

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

<b>Course Number:</b>	311/360K	<b>Instructor's name:</b>	Darlene Grant, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies
<b>Unique Number:</b>	(61045/61235)	<b>Office Number:</b>	SSW 3.130L
<b>Semester:</b>	Spring 2004	<b>Office Phone/e-mail:</b>	471-0532 d.grant@mail.utexas.edu
<b>Meeting Location:</b>	Campbell Elementary School 2613 Rogers, 414-2056; Pease Elementary 1106 Rio Grande, 414-4428	<b>Teaching Assistants</b>	TBA
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b>	T/TH, 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	<b>Office Hours:</b>	TBA and By Appointment

<b>WORKING WITH CHILDREN FROM AT-RISK ENVIRONMENTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS</b>
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**I. Standardized Course Description**

This course is an elective course for anyone planning on working with children and their families as a social worker, psychologist, teacher, health practitioner, childcare worker, coach, mentor, other helping professional, or parent. The course provides an opportunity to work first-hand with students in a neighborhood elementary school that has been designated as priority school by the local school district because of the number of at-risk students it serves. The course will provide a broad overview of environmental factors that create risk for children, as well as those factors that create opportunity, at the individual, family, school, neighborhood, community, and societal levels. The relationships between these factors and school performance will also be discussed, with a special focus on early learning and reading and the impact of mentoring on the life trajectories of children.

UT students will be paired on a one-to-one basis with a first or second grade child and will work with that child twice each for a 60-minute period. The focus of individual sessions will be on developing and strengthening the child's self-esteem and self-confidence, helping the child develop a positive, trusting relationship with an adult role model, and increasing the child's interest in problem-solving and learning, with a particular emphasis on language and reading skills. In addition to the individual tutoring/mentoring and in-classroom sessions with Campbell and Pease Elementary School students, an organized class will be held periodically on Tuesday or Thursday mornings in place of the mentoring/tutoring sessions.

**II. Standardized Course Objectives**

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Identify environmental factors which place children at risk for problems, including individual, family, school, neighborhood, community, and societal factors;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and children's environments in influencing risk and system responsiveness;
3. Identify and compare approaches to learning and social work strategies that are effective with children from high-risk environments, including strengths and gaps, and the effectiveness of such programs with children from culturally diverse backgrounds;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of ethical and value dilemmas that may arise when working in a school setting with children from at-risk environments;
5. Demonstrate communication and mentoring skills that are effective in working with children from at-risk environments, including ways of building self-esteem and self-confidence.
6. In collaboration with the assigned mentee's teacher, and subsequent to two or more elementary school classroom observation experiences, demonstrate ability to assess children's mentoring needs and ability to perform mentoring tasks accordingly, with emphasis on developing a sustained mentoring relationship across the semester.

**III. Teaching Methods**

The course will be primarily experiential. Each U.T. student/mentor will be assigned an elementary school mentee to work with for the entire semester. Each mentor will complete elementary school classroom observations in her/his mentee's

classroom as part of course instruction. Course material will also be presented through short presentations by the instructor, class discussion, worksheets, readings, audiovisual materials, guest speakers, and small group problem-solving discussions. Teacher feedback and other activities.

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

##### Required Readings

McWhirter, J., McWhirter, A., McWhirter, B., and McWhirter, E. (2004). At risk youth: A comprehensive response. Ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, pp. 80-94.

#### V. Course Requirements

Course grades will be based on a total of 100 points earned for the sum following activities:

1. **Completion of volunteer experience** at Campbell or Pease Elementary Schools, mentoring a first or second grade student. **Attendance and attentiveness towards your mentee are the critical factors for satisfactory completion of this course. Seven and eight year old children form emotional attachments to mentors quickly, requiring sensitivity to their needs. You must have a consistent experience.** Observations conducted by the Teaching Assistants overseeing the course will contribute to the assessment of achievement of attendance and attentiveness.

