HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT SEQUENCE

The psychosocial perspective serves as the primary guide in shaping the human behavior in the social environment (HBSE) curriculum.

Courses focus on bodies of knowledge and theory that help to explain the intimate and extended contexts that shape human development and experience, explore the inner lives and psychological functioning of children and adults and explain the complex interactions between person and context.

Content on individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, culture, social structure and political and economic forces—as well as on the relationships among various groupings—is all an integral part of the HBSE curriculum.

Core Courses

SOCW 514 Theories of Individual Development (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: SSW Core Course
Introduces students to major theories of clinical social work practice. We will focus on major theoretical approaches that will include: psychodynamic theories (including classical theory, object-relations and attachment theory, and relational approaches), humanist-existential theories, and cognitive-behavioral theories. We will begin by examining what constitutes a clinical theory, why theory is important and how clinical theory may guide clinical practice. We will proceed by examining the basic tenets of each clinical theory, while focusing on the theory’s conceptualization of the therapeutic change process. We will compare and contrast theories to promote critical and flexible clinical thought which will support a deliberate engagement with the question of what works? For whom? When?. Throughout the course we will consider how each theory interfaces with an intersectional analysis of the identities of the individuals in the therapeutic dyad (i.e., intersectional framework suggests that individuals experience various social positions synchronously rather than independently); as well as differential forms of oppression and racism in the clinical encounter. We will also examine relevant clinical research applicable to each theoretical framework. We will begin to query about the role of research in informing clinical practice, and, how clinical practice informs research. As we critically review the theoretical foundation of each theory, students will develop the ability to discern what theoretical approach best informs our clinical understanding of individual development and associated clinical practice when working with diverse populations and complex issues.

Summer 1 - SSW

SOCW 516 Problems in Biopsychosocial Functioning (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: SSW Core Course
Eligibility: First Year MSW or Advanced Standing Students
Draws upon the individual personality theories taught in 130, Theories of Individual Development, to provide a context in which to understand problems in biopsychosocial functioning. The course will provide students with an opportunity to explore how the relationships between biological, psychological, and environmental factors can lead to the development of individual problems in functioning. Students will learn some of the tools with which to make descriptive developmental assessments in examining psychosis, personality disorders, depressive disorders, and anxiety disorders, as well as how ethnicity, race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other social variables intersect with assessment and practice issues.

Summer 2 - SSW

SOCW 520 Family Theory for Social Work Practice (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: SSW Core Course
Theories framing the foundation for social work practice with families are explored and critiqued as they assist in understanding (1) the relationship between the family and its environment, (2) intergenerational family culture, structure, and process; (3) family life cycle processes; (4) internal family organization and process and (5) individual family meanings and narratives. Attention will be given to those theories that have dominated the early family therapy movement as well as newer epistemological positions and concepts deriving from more current feminist and social constructionist critiques. Implications for clinical practice are addressed. Cross-cutting the exploration of family theory are issues of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability as well as varying family forms. Topics related to gay and lesbian families, divorce, remarriage and single parenting will also be explored. The interface between family theories and the promotion of social justice concerns is addressed.

Summer 2 - SSW

SOCW 522 Sociocultural Concepts (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: SSW Core Course
Introduces students to the sociocultural concepts that define the context of human experience. While exploring the broad thematic areas of culture, social structures, inter-group relationships and identity, concepts of ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, and disability will be explored so as to understand how these variables impact individual lives. Implications for practice will be explored. Special attention will be given to the uses and misuses of power in constructing social identities and meanings as well as personal and group experiences, and to the ways that social identity and position affect access to services and resources.

