HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT I  
SWK 6101  
Fall 2015  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION  
HBSE I is the first course in the sequence on Human Behavior. This sequence includes three courses, HBSE I, HBSE II and Psychosocial-pathology. This first course introduces students to the salient aspects of the human condition. The course emphasizes the reciprocal and transactional influences between people and their environment in the context of biophysical, familial, institutional, and societal forces and social factors. This interaction forms the basis of an ecological approach to human development. The course brings into focus current knowledge and theories regarding human behavior and the social environment as they influence each other.  

The course is focused on issues that deal with the self in an ecological context, with specific attention to the study of individual, physical, intellectual, and temperamental endowment in transaction with sociocultural norms and family patterns. The crises, struggles, conflicts, risks and opportunities associated with these conditions and transactions are explored. The emphasis is placed on differences and similarities in the life experience and lifestyles of men and women and minority groups. The relationship between individual experience and wider system forces is examined. Emphasis is placed on the capacity of the individual, groups and organizations, to improve their own and their community's life in response to macro-system forces.  

Included in the covered topics are: change; the nature of beginnings; the nature of self and of relationships; conflict, and choice; will and determination; the family; differences and commonalities (gender, ethnicity/race, sexual preference, etc.), and coping with crises. This semester parallels the learning process and content relating to values acquisition, assessment and interventions covered in the Foundation Practice sequence.  

In this first semester, students use class discussions, readings and assignments to develop increased awareness of themselves and a greater sensitivity to the impact of their use of self on others. Students are introduced to the notion of the self as a dynamically organized whole in transaction with, and intimately related to the total environment. The way in which the cognitive, affective and behavioral components of the self interact with the environment becomes a theoretical and experiential focal point for this first semester.
COURSE COMPETENCY OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of this course, students will demonstrate:

1. An ability to apply knowledge of the human condition in an ecological context, across the life cycle consistent with sensitivity to human difference such as gender, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, age, ability, and national status. (Core competencies: 2.1.7; 2.1.4; 2.1.10d).

2. An ability to apply knowledge of the ecological view of person-in-society through the study of biological, psychological, familial and other socio-cultural factors that shape human growth and behavior and through study of the ways in which people interact with each other and their environment. (Core competencies: 2.1.7; 2.1.9; 2.1.7)

3. An ability to critically articulate an understanding of competent parenting/care giving, and measures to reduce the risk of child abuse and family violence; along with the ability to identify and report high risk situations to mandated agencies. (Core competencies: 2.1.3; 2.1.1; 2.1.9)

4. The knowledge of social work ethics and values and can delineate the difference between personal and professional values. In addition, students will demonstrate an ability to manage personal values in a manner that allows professional values to guide their thinking and practice. (Core competencies: 2.1.2; 2.1.4; 2.1.5).

5. An understanding of the evolving impact of group, organization and community theories as they relate to growth and development and how these inform the critical conceptual thinking and practice of social work. (Core competencies: 2.1.3; 2.1.9; 2.1.4).

6. The ability to differentiate between factors of personality development which appear to be universal and which are unique to particular individuals and distinctively affected by a multiplicity of forces. (Core competencies: 2.1.4; 2.1.10d)

7. Critical development of self-awareness and a beginning ability to differentially use one’s self through the writing of the journal assignments. Students will demonstrate that they understand that this is the beginning of their development of a professional self as indicated in the evolving growth manifested in the journal. (Core competencies: 2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.1.3; 2.1.7; 2.1.92.1.10d).

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

The first semester includes readings in theoretical and fictional sources, didactic lectures, films and class discussions. Class sessions are designed to permit exploration, not review, of the content assigned readings, and of the students’ responses.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

10% Assigned readings in preparation for and participation in class discussions.
15% Written assignment- “Person in Environment”
25% Quizzes and Reflective Journal
25% Midterm: Written assignment-“Application of ecological perspective to film”
25% Final: written assignment-“Self Assessment through Journal Reflection”


B. Supplemental Texts


C. Additional Articles

Additional articles will be available on e-res.

