Rhode Island College
School of Social Work

Individuals, Families and Small Groups

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Social Work 324 examines influences on the human behavior of individuals and families with special attention to the impact of oppression. Both SW 324 and SW 325 emphasize oppression; in 324 our focus is on women, lesbians and gay men, people with disabilities, and the elderly. SW 324 is based on a foundation of knowledge in social psychology, human development, human biology, and social work and social welfare.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The student will develop the ability to:

1. View the individual and family as biopsychosocial and spiritual systems in interaction with other systems;

2. Understand some of the dynamics and consequences of socially structured discrimination and oppression for development and functioning;

3. Understand some of the dynamics of discrimination on the basis of ability (ableism), old age (ageism), gender (sexism), and sexual orientation (heterosexism and homophobia);

4. Re-examine their own value systems in the light of information, knowledge and experience and appreciate the social work value on diversity;

5. Understand and apply theories of human behavior, including developmental, ecosystems, strengths and social construction theories, and theories about disability, aging and oppression.

6. Use written communication effectively, including writing grammatically correct, well-organized reviews and analyses with appropriate use of the APA guidelines for academic writing.

Expectations of Students: This class uses discussions, small group exercises, guest speakers, video and lecture. Students’ knowledge, experience and reactions to the readings and exercises are of great value. Significant participation and turn-taking are important for the process of the class. Given this, I expect the following of all students:
1. Attendance and timeliness for all classes. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for what you have missed. Important announcements, changes, class agenda are all stated in beginning of class so being on time is important. (Emergencies are, by definition, not every week).

2. Maintenance of confidentiality regarding issues raised by other students, including personal and professional disclosures. See attached School of Social Work confidentiality policy.

3. Assignments handed in on time. To be fair to those who hand in assignments on time, papers will be graded down if late with no prior discussion with me. Extensions need to be requested in advance. Students who turn in late papers without prior notice will be penalized 3 points per day.

4. Reading and reflection on class materials. This will be an active class and will be much more useful to you if you have read the material. You will also learn much more through participation. Therefore, students are expected to read the material.

5. Respectful, strengths-based communication that expresses beliefs, challenges others, and questions assumptions without personal attacks. Students have different views and opinions about topics and issues addressed class and should express their opinions in a manner consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics.

6. Full participation in class activities including a willingness to share relevant experiences, to allow others to share by showing excellent listening skills and patience, and to ask questions, provide feedback, offer ideas.

7. Turning off and putting away cell phones and any other electronic device unrelated to the class.

8. Written submissions that demonstrate effort and editing. I expect that you will proofread your assignments to assure your spelling and grammar reflect high quality work. In addition, you should be familiar with the APA style manual (5th Edition) and use it in your assignments. Please also be aware that your writing should be free of sexist or racist language.

9. Students to stop me if you don’t understand something or want a further explanation. You need to take responsibility for your learning process; I will try not to speed through the material.

10. Regular use of your RIC email. Course communications will be done through RIC email and each student is responsible for monitoring that source.

Expectations of the Instructor

1. I will work to maintain an environment where a thoughtful exchange of ideas is encouraged.
2. I will provide written feedback when I grade your papers.
3. I will be available to you during office hours and by appointment.
4. I will have high expectations for student performance.
5. I will review with students my policy for reading drafts of papers in advance or allowing students to re-write papers.
6. I will make every attempt to assure that papers are returned within two weeks of submission.
7. We will begin class on time (and in 3 hour classes will have a ten minute break halfway through.)
8. I will follow the course outline and negotiate any changes with the class.
9. We will evaluate the class about half the way through the semester to assess the need for changes.
10. I will listen to feedback and critique in the manner it is offered, as a useful tool for change.

**WRITING**

*This is a writing intensive course.* Students will write frequently and in course papers utilize high standards of writing and professional referencing of sources using the American Psychological Association style. Feedback will be given on your writing. For additional help with writing, students are strongly encouraged to utilize one of the resources on campus or at the School of Social Work: The Writing Center, Craig-Lee 225, 456-8141 or OASIS, Craig Lee LL, 456-8231. See attached SSW policy regarding writing.