Participation in class activities, including regular attendance, **coming to class on time**, coming to class prepared (readings and assignments completed, ready to engage with the child), and participating actively and thoughtfully in class discussions and experiential exercises. It is important that you come to every mentoring session at the elementary school, be prompt, and be a positive role model for your mentee for a full 60 minutes Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Dress appropriately for playground play, but attend to usual elementary school dress code (discussed later in this syllabus) and be sure to provide contact information so that you can be reached in case of last minute cancellation of class.

**Because children in general as well as from at-risk environments need relationships with individuals they can trust, a letter grade will be deducted from your final grade for two or more unexcused absences during the semester.** Because this course includes student athletes, official player excuse forms will be the only acceptable excuse for missing class due to away games. All UT students are responsible for letting their mentee know when they will be absent and asking another student in the class to pick up and mentor that first/second grader during the absence.

2. **Completion of one essay paper assignment (minimum of 5 typed pages) relating to the mentoring experience**, in which students are asked to integrate course content with experiences with assigned mentees. Essays will be due at the end of the semester. Begin each essay by describing your mentee and what you and the child have been able to accomplish. Go beyond simple reporting. Evaluate your experience; make observations about the child's development and your behavior during the interaction; reflect on what did or did not go well and give possible reasons; raise questions and issues you are wondering about; identify some interests of the child and consider ways you might build on those in future sessions; describe changes you are seeing in the child over time; express your feelings about the experience you are having with your child; tie mentoring experiences to class readings and discussions. Discuss what you've learned about risk and resilience factors that have an impact on your mentee's learning process, and any recommendations you have for how her/him can achieve.

3. In small teams of three to four, U.T. students are asked to prepare and present **an age appropriate 45 minute experiential/hands on learning module** (ending in time to clean up and escort mentees back to class by 9:00 a.m.) to the children on a topic of interest to children such as gardening, fishing, a sport, or a profession. Every effort should be made to include the small group's mentees as presenters. You will have the first three weeks of April to rehearse with your mentees. Creativity and utilization of community and business resources required. If the presentation is on fire safety in the home, for example, students might (1) develop a letter to the local fire station chief proposing their station's involvement, (2) visit the fire station during the two class periods set aside for such efforts to develop the presentation including distribution of stickers, shirts, etc. the fire department might agree to donate to the cause of mentoring youth, (3) consult principal office personnel or your mentee's teacher regarding what's taboo and what's permissible in an elementary school setting. Sample topics include horseback riding, taking care of your puppy (perhaps the local shelter or pet store could bring a puppy or two), going fishing (perhaps students with the help of a local fishery could create a fishing experience). Finally (4) students are asked to present their learning module to the instructor the day of the presentation. The model should include a copy of the completed proposal and a step by step description that a subsequent small group of students could duplicate with children they mentor. Modules will be returned, so, be sure to make duplicate sets for group participants to keep if so desired. Each project will require principal approval. Once the project has been flushed out and participants from the community brought on board, the completed proposal should be turned in duplicate for review and approval by the instructor and the principal (**due by March 25 including ranking of top 3 preferred presentation dates**). Please submit your proposal if your plan comes together prior to March 25. The earlier review by your instructor and the school principal occurs the sooner you know what adjustments may need to be made. Students are required to produce the presentation without spending money or exchanging favors or bartering (UT t

ball tickets etc.) for community participation. **Once approved each first or second grade class teach should be provided formal invitation from the small group to view the presentation.**

4. **5 Quizzes** over assigned reading, guest speaker, and video presentations. Quizzes will include multiple choice, short answer questions. Instructor and/or the teaching assistant will provide a quiz review of material to be covered prior to each quiz.

**Due Dates and Points:**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>
Attendance/Participation (attentiveness towards mentee)	40
Essay Paper	15
45-min Experiential Learning Module Presentation	30
Quizzes	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Grades will be assigned as follows:

90-100 points = A; 80-89 points = B; 70-79 points = C; 60-69 points = D; below 60 points = F. Students taking the course credit/no credit must earn at least 60 points to receive a passing grade.