D. Assignments

1. **Class Participation:** Class participation is an important part of the learning process and ALL students are expected to participate in all assigned exercises and discussions. Students are expected to complete assigned readings and to be prepared for related class discussions. You will be graded on the depth of your contributions and preparedness for class. (2.1.3; 2.1.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.7).

2. **Reflective Journal:** Beginning with the first class session, students must write and submit a weekly journal entry reflecting on your reactions to the assigned readings and experience in the human behavior class. You are expected to integrate class discussion, practice and self-reflection in these journals; **discuss at least one reading for each journal entry. At times, the professor may send “prompt” questions to set the tone of the response for that week. Journals must be submitted via email.** Each professor may include additional instructions. (2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.1.3; 2.1.4; 2.1.7; 2.1.9; 2.1.10d)

3. **Quizzes:** There will be a quiz every week focused on the content of the assigned readings. This means there will be 12 or 13 quizzes during the semester. Quiz scores will be summed so that there is one score (grade) equaling a percentage of the total number of points allowed. **Dates will be given in class by the professor.** (2.1.7; 2.1.9.2.1.3)

4. **Written assignment: “Person in Environment”**- This is a 3-4 page paper discussing the significance of the relationship between the developing person and
his environment. All communication occurs within the context of a relationship; in professional social work this relationship is between the Helper and the Person seeking Help. Our understanding of the client is based on his/her functioning within the context of their particular experiences and environment. One’s life experiences are not in a vacuum, they develop in an emotional, cultural, physical, social and value-laden environmental time period. What personal and environmental dimensions would you consider important to your current functioning? What would enhance her hinder your ability to develop a relationship with a client for whom all these dimensions are descriptively different from your dimensions?

. Additional instructions will be given by your professor. Due Date: 3rd. class. (2.1.3; 2.1.4;2.1.7)

Write a 3-4 page paper on “The Significance of Understanding the Context of the Person in Environment”. This dynamic dyadic interaction between the Helper and Person being helped depends on at least a sense of rapport and takes place through the screens of histories and experiences of both Helper and the One being Helped.

How does your personal looking glass influence the way you understand someone’s request for help and the way you receive and respond to another’s request for help?

Imagine yourself in the role of needing help. How might your developmental environment inform when and how you request help?

Imagine yourself in the role of Helper. How would your understanding of the client differ if you had no knowledge about his/her life experience and the environment that influenced their development What might enhance or hinder your ability to understand the contextual need of the client, listen to and accept the Other’s reality and definition of the need?

How might your experiences, the memory of the experiences or the reprocessing of the experience of seeking or providing help inform your development as a beginning professional social worker? How might this help you to delineate the difference between personal and professional approaches to helping? How might this contextual framework help you to develop an understanding of the client?

Instructions: (1) Spend some time thinking about the above questions and comments. Allow yourself to become involved in and play with the memory experiences. Note the thoughts, images, feelings that emerge. Note your response to the assignment. (2)Write a 3-4, (no more) page paper responding to the above comments and questions. This is personal and experiential. Do not use literature or citations in this paper. (3) Due Date:3rd class. (4) This paper is reflective, therefore the content is not graded. However, the paper will be graded on how well you have presented ideas in writing, organization of the paper and grammar (5) All papers must be typed, double spaced. The cover page must be attached to the back of the paper so that the name of the writer is unknown until after the paper has been read.
5. **Midterm: Written assignment- Application of the Ecological Perspective to a Film.** This assignment is a combination of demonstration of mastery of content as well as application of content to a client/case situation. (2.1.2; 2.1.3; 2.1.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.7; 2.1.9)

All written assignments require understanding of theoretical concepts and materials presented in classroom and readings. This paper is an opportunity for you to apply the material learned this semester.

Choose from the following list of films **ONLY**. You must identify to the professor the film chosen prior to writing the assignment.