**Grades for this Course:** Note, courses in the SW major must be passed with a grade of C or above and students must maintain a GPA of B- or above in all SW courses.

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**Grade of Incomplete**

A report of incomplete can be given in place of a grade when the work for the semester has been passing but has not been completed, because of illness or some other reason that, in the opinion of the instructor, justifies such a report. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate a request for an incomplete, and this must be initiated before the last day of class. The instructor has the prerogative to grant or deny the request. If an incomplete is granted, a contract for completion must be negotiated between the student and the faculty member. College policy requires that all incompletes be completed by the end of the next semester. However, when successful completion of one course is a requirement for beginning the next course, students must complete the Incomplete prior to the beginning of the next semester.
Academic Honesty

See statement at end of syllabus. All students should read and observe the academic honesty policies of the School of Social Work.

Learning Accommodations:
Any student with special learning needs is encouraged to inform the instructor as early in the semester as possible so that reasonable accommodations may be discussed. Rhode Island College is committed to making reasonable efforts to assist individuals with documented disabilities. As part of this process, students with a disability should contact the Office of Disability Related Services at Craig-Lee 127, 456-8061, to register if theirs is a documented disability or to learn more about how to document a disability. Please obtain the proper Student Life Office forms for accommodations and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

READINGS: All readings for this course are available on electronic reserve at the library under Social Work 324. You will need an activated RIC CARD which is obtained in the Student Union Campus Card office. Everyone’s card must be activated each semester at the library circulation desk. If you prefer, you may pick up a copy of the course readings at Copy World at 290 Taunton Ave, East Providence. You must call in advance (438-7333) to order a copy and provide a credit card to insure pick up.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING (See detailed descriptions at end of syllabus)

1. Attendance and Participation: 15%
2. Four of Five Possible Activity Analyses: 60% total (15% each).
3. Written Reviews of Readings: 15% Six (6) assigned.
4. Critical Analysis of your own writing: 10%

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 Introduction to course expectations, each other and major theories used in the course: systems and ecosystems, developmental theories, spirituality, social construction, oppression, and strengths/resilience. Writing for the profession.

  A starting point: evaluating your writing; Writing for a purpose: types of writing; Plagiarism.
- RIC HomePage, Adams Library link: see the “LibGuides” for “Citing Sources” (includes a link to APA) and “Academic Integrity.”
Week 2  Social Systems Theory in Human Behavior (24 pp)

Biopsychosocial Developmental Theories in Human Behavior

Due: Reading Review of Shriver and Lesser and Pope

Weeks 3 & 4 Disability, Ableism and Social Construction Theory: Strengths and Resilience
Readings on Disability discrimination and social construction models

Due week 4: Reading Review on Rapp & Goscha AND EITHER Wendell OR Raske

Weeks 5 & 6 Aging and Ageism
Readings on Aging and Ageism

Due Week 5: Activity Analysis on Disability (Optional for 4/5 choices)

Due Week 6: Reading Review on Roy and Copper, together.

Weeks 7, 8 & 9 Gender & sexism

Readings on Gender and Sexism

• Feinberg, L. (1998). We are all works in progress. In, Trans liberation: beyond pink or blue (pp. 9-13). Boston: Beacon Press.

Due Week 8: Activity Analysis on Aging Due (Optional for the 4/5 choices)
Due Week 9: Reading Review on TWO of the above, together.

Weeks 10 & 11 Sexual orientation, homophobia, heterosexism and Oppression Theory

Week 11: Readings on Sexual Orientation and Homophobia, Heterosexism and Oppression Theory (37pp.)


Due Week 10: Activity Analysis on Women and Sexism Due (Optional for the 4/5 choices)
Due Week 11: Reading Review on Pharr AND ONE of the others above, together.

Week 12 Spirituality
Jacob, C. Spiritual Development. In, J.G. Lesser & D.S. Pope, (eds.) Human behavior and the social environment, theory and practice (pp. 188-204). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Review readings from week 7, Roy, pp. 345-347; and week 9, Shaw.

