, whether in full or part. It can be an act of commission, in which one intentionally appropriates the words, pictures, or ideas of another; or it can be an act of omission, in which one fails to acknowledge/document/give credit to the source, creator, and/or copyright owners of those words, pictures, or ideas. Any fabrication (i.e. making up) of material, quotes, or sources other than created in a work of fiction, is also plagiarism.

Plagiarism also includes, but is not limited to, the purchase, copying, or uncited use of another's work; use of material translated from another language as though it were original to the student; copying material word for word without quotation marks and
attribution to its source; and presenting collaborative work as though it were the presenter's work alone.

*Students may not submit the same material for two courses without prior written approval of both instructors involved.* Making false statements regarding academic misconduct or attributing the misconduct wholly to others is also misconduct. Pressuring a faculty member or fellow student to behave unethically is also academic misconduct and grounds for Status Review.

**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.

**Writing Style and References**


**Academic Writing Assistance**

Students in need of tutoring and/or academic writing assistance should contact their faculty advisor for available resources. Additional information on writing assistance for Off-Campus students is available via the OCP web page at: [http://www.bu.edu/ssw/academic/msw/off-campus/current/supports/index.shtml](http://www.bu.edu/ssw/academic/msw/off-campus/current/supports/index.shtml)

**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.

**Confidentiality**

Federal health regulations of 2003 mandate the protection of client confidentiality by changing the name of the client, significant others, agency, conditions, other descriptors, and geographic locations that could lead to client identification.