- *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*
- *Slum-dog Millionaire*
- *The Kite Runner*
- *The Secret Life of Bees*
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

Theoretically define and identify the five (5) systems of Broffrenbrenner’s Ecological Perspective as noted in the film. **Do not summarize the film.**

The focus of this assignment is on infancy and childhood. Using the multi-dimensional and life cycle perspectives discuss how the varied systems interact to inform the functioning and development of the main character (child) in the film. There should be a particular focus on environmental press; the interlocking circles of risk, resource and resilience, nature and nurture.

Choose a theme, then explore and analyze how the theme played out in the various systems’ and how this influenced the individual’s development. Remember the various systems are connected to one another and have reciprocal impact effectively bringing about change in each other as well as having an impact on the development of the individual.

**THEMES**

Family conflicts
Stigma
Anxieties
Negotiating cultural differences
Violence
Social construction of identity
Parent-child relationships
Psycho-sexual development
Religious training
Classism
Power
Guilt
Gender role models
Mothering and fathering
Vulnerability of support networks
Loyalty
Trust
Intergenerational trauma experiences
Initiative and responsibility
Victimization
Double bind of class and ethnicity
Ethnic vulnerability

You may use any and all of the required readings as well as 4 additional external scholarly readings necessary for your analysis. This is an analysis and you must apply the didactic material to the life experience of the film. Although you will focus on one character this paper is also about systems and the probable systemic impact on development. Do not use online computer sites such as Wikipedia or sites that provide psycho-educational information. Use professional scholarly journals and texts only!

The theme chosen should be identified as a common thread that runs through the systems. REMEMBER AN OCCURRENCE IN ONE PART OF THE SYSTEM HAS AN IMPACT ON ALL OTHER PARTS OF THE SYSTEM.

This paper should be presented in a scholarly fashion. Make sure to include an Introduction and a Conclusion. You may use headings to organize your paper if it helps. Number your pages. Please include citations and references which must conform to APA #6, academic style. This paper should be 10-15 pages, (NO MORE). Proofread your paper before submission. Due date: 9th session. LATE PAPERS ARE NOT ACCEPTED

6. Final Written Assignment: Self Assessment through Journal Reflection : Due Date: Session 13

HBSE I - Final Paper – Self assessment through Journal Reflection

Using the multidimensional and life cycle perspectives as your theoretical orientation, write a brief (5-7 pages), insightful analysis of your experience and what you have learned about yourself over the course of the semester. This assignment requires an integration of the material we have discussed in class including incorporating the 5 levels of the ecosystem and environmental press as they pertain to your understanding of the developing self.

(2.1.1; 2.1.3; 2.1.7; 2.1.10d)

In preparation for doing this you should:
1. Review your journals
2. Consider the themes we have discussed over the semester
   a. Beginnings & Transitions/Change
   b. Families & Crisis in Families
   c. The Self in an environmental context – Trauma, Risk & Resilience
   d. Otherness & Environment
   e. Self in Relation to Other Broader Systems (Culture, Social Policy, etc)
   f. Cognition & affect
   g. Choice & Will
   h. Biology & Environment
   i. The Nature of Self: How do we know who we are?

Consider & Respond to the following:

- Any changes you have seen in your sense of self over the course of the semester. For example – are there any changes in how you think about yourself since you first began this class?

Other areas of consideration: (this is not all inclusive & you should examine course description & competencies for ideas on how you might evaluate yourself & your journals for this assignment).
- Has your understanding of beginnings evolved? Changed? Stayed the same? Be specific.
Do you look at your family system or families in general with a different lens or understand the impact of family on development any differently?

What about Trauma, risk, resilience? Has your understanding of these concepts broadened or changed?

What about the impact of the various systems of the ecological perspective – do you have a different understanding of them than previously?

What about the nature of self and all that contributes to development? Has any of what we have read/discussed influenced your understanding of the nature of self? Be specific, what and how?

Think about crisis, struggle, change, conflicts, risks & opportunities in the environment . . . has your understanding and sensibility about any of these been impacted?

How about the individual experience and the wider system forces in terms of development? Any shifts in thinking or understanding about how they impact one another?

