

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

<b>Course Number:</b>	SW 381R	<b>Instructor:</b>	Jemel Aguilar, Ph.D.
<b>Unique Number:</b>	63645	<b>Office Number:</b>	3.106F
<b>Semester:</b>	Fall 2009	<b>Contact Information:</b>	512-471-4219 <a href="mailto:jaguilar@mail.utexas.edu">jaguilar@mail.utexas.edu</a>
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b>	Wednesday, 5:30—8:30 SSW 2.112	<b>Office Hours:</b>	Wednesday, 1:00 to 2pm Or by appointment
<b>Teaching Assistant:</b>	Jeremy Goldbach	<b>TA office hours:</b>	By appointment

**THEORIES AND CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES  
OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

**I. Standardized Course Description**

This graduate-level course will focus on empirically based theories and conceptual approaches that undergird social work practice and research with individuals and families in social systems. Ecological-systems theory and a lifespan developmental framework will serve as conceptual guideposts for understanding social work's person-in-environment, contextual approach to the reciprocal relationship between human behavior and the social environment. Other traditional and alternative theories are also examined, including Psychodynamic, Cognitive Behavioral, Social Learning, Empowerment, Transpersonal and Feminist. A critical perspective is emphasized to understand (1) theoretical knowledge construction, evaluation and integration, and (2) theoretical relevance to explain the influence and contribution of factors related to race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and physical and mental ability to human behavior and development. Methodological, empirical, and ethical considerations of contemporary issues (i.e., poverty, privilege, oppression, risk and resiliency) and multi-dimensional aspects of the human experience and change across the lifespan (i.e., biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual) will be critically examined.

**II. Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge about and critically analyze relevant theories of human behavior and development comparing definitional components, philosophical underpinnings, value assumptions, strengths, and limitations.
2. Analyze the reciprocal relationships of human behavior and social systems, and how this interaction influences health and well-being as well as risk and vulnerability.
3. Describe the social construction of theoretical concepts, empirical evidence, gaps in knowledge, and relevant controversies regarding theories of human behavior and development.

4. Analyze the impact of such factors as race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and physical and mental ability on risk and resilience, identity development, and human interactions within social systems.
5. Understand the interaction between the biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of the human experience and lifespan development.
6. Conduct a scientific review of empirical evidence and theory to address human behavior and development topics.

### **III. Teaching Methods**

This course is designed to incorporate a variety of teaching methods, including interactive lectures, experiential group activities, reading assignments, and audiovisual material to help students learn theoretically-grounded knowledge of human development and behavior, and to demonstrate this knowledge in class discussions, written assignments, and presentations.

### **IV. Required and Recommended Texts, and Materials**

Robbins, S.P., Chatterjee, P., & Canda, E.R. (Eds.). (2006). *Contemporary Human Behavior Theory: A Critical Perspective for Social Work*. Pearson: Boston, MA.

This instructor reserves the right to provide and/or assign additional readings to supplement the text.

### **V. Course Requirements**

Students will be evaluated on the following required assignments, as well as class participation and contribution.

#### **1. Attendance, Preparation and Contribution**

Students are expected to attend all classes, participate meaningfully in class discussion, exercises, and small group activities and assignments. Some of the group activities are scheduled on the course schedule. The instructor reserves the right to modify and rearrange these activities during the semester.

It is important for social workers to be aware of group dynamics including peer groups in which they participate. It is also important to contribute to the group process. A portion of the grade for this course will depend on your level of attendance, preparation, participation and contribution. For some, this means learning to speak up, to add comments or to raise questions. For others, it means being sensitive and allowing others to contribute.

**2. Critical Analysis Group Project**

In small groups, students are expected to develop a theoretical framework to be used to critically examine human behavior and development. This assignment will promote critical dialogue and facilitate learning about theoretically grounded knowledge and its implications for micro, meso, and macro dynamics across the lifespan.

**3. Examination**

One examination will be given in the course. This examination will consist of objective and short essay questions, and reflect material presented in class lectures and reading assignments.

**4. Theory Paper**

Students are expected to complete one paper on the comparison and contrast of selected human behavior and development theories. This assignment will provide a conceptual framework for understanding and evaluating theoretical perspectives.

Overall Criteria for Evaluating Student Assignments

Your written work should be well-conceptualized and researched, clearly organized, and supported by examples and details. Show evidence of your own creative and thoughtful analysis. Papers should follow the APA style format. Additional criterion and evaluation guidelines will also be provided for all assignments.

**Grading and Weighting of Assignments**

Attendance, Preparation, Contribution	10
Critical Analysis Group Project	25
Examination	25
Theory Paper	40
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>100 points</b>

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- 100-94=A**
- 93-90=A-**
- 89-87=B+**
- 86-84=B**
- 83-80=B-**
- 79-77=C+**
- 76-74=C**
- 73-70=C-**
- 69-67=D+**
- 66-64=D**

**63-60=D-**  
**59 and below = F**

**A-/A = SUPERIOR:** Significantly exceeds assignment/performance expectations; demonstrates a high level of in-depth critical thinking and analysis that resulted in work additional to that laid out in the assignment directions (i.e., coherence and integration of ideas);

**B-/+ = GOOD:** Assignment/overall performance in course meets all the requirements with evidence of critical thinking and analysis;

**C-/+ = AVERAGE:** Assignment/performance meets the requirements or has minor gaps, but lacks evidence of in depth thinking and analysis;

**D-/+ = BELOW AVERAGE:** There are important gaps in the assignment both in terms of not meeting the requirements and lacking critical thinking and analysis.

