

WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK YESHIVA UNIVERSITY DOCTORAL  
PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WELFARE

SWK8814: SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE THEORIES

Dr. Sari Skolnik – Spring Semester, 2019

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, students will explore contemporary social work theory within the context of its applicability and relevance to social work practice. The focus is on an in-depth examination of the role and use of practice theory within the social context in which it is practiced and the interface between political, cultural, and national issues that influence the development, selection, and use of practice theory.

The analysis of social work theories considers their uses and adaptations from other disciplines as well as inter-disciplinary perspectives that include social work. Attention is given to the basis and evolution of the theory, its precepts, its utility (based on assessment according to agreed-upon criteria discussed in class), and the limitations. The application of theoretical perspectives to actual practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels is emphasized.

**EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

Knowledge Objectives

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate:

1. Knowledge about the different theoretical frameworks for social work practice and their differentiating attributes.
2. Knowledge about the underlying theories that inform social work practice.
3. Comprehension of the key elements of a theory.
4. Ability to critically compare and appraise the major theoretical perspectives.
5. Knowledge about current debates regarding the validity and utility of various theories and concepts of practice.
6. Understanding of the linkages between social work theory, research, values and ethics, and practice.

Skill Objectives

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate:

1. Ability to articulate the implications of different theoretical frameworks for social work practice.

2. Ability to document and convincingly defend a position on a social work theory.
3. Ability to apply theoretical models to practice situations.
4. Ability to articulate criteria of effective theoretical perspectives.
5. Ability to critique theoretical formulations and their application to practice.
6. Skill in analyzing the knowledge base of one's own practice.
7. Skill in identifying the value base of different theories.

## **PLAGIARISM**

Students should remember that the School will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will automatically FAIL the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action that may include expulsion.

## **HIPAA ALERT**

In line with the new HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work, will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Given the nature of classroom discussion and the presentation of case materials and at times personal revelation in class, students are reminded that the same commitment to confidentiality with clients extends to classmates. What is shared in class stays in class.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, Rochelle Kohn, Beren Campus, 917-326-4828, rkohn1@yu.edu,

Abby Kelsen, Wilf Campus, 646-685-0118, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. After approval for accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter to Disability Services Office immediately.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Required Texts**

Payne, Malcolm (2014). Modern Social work theory, 4th Ed. Lyceum.

Turner, F.J. (2017). Social work treatment: Interlocking theoretical approaches, 6th ed. Oxford Univ. Press.

### **Course Assignments**

#### ***Discussion Board:***

Directions: On weeks when there is no face-face class (weeks 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13) you will need to participate in the assigned discussion forum. Each student is responsible to develop ONE response post to the assigned questions and at least ONE response to a classmate's comments. Each post should demonstrate your familiarity with each assigned reading, assigned practice theory, its' premise, practice principles, interventions, populations that it might be employed with and how it might be integrated into practice with clients. These posts are in lieu of live class discussions, the expectation is active participation from the entire class. I will keep track of the time you spend on-line, your participation and the substance of your work on an ongoing basis throughout the semester. Posts will be graded. Rubric is included in the discussion section. You must post your weekly response on the discussion board by Sunday night and respond to at least 1 classmate by Wednesday night. I will be responding to posts throughout the module. Each module will begin on a Thursday.

#### ***Class Presentations:***

Each student will be part of a group leading a discussion about a specific theoretical framework. These groups will be assigned during the first class. Specific requirements will be handed out in class.

**Mini Paper:** Reflect on your current social work practice---What guides your practice? What is the role of theory in your current practice? What role does practice wisdom play. How have the readings in this course so far impacted your thoughts about the role of theory in contemporary social work practice. **Due February 28th.** Use references and APA. Submitted electronically. **No more than 5 pages!**

**Final Paper.** A final paper is **due no later than May 14th** and will be submitted electronically and will include the following content:

Please select a theory that has guided your work with a client (can be individual, group, or community). Give an overview of a case and with detail of theory integration to this practice scenario, answer the following:

1. How did this theory inform your *assumptions* about the case?
2. How did this theory inform your *assessment* of the case?
3. How did this theory inform your **interventions** of the case?
4. Critically analyze how this theory supported your work with this case
5. Critically analyze the limitations of this theory with this case
6. Illustrate how your work with this case represented both the "art and science" of social work practice.

For any citations, use APA 6th Edition citation format throughout your paper, including in your reference section. The paper should make use of 10 citations, half of which may be taken from course readings. A limited bibliography is required. Late papers will be graded down. (Half a grade a week). 8-10 pages.

### **Grading Policy**

The following grading policy will be adhered to by the professor. All assignments must be handed in on time in order to receive the highest grade. Late papers and précis will be graded down depending on the time lapse and circumstances, to be determined by the professor.

Your final grade is based upon these 3 assignments:

Discussions & Class Presentation: 40%

Mini Assignment: 20%

Final Paper: 40%

Students wishing to take the comprehensive exam may not have an incomplete. Other students may have an incomplete only with the permission of the instructor and university rules about completing the course will pertain.

### **On-Line Access**

Students are expected to have and be able to use a Canvas account with the university.

There will be 9 modules in this course. Each Module will open on a Thursday (except no module assigned during Spring Break) and close on a Wednesday.

Module 1: Thinking Critically about Social Work Practice Theories

Module 2 & 3: Psychosocial & Psychodynamic Approaches

Module 4: Crisis & Task-Centered Approach

Module 5: Cognitive Behavioral Theory

Module 6: Systems Theory & Ecological Practice

Module 7 & 8: Social Construction, Narrative, & Role Theory

Module 9: Feminist Theory