- Is there a particular human behavior theory or perspective discussed in class or readings that you are partial to? One that might be helpful to you and which you would be able to use in practice? We discussed and went over several (some in more depth than others) see list that follows . . .
  - Theory of evolution
  - Psychosocial Theory
  - Psychosexual Theory
  - Cognitive Theory
    - Piaget
    - Vygotsky
  - Theories of Learning
    - Classical Conditioning
    - Operant Conditioning
    - Social Learning Theories
    - Cognitive Behavioral Theory
  - Cultural theory
  - Social Role Theory
  - Systems Theory

The evaluation of your journals will consider
1. Your understanding of the material you have chosen to respond to (class or readings) in terms of ecological view of person-in-environment and human difference.
2. Demonstrated understanding of multiple forces that distinctly impact individual development.
3. The connection you make between material (discussion & readings) and work with clients (individual, group or community).
4. Demonstrated self-awareness & ability to take-in others in terms of point of view and perspective.
5. How well you were able to present your ideas in written form.

All students must complete ALL class assignments, pass quizzes, midterm and final papers to receive a passing grade for the course. DO NOT make last minute requests for special accommodations for completion of work; if accommodations are necessary this must be thoroughly discussed with the professor with sufficient time to explore options and for the professor to plan.

PLAGIARISM
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 is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking or 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 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 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 masked so that the person cannot be readily identified. This means that any information that would allow the person to be identified must be changed or eliminated. This may include name, date of birth, any information unique to the individual that would allow for identification including diagnosis, race, ethnicity or gender. Information such as race, ethnicity, gender and diagnosis may be included if it will not allow for identification.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Given the nature of class discussion and the presentation of case material, as well as personal revelation in class, students are reminded that the same commitment to confidentiality with clients extends to classmates. **WHAT IS SHARED IN CLASS REMAINS IN CLASS**

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations must 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. All documentations for possible accommodation must be submitted to the professor by the third class. **All possible accommodations must be discussed and negotiated with the individual professor; specific accommodations are not automatic.**

**E-RES (Electronic Reserve)**

You can access the selected articles from your home or from a university computer at no charge.

**How do I Use E-RES?**

1. Go to [www.yu.edu/libraries](http://www.yu.edu/libraries), Click on E-Res.

2. **Click on E-RES. If you are off-campus, at this point you will be prompted for your Off Campus Access Service login and password.**

3. Click on Search E-RES” or on “Course Index,” and search by instructor’s name “Search E-RES” or on “Course Index,” and search by instructor’s name, department, course name, course number, document title, or document author.
4. Click on the link to your course.

5. Enter the password given to you by your instructor. Read the copyright guidelines that appear on the screen, and click on “Accept” to proceed.

6. Locate and click on the item you wish to view. Titles beginning with “A”, “An”, or “The” are alphabetized under “A” and “T” respectively.

7. When the article text or book record appears on the screen, you can print, email, or save it to a disk.

To view documents that are for pdf format, the computer you are using must have Adobe Acrobat Reader software. You can download it FREE at www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

Course Outline

Theme I - Orientation to the course: Beginnings and Change

Session (1) Beginnings and change: Beginnings relate to the student and the client. We live in a systemic society and we develop across a continuum informed by different experiences, relationships and the environment. Beginnings may include conflicts, anxieties, losses, excitement, struggles and aspirations; these inherent dimensions are organized and informed by our life experiences.

Required readings:


Chapter 1-“Beginning at the end, Ending at the beginning” 1-10


Theme II – Multidimensional Approach and Life Course Perspectives:

Sessions( 2, 3, 4, 5) Theory and Broad Definition of Systems: Development as Change:
The person in environment construct has been used as the foundation for developing a multidimensional approach. No one dimension of the person or the environment will tell the whole story; it is the interaction of all the dimensions folded into the construct of the person-environment relationship that tells the story. This story is told over time and within a specific time period; understanding the importance of time helps us to understand the constant changes in the person-environment transactions.