Summer 1 - SSW
SOCW 525 Child Development from Infancy to Adolescence (2 Quarter Hours)

Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: SSW Core Course
This foundation course will examine the bio-psycho-social development of children and adolescents as a basis for understanding: (a) cognitive and affective developments allowing the child to construct individual and social life at increasingly complex levels of differentiation and affiliation, (b) the use of those developmental levels as paradigms for healthy functioning, (c) a range of childhood experiences which may enhance or deter well-being and development, and (d) the utility of normal child development as a heuristic for understanding developmentally based theories of bio-psycho-social difficulties. Values and ethical issues related to these approaches are identified and related to practice illustrations. Particular attention will be paid to issues of self regulation, internal representation, affect, cognition, relatedness, and separation. The tasks of infancy, early childhood, latency, and early adolescence are examined in the contexts of family and peer relationships and values and in relation to influences of gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, and other cultural forces on the developing child. Issues of strengths, resilience, vulnerability, and dysfunction in the developing child are addressed. All of these themes are illustrated through practice application. A critical stance is encouraged in which various ideas and theories are examined in relation to the values they imply, the sociocultural contexts in which they develop, and their application to participants' other courses (such as practice and racism).

Summer 2 - SSW

SOCW 697 Human Behavior in Social Environment Rotating Topics (2 Quarter Hours)

Elective Courses

SOCW 679 Human Behavior in Social Environment Rotating Topics
Elective (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable
SOCW 700 Collective Trauma: The Impact of Intercultural Violence on Individuals, Communities and Cultures (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Introduces students to information, concepts, and controversies critical to understanding the impact of massive violence on individuals and groups of people. Throughout the course understanding the impact of such violence will be coupled with the question of what people, and cultures, need to recover. Widespread violence threatens the constituent elements of individual and community life, especially when the violence is between communities and targets civilians, as in Rwanda or Bosnia. Each individual caught in such violence has to begin a new life which in some way incorporates the destruction and violation which have occurred, and communities also have to reestablish, or even create, conditions for resuming viable community life. During the course we will consider what enables recovery as we look at mass violence in a number of ways. We will consider the changing nature of warfare, and detail the impact of intercommunal violence (including specific ways women and children are affected). We will consider the role of group identity in the generation of mass violence, and the ways in which violence and the terror it generates affect the subsequent group identities of conflictants (for example, the impact of the 1994 genocide on ethnic identity in Rwanda; the impact of September 11 on the national identities of US citizens). We will look at ongoing impact, through issues such as intergenerational transmission, and group memory of horror. We will look in detail at the controversies surrounding the use by the humanitarian field of concepts such as trauma and PTSD to delineate the effects of mass violence, and consider other frameworks. We will look in depth at some of the ways people and communities get caught in cycles of revenge and violence, and then look at the stages which individuals and communities go through in moving toward peaceful coexistence. We will consider (particularly at the start of the course and again at the end) the impact of working with the issue of mass violence (confronting the brutal facts, working with those involved, etc) upon ourselves as students, workers, and human beings.

Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 701 Neurobiology and Clinical Social Work (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Synthesizes contemporary literature that demonstrates the increasing relevance of neurobiology findings on clinical practice, with a range of vulnerable populations. Using aspects of child development theory, contemporary attachment theory, trauma theory, cognitive neuroscience, and clinical theory, the course focuses on the adaptive functions of positive early relationships for the achievement of key developmental capacities. A central hypothesis of the course is there is no such thing as a “single brain” and that one’s social brain is fundamentally shaped in interaction with other people. The healing benefits of a therapeutic relationship are explicitly demonstrated. We will explore the central role of affect regulation, mentalization, and implicit relational knowing in adult psychotherapy. We also will explore the outcomes of disrupted attachment and trauma on brain development; in so doing, we will explore clinical implications and treatment strategies for a range of biopsychosocial disorders. Classroom methods will include lecture, small group discussion, videotapes and case presentations.

Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 702 Social Class and its Implications for Social Work (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Provides the opportunity to learn about social class from a variety of perspectives – theoretical, sociological, cultural, and personal – while considering its relevance to the field of social work. Though class is the primary focus of the course, we will contextualize our understanding in relationship to race, gender, and sexuality. Since this course combines both personal and intellectual discussions of class, it is critical we maintain an environment where people can share their experiences honestly and talk critically and thoughtfully about social class regardless of their background, personal goals, and political orientations. All students who enroll should be prepared to engage in rigorous and concentrated study of this important facet of our lives.

Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 703 Theoretical Sex Primer for Clin Soc Wk: Conceptualizing Sex/Desire/Pleasure Thru Intersectional Lens (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Concepts and theories of sexuality, desire and pleasure get practiced in the clinical encounter. Rather than taking these concepts as self-evident, we subject them to critical scrutiny: how do we understand categories of sex and sexuality? What is at stake for clinical social work practice when we claim the basis of desire as psychological, genetic, cultural, biological, pornographic, or social? How do normative discourses about desire, race, gender and ability filter into our clinical understandings and practice models? As clinicians how are we grappling with the new roles that pharmacological and social media technological developments are playing in contemporary sexual/relational lives? Importantly, we ask: How might re-thinking sex and desire as a social and ethical practice assist us in our clinical work with clients? Our point of entry for deliberating on how theory meets clinical practice in different settings (rural/urban, liberal, conservative) and with clients identifying across socially marked differences is multidirectional: theoretical readings (drawn from psychoanalytic traditions, sexology, queer of colour critique, trans theory, disability studies), fiction writing, film, class discussion and importantly, clinical case studies.

Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 704 Is age just a number? Is 70 the new 50? The social construction of aging in the 21st century (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
All of us will acquire the status of elderhood if we are fortunate to live long enough. But where does that line begin? What are the sociocultural dynamics involved in that determination? The discourses of aging, how we understand when “elderhood” begins, what it should look like, how it should be understood and experienced, are cultural directives which are profoundly gendered, classed, raced and emmished in social discourses about the body. Phrases such as “graceful aging” and “dying with dignity” can be seen as efforts to challenge harmful practices and stereotypes about growing older and reaching the end of life in an ableist culture. What are the effects of such dynamics on the well-being of older adults, as well as those of us who can imagine ourselves in this status in our own futures? This course will address how a deep appreciation of the sociocultural context of aging can enrich clinical dialogues and social interventions in social work practice.

Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable
SOCW 705 Personality Disorders in Theory and Practice (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Provides an introduction to personality disorders and their treatment. The course begins with an examination of theoretical constructs of personality disorder, and some of the controversy that has developed around these constructs. We will then, using a “common factors” model, explore the etiologies, presentations, and treatments of various personality disorders, with a special focus on DSM-5 Cluster B disorders – Borderline Personality Disorder, Narcissistic Personality Disorder, and Antisocial Personality Disorder. We will study both classical and contemporary psychoanalytic papers on the topic, as well as contemporary models rooted in psychodynamic and trauma-focused thinking (e.g. Transference-Focused Psychotherapy, Mentalization-Based Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy). We will also invite guest lecturers with particular expertise on different populations and treatments to share their insights and answer questions on theory and practice.
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 706 Comparative Theoretical Perspectives on Disability and Ableism (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Introduces students to social work with persons with disabilities and their families. We will consider the history, social construction, cultural perspectives, and demographics of physical, emotional, sensory, and cognitive disability. Major national disability policies and programs are studied and critiqued, along with individual and collective strategies that foster empowerment and social justice. Individual experiences of people with various types of disabilities and families are explored, followed by a discussion of issues of discrimination, equal access, universal design, and social integration. After gaining a sense of the personal experiences and social status of people with disabilities, implications for social work practice are addressed.
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 707 Issues in the Treatment of Mental Illness: Clinical and Social Policy Perspectives (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Addresses some of the major policy and service delivery issues in the field of mental health that affect the lives of individuals with chronic mental illness and their families. Particular attention will be given to individuals suffering from major mental illnesses, including Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorders, Major Depressive Disorder, and Psychological Trauma. Course readings and case material will also address issues in the treatment of adults dually diagnosed with major mental illnesses and Substance Related Disorders. Advocacy efforts from clients and their families will be discussed. Students' class presentations of their own clinical work with mentally ill adults will provide opportunities for discussing treatment questions and ethical dilemmas that arise in working with these individuals and their families.
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 708 Race and Ethnicity in Psychodynamic Clinical Practice (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Addresses: (a) how socialization of race and ethnicity may influence client’s subjective presenting concerns, transference, defenses and resistance, as well as the therapist’s own subjective countertransference, defenses, and resistance in the clinical encounter and therapeutic relationship, and (b) the therapist’s unique multicultural challenges in mobilizing a working alliance with her or his given client. Contemporary relational and intersubjective psychodynamic concepts will be critically examined with racially and culturally marginalized client populations. Assessment, subjective and intersubjective transference/countertransference, defense system, resistance/impasses, and the use of self within the therapeutic working alliance will be emphasized.
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 709 Transgender Studies: Theory, Practice, and Advocacy (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Situates contemporary trans identities, experiences, communities and movements in their historical and social contexts and explores implications for social work practice. Drawing on literatures from psychology, sociology, cultural studies, LGB studies and queer theory, as well as trans community sources, we’ll examine how categories like trans and transgender have been shaped by medical, psychological, and cultural/community-based discourses and how these discourses continue to play out. Using a range of theoretical lenses, community perspectives and clinical case studies, we’ll compare and critique current treatment protocols, diagnostic criteria, and “best practices.” Assignments will focus on exploring social workers’ overlapping and sometimes contradictory roles as clinicians, advocates and gatekeepers, and identifying/developing ethical approaches to these contradictions in order to support trans individuals and communities to live and thrive with self-determination and dignity.
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable
SOCW 710a Perspectives on Transference and Countertransference: 
Exploring Use of Self in Clinical Practice (2 Quarter Hours) 
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment 
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective 
This elective course will pay close attention to the complex dynamics 
that occurs both within and across racial identities in doing clinical 
work. Students will be encouraged to pay particular attention to how 
the interplay of the intersectional identities of client and clinician 
impacts use of self in clinical practice. The course focuses on the 
therapeutic alliance and the complex relational dynamics that emerge 
in clinical social work through an in-depth study of transference and 
countertransference. Through a careful reading of both current and 
historical literature and an emphasis on relational and intersubjective 
theories, students will be exposed to a range of approaches for 
recognizing and reflecting on the transference/countertransference 
field. Students will learn to think critically about individual, interpersonal, 
and structural dynamics that influence therapeutic alliances and the 
trajectory of the clinical exchange. Students will be encouraged to pay 
particular attention to how the interplay of the intersectional identities of 
client and clinician impacts use of self in clinical practice. Students will 
explore applications of course material through experiential exercises, 
shared case material, and appropriately boundaried engagement with the 
relational dynamics that emerge in class. This course seeks to establish a 
learning environment where students can freely engage with some of the 
most challenging affective and relational aspects of clinical work through 
a learning stance characterized by curiosity, openness to perspectives with 
which they may disagree, and commitment to mutual support in the 
learning process. 
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW 

SOCW 710b Transference and Countertransference in Clinical SW: 
Considerations for BIPOC Clinicians (2 Quarter Hours) 
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment 
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective 
This course examines the complex relational dynamics that emerge 
in clinical encounters through an in-depth study of transference and 
countertransference. In particular, the course focuses its examination 
on racialized transference/countertransference, holding the experiences 
of BIPOC clinicians as a central analytic. Through a careful reading of 
both current and historical literature and an emphasis on relational 
and intersubjective theories, students will be exposed to a range of 
approaches for recognizing and reflecting on the transference/ 
countertransference field. Students will learn to think critically about both 
the interpersonal and structural factors that influence how therapeutic 
alliances form with particular attention to intersectional identities and 
use of self in clinical practice. Students will explore applications of 
course material through experiential exercises, shared case material, 
and engagement with the relational dynamics that emerge in class. This 
course seeks to establish a learning environment where students can 
freely engage with some of the most challenging affective and relational 
aspects of clinical work through a learning stance characterized by 
curiosity, openness to perspectives with which they may disagree, and 
commitment to mutual support in the learning process. 
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable 