Due Week 12: Activity Analysis on Sexual Orientation and Heterosexism Due (Optional for the 4/5 choices)

Week 13 Review and Summary of Course Content

• Selected review and catch up

Week 13 Due: Spirituality Activity Report Due (Optional for the 4/5 choices)

Week 14 Last Class. Evaluation and Ending

Due: Student Writing Analysis Due for all students. See assignments.

Descriptions of assignments:

WRITTEN REVIEWS OF READINGS: Six (6) times during the semester students will hand in written reviews of a reading due for that week. The syllabus indicates which readings must be reviewed and where there is a choice of readings to review. Wherever more than one reading is to be done for one review, the student should review BOTH readings together as ONE review, comparing and contrasting them. It is suggested of course that students read all readings since reference to them will be required in the papers on your activity analyses.

PLEASE NOTE: All reviews are due in the beginning of class on the day due. If a student is necessarily absent, s/he may consult with the professor about their policy on whether the student can submit the reading review by email before class only or not at all.

Tips on reading: Look for: something that surprises you, something you did not know, and something with which you may disagree. If you do not understand something in the reading, please bring that to your professor’s attention before the unit is completed.

How to write your reading reviews: see description of types of writing in Glicken, pp. 13-17 for what is a “review.” In your review, your first paragraph should summarize the author’s point and your point of view about it. In the remainder of the 2 pages elaborate on your point of view, including what surprised you, what you did not know and what you may disagree with and offer support for your point of view. This requires you to have completed the reading thoughtfully, to have comprehended the content and then to have processed its implications. You may agree or disagree with the author(s) based on other readings, your own individual or family or social group experience; and/or on your understanding of the social work profession, of clients or of society. You may refer to specific points the author(s) make in the main body of your review. Your written comments should make clear you have understood the content and
processed its meaning. PLEASE NOTE: a summary of the content is a “report” not a “review” and will not be acceptable. A response to only the first part or to one part of the reading is not a review of the entire reading and will not be acceptable.

ACTIVITY ANALYSIS: Students will do 4 of these 5. 60% (15% each). Each of these papers is a critical analysis (see Glicken pp. 13-14 for what is an “analysis”). Base your critical analysis on the readings for the course as they help you analyze your observations in the activity. Your Activity Analysis will be graded on the basis of writing, correct reference to course readings, incorporation of class work on the issue, and application to your own life and family. Each paper is similar, but as we move through the semester you will have an increasing number of references to readings and to prior course content. See specific outlines below. Be sure to proofread your paper for grammar and spelling and organization. Be sure to use APA format correctly: correct use of APA format will become a significant portion of the points assigned to each.

1. Disability and Ableism: due week 5. Critically analyze your experience in doing one of the activities below. This paper will be graded on the basis of writing, use of course readings, reference to class work on the issue, and demonstrated enhancement of your own self understanding. 2-4 pages. Citations from a minimum of 4 different course readings. Your review should address these topics a-d in a well-organized, clearly written 2-4 page paper critically analyzing your activity experience in the light of course material. APA format will account for 2 points of your grade and only as to whether it is clear the student attempted to utilize the format.
   a. The activity you picked from below. (This should NOT comprise most of the paper: that would be a report. This is a critical analysis).
   b. Experiences the person reports to you that reflect, in your opinion, in support or contradiction, any of the theories on disability,
   c. Your observations of others that may demonstrate prejudice or discrimination against people with disabilities.
   d. Your observations about yourself, your own beliefs, assumptions and values (and, if relevant, your family’s) that may reflect disability prejudice or discrimination.

   “ACTIVITIES” FOR DISABILITY ANALYSIS: If you choose one of these but do not learn from it, do another one or approach the professor for guidance!