## **VI. Class and University Policies**

1. **The University of Texas Honor Code.** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.
2. **Attendance.** It is important for social work practitioners to be punctual in both attendance and in meeting deadlines. Therefore, class attendance is expected, as is handing in assignments on time. Students who fail to attend class on a regular basis (missing more than one class without a valid excuse, e.g., medical documentation) may receive one or more course grades lower than their final grade when points are totaled.
3. **Late Assignments.** All assignments must be turned in on the due date and must be submitted at the beginning of the class period. Changes in work schedules, personal celebrations, transportation problems, computer/printing problems, etc. are not considered legitimate reasons for missing an assignment. Late assignments will result in a deduction of fifteen points for each day it is late. Any legitimate adjustments in due dates must be discussed with the instructor at least 24 hours PRIOR to the regularly scheduled due date.
4. **Policy on Scholastic Honesty.** It is expected that work handed in will be your own. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty (i.e., plagiarism and cheating during exam, etc.) are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).
5. **APA.** The School of Social Work uniformly requires APA editorial style as the standard format for all written assignments. Details of the APA style are included in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Information on APA style and format can be found at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) in the School of Social Work. All papers must strictly adhere to APA formatting and referencing requirements. Those papers that are not formatted correctly will receive a 5 point reduction for each mistake.

6. Referencing. Appropriate referencing is required. Failure to use quotation marks for direct quotes or citation for indirect quotations and/or others ideas may result in a “0” for the paper and/or an “F” for the course.
7. Course Feedback. Social work practitioners are assertive and function as team members. Therefore, feedback about the course is welcome and the course will be viewed as a joint effort between students and the instructor.
8. Professional and Ethical Conduct. The professor expects students to act like professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another’s opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism. Discrimination, harassment, and intimidation will not be tolerated. Also, do not engage in any behaviors that may distract the instructor or other students during class, including chatting and ringing of cell phones/pagers. During class discussion or group activities, students may share information about their own personal and professional tasks, trials, and triumphs. Please note that each one of us is expected to adhere to the Social Work Code of Ethics by acting responsibly and maintaining confidentiality. Students’ class performance and grades are kept confidential.
9. Course Modifications. Any modifications, amendments, or changes to the syllabus and or assignments are the discretion of the instructor. Changes will be announced in class. It is the responsibility of the student to inquire about any changes that might have been made in his/her absence.
10. Safety. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.
11. Documented Disability Statement. Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The course instructor cannot provide reasonable accommodations without a letter from Disability Services. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

12. Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students. Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. **Grades will not be discussed over email.** Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.
13. Religious Holidays. By UT-Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. Student will not be provided an opportunity to make up an assignment if he/she notifies the instructor after observing their holy day.
14. Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL). If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.
15. Emergency Evacuation Policy. Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:
  - Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
  - If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
  - In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
  - Unless the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office gives you instructions, do not re-enter a building.
16. Use of Blackboard in Class. In this class the professor may use Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://courses.utexas.edu>—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to give students online quizzes and surveys. Students can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk by calling 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please plan accordingly.

## VII. Course Schedule

Date	Description/Due Dates	Text / Readings
Week 1 8/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions Brief Foundational Introduction to Social Work</li> <li>• Discussion Focus: Theory vs. Ideology discussion The Role of Theory in Practice and Research The Importance of Critical Thinking</li> <li>• Group Activity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Chapter 1</b></p> <p><b>-Assign Readings on Ecosystems theory.</b></p> <p><b>-Assign Lit. Rvw.</b></p> <p><b>Note: Please bring text to the next class session.</b></p>
Week 2 9/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Focus: Overview: Theories of Psychology and Sociology in Social Work Critical Analysis of Theory -Foundational Perspectives on Social Work Values -Theoretical Perspectives Lecture Series, Part 1 of 4: The Socio-cultural Context</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Groupwork</li> </ul>	<p><b>Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5</b></p> <p><b>-Readings on Ecosystems theory.</b></p> <p><b>-Assign Critical Analysis Group Project</b></p>
Week 3 9/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Focus: Theoretical Perspectives Lecture Series, Part 2 of 4: The Socio-cultural Context continued</li> </ul>	<p><b>Previously assigned chapters continued</b></p> <p><b>-Assign Theory Paper</b></p>
Week 4 9/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Focus: Theoretical Perspectives Lecture Series, Part 3 of 4: Human Behavior and Development</li> <li>• Theory Evaluation and Framework Development The Role of Research</li> <li>• Groupwork</li> </ul>	<p><b>Chapters 6 -12</b></p>

Week 5 9/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Focus: - Theoretical Perspectives Lecture Series, Part 4 of 4: Human Behavior and Development continued</li> <li>• Theory Evaluation and Framework Development continued</li> </ul>	<p><b>Previously assigned chapters continued</b></p> <p><b>Chapter 13</b></p>
Week 6 9/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Paper Consultations</li> <li>• Groupwork</li> </ul>	<b>-Paper Outlines optional</b>
Week 7 10/07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam Review</li> <li>• Individual Paper Consultations</li> <li>• Groupwork</li> </ul>	<b>-Paper Outlines optional</b>
Week 8 10/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WORKDAY</li> </ul>	
Week 9 10/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EXAM</b></li> </ul>	
Week 10 10/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WORKDAY</li> </ul>	
Week 11 11/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Group Presentations</b></li> </ul>	<b>DUE: Theory Paper</b>
Week 12 11/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Group Presentations</b></li> </ul>	
Week 13 11/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application: Theoretical Framework Development</li> </ul>	
Week 14 11/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanksgiving week – No Class</li> </ul>	

<p>Week 14 12/02</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Future of Human Behavior Theory</li> <li>• Reflections on Paper</li> <li>• Course Summary</li> </ul>	
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### VIII. Bibliography

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