SOCW 711 Theory and Clinical Practice with Addicted Clients: Dual 
Diagnosis (2 Quarter Hours) 
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment 
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective 
Using multiple theoretical frameworks, this course will focus on the 
assessment and treatment of people diagnosed with substance use 
disorders and mental illness. Students will learn how to complete 
 thorough biopsychosocial assessments, with special attention given 
to the co-occurrence of addiction and mood disorders, psychological 
trauma, psychotic disorders, and ADD/ADHD. A range of therapeutic 
interventions will be introduced and applied through case analysis, these 
include: psychopharmacology, psychodynamic approaches, motivational 
enhancement treatment and the stages of change, individual, group, 
and family therapy modalities, relapse prevention, and the use of mutual 
support programs. Discussion will include choosing priorities in treatment, 
the challenges of providing integrated treatment, and systemic pitfalls 
faced by those working in the field and those trying to access services. 
Understanding that those who are dually diagnosed experience greater 
risk factors for being part of oppressed and vulnerable populations 
will be incorporated within the ongoing class discussions. Classroom 
methods will include lecture, small group interaction, videotapes and 
case presentations. 
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable 

SOCW 712 Intimate Relationship Violence (2 Quarter Hours) 
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment 
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective 
Social workers may encounter forms of intimate relationship violence/ 
abuse during their careers. This course will use an intersectional lens 
to examine abuse and violence in diverse intimate relationships and 
contexts, while also exploring historical perspectives, the evolution of 
services, social policies, and current trends and tensions in the field. 
Assessment, intervention, advocacy, and prevention at micro, mezzo, and 
macro levels will be explored, as well as foundational social work skills 
with survivors. 
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable 

SOCW 713 The Social Determinants of Health (2 Quarter Hours) 
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment 
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective 
A Social Determinants of Health (SDH) framework provides practitioners 
with analytical tools to address structural challenges. This course 
will examine and critique the health care system utilizing an SDH 
framework, enhancing clinicians’ ability to create solutions to systemic 
healthcare challenges. Students will: 1.) Develop a historically grounded 
understanding of healthcare systems as social and political institutions, 
that is, the product of compromises amongst competing social actors 
2.) Develop the sociological imagination for clinical social work practice 
as useful tool for understanding the connections between individuals’ 
health outcomes and the social forces that surround them and to develop 
fundamental theoretical knowledge to enhance clinicians’ ability to 
provide intellectual critiques as well as solutions to systemic healthcare 
challenges. 
Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable
SOCW 714 Combat Stress, Moral Injury, and the Modern American Military Experience (2 Quarter Hours)

Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
This course will introduce students to the emotional/psychological dynamics and effects of the combat experience on American soldiers and veterans and the society from which they emerge and subsequently return in the aftermath of violent military operations. We will examine American cultural and political representations of war and their influences on members of society and the military. We will further explore some common experiences of American service members including recruitment, inculcation into military culture, entry-level and combat-specific training, and finally, real-world operations. These conversations will help students better understand resulting cases of post-traumatic stress, moral injury, and other mental health related issues that many veterans experience upon coming home and often endure for the remainder of their lives. The emphasis of the course is on the experiences of soldiers and veterans before, during, and after their military service, not on specific clinical methods or particular strategies of recovery. The individual and collective identities of these veterans as they are formed prior to war and how these identities are often disrupted in war’s aftermath plays a significant role in their ability to engage particular processes of recovery. Parallel to these issues are the perspectives and values of the people in veterans’ own communities, especially friends, colleagues, and family members, and also oftentimes their mental health providers. The spectrum of societal and community reactions to these veterans’ psychological distress and the operations they participated in are crucial to whatever methods and processes of recovery may be employed. We will analyze the various controversies and tensions around veteran care, especially as it relates to attitudes about American foreign policy. While there will be some comparative work done in this course with the military experiences from other countries and eras, the primary focus in this course will be on modern American conflicts and the experiences and treatment of American veterans, as this is a community that students will potentially work with in their careers as social workers.

Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 793 Senior Integrative Seminar (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Integrative topics not included in the regular curriculum, but within the HBSE sequence and reserved for final summer MSW students. Specific title and description information will be posted in the registration portal for the term offered.

Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable

SOCW 797 Human Behavior in Social Environments Rotating Topics Elective (2 Quarter Hours)
Coordinating Sequence: Human Behavior in the Social Environment
Fulfills: HBSE Sequence Elective
Topics not included in the regular curriculum, but within the HBSE sequence. Specific title and description information will be posted in the registration portal for the term offered.

Summer 1 - SSW, Summer 2 - SSW, Variable