1. Your own life experience with a physical or cognitive/emotional disability of your own. In writing your analysis paper, think about specific experiences you have had.
2. Your experience with someone you know very well, such as a family member, who has a physical or cognitive/emotional disability. In writing your analysis paper, think about specific experiences you have had.
3. Go to the mall, a restaurant or other public place with someone who has a physical or cognitive/emotional disability. In writing your analysis paper, think about what you experienced yourself and what you observed.
4. Interview someone: Interview someone with a disability who consents to this interview. This may be a family member, a friend, or an acquaintance. Discuss with them the
ethical issues and attach their initialed consent to participate in this interview (see end of syllabus for form). In the interview, reflect with them on their life experiences, the challenges they have faced, aspects of prejudice, oppression and discrimination they may have dealt with and strengths they identify. In your analysis paper, think about specific experiences they told you about and what you observed in interviewing them.

2. Aging and Ageism: Due Week 8. Interview someone over the age of 65 about their life since age 50. This may be a family member, a friend or an acquaintance. First discuss with them the ethical issues and attach their initialed consent to participate in this interview (see form at end of syllabus). Reflect on the later-life transitions and challenges they have faced, aspects of successful aging and strengths they identify, and how they have exhibited resilience. Graded on the basis of writing, reference to course readings (citations from a minimum of 4 course readings), use of class work on the issue, and application to your own life and family. **Hand in with initialed consent form.** Your critical analysis should address these topics a-d in a well-organized, clearly written 2-4 page paper critically analyzing your activity experience in the light of course material. APA format will constitute 5 points of your grade and as to whether the student successfully used the format.
   a. A brief description of the person (disguising their name to maintain their privacy): for example, such information as their age, race/ethnicity/culture, gender, lifetime occupation(s), and how you know them.
   b. The most meaningful thing you learned about this person in relation to their aging experience.
   c. Experiences in aging the person had that reflect, in your opinion, in support or contradiction, any of the theories on aging.
   d. Your own beliefs, assumptions, and values (and if relevant, your family’s) about being old, aging, gerophobia, ageism, invisibility of the old, etc.

3. Women and Sexism: due week 10. After doing the readings for this course and after our class discussions, do one of the activities described below. (Don’t forget the discussion part of the activity!) Graded on the basis of writing, reference to course readings (citations from a minimum of 6 course articles) and class work on the issue, and application to your own life and family. Your critical analysis should address these topics a-d in a well-organized, clearly written 3-5 page paper critically analyzing your activity experience in the light of course material. APA format will count for 5 points.
   a. A brief description of the activity you carried out or the person you interviewed.
   b. Experiences with gender you observed or were told of that, in your opinion, that may support or contradict any of the theories about gender and sexism that we studied.
   c. Your observations about others that may reflect sexism, gender role stereotypes, disregard for women, or acceptance of women’s unequal access to resources.
   d. Your observations about yourself, your own beliefs, assumptions, and values (and if relevant, your family’s) regarding sexism, gender roles stereotypes, disregard for women, or acceptance of women’s unequal access to resources.

   **“ACTIVITIES” FOR WOMEN AND SEXISM OPTION:** If you do one of these without learning anything, do another one!
1. **Go to at least two toy stores** and tell the clerk that you need to buy gifts for a set of 6-year-old twins, a boy and a girl. Explain that you have never shopped for children before and do not know what these children like, but that their parents say the twins like to get two different toys. How does your shopping experience compare with the idea that nowadays boys and girls are all raised to believe they are equal and can do anything. With your friends and family, have a discussion about this activity and its implications for the well-being of women and discrimination against women and girls.

2. **Review several issues of “women’s” magazines**, observing advertisements, articles, and photographs for roles of men and women, boys and girls, and messages about gender roles. Identify themes that express sexism toward women and girls or that limit the roles of men and women. With close friends or family, have a thorough discussion of what you have seen and debate from the point of view of women’s well-being and the discrimination against women and girls.

3. **Observe a family function** (dinner or an event like a wedding, shower, religious event, party) **for roles of men and women, boys and girls, and for messages about gender roles.** Identify themes that reflect sexism toward women and girls or that limit the roles of men and women. With close friends or family, have a discussion of what you have seen and debate from the point of view of women’s well-being and the discrimination against women and girls.