A = Mentoring/tutoring performance, essays and presentation are excellent for an undergraduate student. Student demonstrates insight and innovation in all areas graded.

B = Mentoring/tutoring performance, essays and presentation are good for an undergraduate student. All work is well-organized, conscientious, accurate, and thoughtful.

C = Mentoring/tutoring performance, essays and presentation are average for an undergraduate student. All aspects of assignment are met.

D = Mentoring/tutoring performance, essay and presentation are barely adequate. Some aspects of assignment are not met, work seems hastily completed, and materials submitted are not free of grammar and spelling errors.

F = Mentoring/tutoring performance, essay and presentation are inadequate for an undergraduate student. Many aspects of assignment are not met, work seems hastily completed, materials submitted lack skill in organization and writing, and course does not meet the criteria given for the assignment.

**VI. Class Policies**

1. **Deadlines:** Except under extremely unusual circumstances (e.g., documented death of a family member, documented serious illness), assignments must be turned in on the due dates. Assignments may be rewritten for a higher grade after final paper has been submitted and extra credit will not be given. Three points per calendar day will be deducted for an assignment handed in late. Points deducted for drafts of papers submitted late will be deducted from your final paper grade. If an assignment has not been handed in for grading within ten days after the due date, a grade of 0 will automatically be assigned for that assignment.

2. **Scholastic Dishonesty:** Any assignments that show evidence that they have not been completed directly by the student will not be accepted and will result in automatic failure in the course for the student. This constitutes academic misconduct and also makes the student subject to possible expulsion from the University.

3. **Attendance:** Students are expected to attend class regularly. If you are going to be gone for an athletic or other event, you must notify the site coordinator in writing at least 24 hours prior to missing class. If you are suddenly ill or unable to attend your mentoring session and/or the class, you must call Campbell or Pease Elementary by 7:15 a.m. You must bring the TA an official note from a physician or the Student Center. There will be **NO opportunities to make up missed** mentoring/tutoring/working with your elementary school student if you have unexcused absences or tardies.

4. **Responsibility for Grading:** If UT students are having problems with the course, they are expected to assume the responsibility for notifying the instructor prior to the end of the course. Dr. Grant will be responsible for final grades on papers and for assigning the final grade for the course. Grades are final once they have been submitted to the Registrar's Office at the end of the semester and will not be changed unless the instructor has made an error in calculating the total earned in the course. Note that it is your responsibility to pay attention to the syllabus and course requirements and monitor your own attendance and how many points you may have lost because of absences.

5. **Feedback about the Course:** The course is a team effort between instructor, teaching assistants, and U.T. students. Feedback is welcome. Students will have an opportunity to provide feedback to the instructor midway through the semester as well as during the formal UT course evaluation conducted at the end of the semester.

6. Respect and Confidentiality: Students will be expected to respect the opinions and feelings of other students and speakers, even though they may differ from their own. Because some of the class material is of a sensitive nature and is difficult for some students because of their own personal life experiences, discussion will be encouraged to allow students a chance to process their feelings as well as class content. Students are also expected to keep personal experiences and feelings shared in class confidential, as well as information shared by or about the children participating in the mentoring program.

Date	Topic	Reading/Prep
January T 20/TH 22	Introduction to Course	
T 27/29	Video: The Children are Watching No Formal Class Thur. Jan. 29	McWhirter et al. Preface & Chapter 1, Introduction to At-Risk Is
February T 3/TH 5	Video: Listening to Children	
T 10/TH 12	Video: Medicating Kids Quiz #1 Thurs. 12	McWhirter et al., Chapter 2, Environmental/Societal Factors that Contribute to Risk
T 17/TH 19	<b>First Meeting at Elem School Tues.</b>  No Formal Class Thur. Feb. 19 Small Group Project Meetings	
T 24/TH 26	Quiz #2 Thurs. 26	McWhirter et al. Chapter 3, Family Problems of At-Risk
March T 2/TH 4	No Formal Class Tues. Thurs. Small Group Project Meetings	
T 9/TH 11	Quiz #3 Thurs. 18	McWhirter et al. Chapter 4, School Issues that Relate to At-Risk Children
T 16/ TH 18	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
T 23/TH 25	March 25 Group Presentation Plans Due	
T 30/April TH 1	Quiz #4 Thurs. 1	McWhirter et al. Chapter 5, Individual Characteristics of High-Risk Versus Low-Risk
T 6/TH 8	Project Plans Returned, Project Planning with Mentees	
T 13/ TH 15	Quiz #5 Thurs. 15	
T 20/TH 22	Small Group Presentations Both days	
T 27/TH 29	Small Group Presentations Both days; <b>Course Evaluation</b>	
May T 4/TH 6	Small Group Presentations Both days if necessary	