**Required Readings:**


Chapter 2—“The Ecology of Human Development” 11-34


Part I: A Multidimensional Approach for Multifaceted Social Work

Chapter 1—“Human Behavior: A multidimensional Approach” 1-34.
Chapter 2—“Theoretical Perspectives on Human Behavior” 35-76

Part III: The Multiple Dimensions of Environment

Chapter 7—“The Physical Environment” 225-256
Chapter 8—“Culture” 257-290
Chapter 9—“Social Structure and Social Institutions” 291-336
Chapter 10—“Families” 337-380
Chapter 11—“Small Groups” 381-412
Chapter 12—“Formal Organizations” 413-445
Chapter 13—“Communities” 447-477
Chapter 14—“Social Movements” p. 479-512


Chapter 1—“A Life Course Perspective” 1-40

**Theme III- Theoretical Perspectives of Human Behavior**

**Required Reading**


Chapter 2—“Theoretical Perspectives on Human Behavior” 35-75

**Theme IV-The Self in an Environmental Context, Trauma, Risk & Resilience**

Identification and exploration of Brofenbrenner’s ecological perspective of development provides a lens through which we understand our clients. All systems have inherent risks and developmentally we learn to negotiate the systems in spite of and because of the risks. All
systems also include resources and the interaction between risks and resources help us to
develop coping skills, change and grow. This occurs through the process of response to
stress, crisis and trauma experiences.

**Required Readings:**


  Chapter 2- “The ecology of human development” 11-34
  Chapter 3- “Socio-cultural Risk and Opportunity” 35-70

  Chapter 9- “Social Construction” 232-270
  Chapter 11-“Risk and Resilience Theory” 315-342

  Chapter 2-“Terror” 33-50
  Chapter 3-“Disconnection” 51-74
  Chapter 5- “Child Abuse"

**Session 5: Application of broad systems to a film:** *Boys of Baraka*. The class will view this film together.

**Learning Theme V – Individual Person as a System**

**Session (6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13) Definition of the Person as a System Developing**

**Through Different Stages**

**Session 6: Introduction of the person as a system: Multiple Dimensions of a Person:** Understanding the different dimensions of a person from a bio-psychosocial perspective provides a way of understanding development throughout the life span. The Eriksonian paradigm is an excellent example of development over the life span.

**Choice and Will-** Socio-cultural factors inform our identification and understanding of our choices and the capacity to exercise our will.

**Required Readings:**


The Nature of Self: How do we know who we are?

Required Reading:


Afterword “What does it mean to be human?” 328-335.


The Biological Person: Biological factors may restrict and/or enable and circumscribe the parameters of human development and individual abilities.

Required Readings


Chapter 3- “The Biological Person” 79-114


Chapter 2- “Conception, Pregnancy and Childbirth” 41-92

The Psychological Person: Cognition, emotions and affect are dynamic dimensions of the personality. There is a special relationship between intelligence, coping and decision making across the life cycle. In addition, ego capacities are the focal points of our psychological development.

Required Readings


Chapter 4- “The Psychological Person: Cognition, Emotion and Self” 115-143.

The Psychosocial Person and the Spiritual Person: The psychosocial perspective is a traditional social work perspective important in understanding human behavior. However, it is important to add to this a person’s spiritual understandings and yearnings. This refers to one’s search for meaning, purpose in life and the need to connect to others in the world. It is a process and therefore, develops over time. This is particularly important in understanding the traumatic responses of people.

Required Readings


Chapter 6- “The Spiritual Person” p. 177-192.


Chapter 3-“Infancy and Toddlerhood” 93-134
Chapter 4-“Early Childhood” 135-176
Chapter 5-“Middle Childhood” 177-220.

Session 14: Wrap up and preparation for HBSE II with a focus on Adolescence and adulthood.
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: Selected articles are on E-Reserve


Salzburg, S., (2004) Learning that an adolescent child is gay or lesbian: The parent experience, Social Work, 49(1), 109-118