## **CAMPBELL and PEASE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SW311/360K -- DO'S AND DON'TS**

### **DO**

- Conduct yourself in a professional manner
- Dress appropriately to the agency mission (no caps in bldg., no open toed shoes, no short-shorts)
- Adhere to all agency policies (no running in halls, keep mentee in your sight at all times, sign in and out)
- Be on time to any agency volunteer commitments agreed to by you and your instructor/TA, including any appointments scheduled activities in which you might be engaged; give ample notice in the rare event that you cannot meet your volunteer commitment
- Become familiar with all agency rules, regulations, procedures, etc. that pertain to volunteers
- Be sure that you are covered by agency policies and your own insurance if you are asked to transport clients; you may be liable if problems occur
- Express your own personal developmental needs to your instructor/TA
- Learn your limits as a “volunteer” working in this elementary school setting
- Make sure you use the resources available to you including your TA, the elementary school staff)
- Use appropriate channels to discuss any problems experienced within the elementary school and/or this 311/360K class (concerns about your volunteer experience)
- Treat clients with dignity and respect and abide by confidentiality rules and the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics
- Document time spent in the agency and activities in which you participate in an honest fashion (don't sign attendance for an absent friend the child is the one who suffers)

**DON'T**

- Forget you are a volunteer in the context of this class
- Be afraid to make or admit mistakes as a volunteer; it's a learning experience
- Violate any agency rules or regulations
- Use telephone or other agency equipment for personal reasons
- Make promises/commitments you can't keep (especially with clients)
- Buy gifts or get overly involved with clients on a personal basis, become involved with clients outside of your volunteer experience, or become involved with your mentee in ways that your instructor/TA does not know about
- Be afraid to ask your instructor/TA about anything that pertains to your volunteer assignment

**SW 311/360K**  
**Campbell and Pease Elementary Class Participation Form**

Please complete the form below. **Part I of the form will be used by the instructor only.** Part II will be used by Campbell Elementary School and the instructor and teaching assistance in matching you with a Campbell student.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Other courses taken this semester (class and meeting times):

Other commitments this semester (days and times, e.g., work, sports practices)

**Background information:**

Previous courses completed related to this course:

Previous volunteer or work experience related to this course:

Reasons why you are taking this course as opposed to other courses:

Personal experiences/issues it might be helpful for me to know that will help set you up for success in taking this course:

Have you ever been arrested/convicted of a crime (e.g. felony, drug-related, sexual abuse related)? If yes, explain briefly. (Note that although this information will be kept confidential, it will help in ensuring that you are placed in an appropriate setting and to protect you, the School of Social Work, and the University; some agencies, for example, will not allow persons to volunteer who have been convicted of drug-related crimes.)

The information described above is correct. I understand it will be used only in relation to this course.

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

**PART II  
MATCH FORM**

UT Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname/name you prefer to be called \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Year \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_ UT GPA \_\_\_\_\_

Special interests, hobbies, experiences you have that will help us in matching you with a Campbell/Pease student:

Other languages spoken besides English, if any (Campbell/Pease has an English as Second Language/ESL first grade classroom):

Type of child you prefer if you have a preference (e.g., gender; ethnicity; interests; personality, e.g., active learner/quiet child):

Other factors you want us to consider in the match process/helping set you up for success at Campbell/Pease and in the course:

**SAMPLE of Typical Daily In-Class MENTOR/MENTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

The major assignment for the semester will be the development and completion of two essays summarizing your mentoring interaction. Your essay will need to address key issues, characteristics, and quality of interaction issues between you and your 1<sup>st</sup> grade mentee. Each Tues. and Thurs. mentors will be provided a series of developmentally relevant questions to pose to their mentee. Completed forms will be collected and compiled by the Graduate Teaching Assistant and returned to each mentor before the end of the semester, with directions on how to compile the total group of worksheets into a packet to present to each child/child's teacher.

Directions:

Sitting at a table that provides some privacy between you and your first grader, please have your first grader answer/respond to the following questions.

Mentor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

First Grader's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
2. When is your birthday? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please count as high as you can count starting with one. Here the Mentor should document how high the first grader can count without error.
4. Please say your ABC's. Here the Mentor should document how well the student does and/or any difficulty the student has including how many times she/he has to start over before getting it right or how much help is offered to complete the task successfully.
5. What do you like most about school? What don't you like about school?
6. What do you want to be when you grow up?
7. When you have homework, who helps you with your homework at home?

SW311/360K Campbell and Pease Elementary Schools  
WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Today, mentors are asked to talk to their mentees about their fears and worries to get some insight into how their fears and worries might be contributing to problems they experience in school and peer relationships and might compromise healthy growth and development.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Grader's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First, read this to your Mentee: Mentors talk about all kinds of things with you. Today We're going to talk about fears and worries, and maybe we can talk about ways to deal with your fears and worries.

All children get scared sometimes about different things. What kinds of things make you feel scared?

What do you do when you are scared?

Who do you talk to when you are scared? If no one, maybe we can think of someone for you to talk to when you're scared.

Maybe we can come up with a plan for the next time you are scared. It's always good to have a plan.

All children worry about stuff. Tell me what you worry about.

Do you worry about things when you're in school?

7. Who do you talk to when you are worried? If no one, maybe we can think of someone for you to talk to about stuff you worry about.

8. Maybe we can come up with a plan for the next time you are worried. It's always good to have a plan.

A Letter to My Teacher About my UT Mentor

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Date \_\_\_\_\_:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My U.T. mentor is \_\_\_\_\_. Her/His is studying \_\_\_\_\_ at U.T. She/He is a \_\_\_\_\_ (junior, senior, etc.). She/He wants to be a \_\_\_\_\_ after she/he graduates from U.T. She/He is \_\_\_\_\_ feet and \_\_\_\_\_ inches tall. Her/His hair is \_\_\_\_\_ and her/his eyes are \_\_\_\_\_.

My mentor likes to \_\_\_\_\_. She/He likes to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to. Her/His favorite color is \_\_\_\_\_, and her/his favorite food is \_\_\_\_\_. She/He likes to eat \_\_\_\_\_ for breakfast and \_\_\_\_\_ for lunch. Her/His favorite game is \_\_\_\_\_ and her/his favorite t.v. show is \_\_\_\_\_. I told her/him my favorite food is \_\_\_\_\_ and my favorite t.v. show is \_\_\_\_\_.

I told my mentor that I want to be a \_\_\_\_\_ when I grow up, and she/he said “\_\_\_\_\_”. I like to \_\_\_\_\_ with my U.T. mentor. She/He is \_\_\_\_\_ to talk to and \_\_\_\_\_ to play with. We will be taking a picture with our mentor this semester and we get to take the picture home to show everybody. Her/His teacher Dr. Grant is a \_\_\_\_\_ lady. She said we will get the pictures back in a couple of weeks. She likes to make sure I say good morning to her after my mentor picks me up from class. The Teaching Assistants are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. They like to play with us and help us with our work too.

My mentor says she/he is going to help me with my self-esteem, and liking school and learning about getting along with others. I think that’s \_\_\_\_\_. Well that’s all for now.

Love, \_\_\_\_\_ (mentee’s signature)