4. **Interview someone who identifies as transgender:** Interview someone who identifies as transgender who consents to this interview. This may be a family member, a friend, or an acquaintance. Discuss with them the ethical issues and attach their initialed consent to participate in this interview (see end of syllabus for form). Reflect with them on their life experiences, the way they view gender, challenges they have faced because of gender biases or gender roles, aspects of sexism they have struggled with and the ways their gendered experiences have been strengths for them. **PLEASE NOTE:** this is not about sexual orientation, it is about gender representation and identity. In writing your critical analysis, think about specific experiences they told you about or about what you observed in interviewing them that relates to gender.

**4. Sexual Orientation, homophobia and heterosexism. Due week 12.** Do one of the activities. Graded on the basis of writing, reference to course readings (citation of a minimum of 5 course readings), class work on the issue, and application to your own life and family. Your critical analysis should address these topics a-d in a well-organized, clearly written 3-5 page paper critically analyzing your activity experience in the light of course material. APA format will count for 5 points of your grade.

  a. A brief description of the activity you carried out/ the person you interviewed.
  b. Experiences with sexual orientation that you observed or were told of that, in your opinion, may support or contradict any of the theories we studied about oppression and homophobia.
  c. Observations about others that, in your opinion, reflect the ideas of stigma, heterosexism and homophobia, heterosexual privilege, or internalized homophobia and heterosexism AND……
  d. Observations about yourself, your own beliefs, assumptions and values (and if relevant, your family’s) regarding sexual orientation. Attend to ideas of stigma, heterosexism and homophobia, heterosexual privilege, or internalized homophobia and heterosexism.

**“ACTIVITIES” FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OPTION *
In each of these, explore your own internal reactions as well as the external reactions you receive. If you do one of these without learning anything, do another one!

1. Wear a rainbow or lavender ribbon for 24 hours during a busy, public time of your week. Explain you are wearing it in support of lgbt rights.
2. Walk around publicly holding hands with a same sex friend.
3. If you are involved in a romantic heterosexual relationship, go out for a date and for the whole time do not demonstrate in any way that the two of you are anything but friends. Make sure your partner does not demonstrate in any way the nature of your relationship.
4. Confront a joke about sexual orientation directly without identifying your own sexual orientation.
5. Have a video party and invite your friends over for an lgbtq-themed movie. Observe people’s level of comfort and any signs of discomfort, including making fun. Discuss the movie. Explore your own and your friends’ reactions.
6. Go to a same sex (lesbian or gay) club with a same sex friend. Dance.
7. Write a letter to the editor supporting an aspect of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender rights.
8. Go to a meeting of an lgbt group that is focused on social action or self-help (if appropriate for you) or social activities.
9. Interview someone lesbian, gay, or bisexual who consents to this interview. This may be a family member, a friend or an acquaintance. Discuss with them the ethical issues. Attach their initialed consent to participate in this interview. Reflect with them on their life experiences and the challenges they have faced, aspects of prejudice, oppression and discrimination they have faced and strengths they identify.


**5. Spirituality: due week 14.** Graded on the basis of writing, reference to course readings (citations from a minimum of 2 course articles), class work on the issue, application to your own life, and application to reading. Your critical analysis should address these topics in a well-organized, clearly written 2-4 page paper critically analyzing your activity experience in the light of course material. APA format will account for 6 points of the grade.

Please do one of the following:

1. Consider your own life experience with spirituality and/or religion. In writing your analysis paper, think about specific experiences you have had.
2. Go to a religious service of a religion unfamiliar to you with someone from that religion who is willing to help you better understand it. Before the service, read about this religion. After the service, talk with them about the service (and if appropriate, what you read) to learn about what their experience in this religion has been. In writing your analysis paper, think about what you experienced yourself and what you observed.
With your own religion (#1) or in observing and learning about another religion (#2), consider how the religion or spiritual experience relates to the issues discussed in class this semester. For instance, consider the ways in which the religion may be empowering and/or oppressive, how the traditions and rituals may matter, how cultural diversity is addressed, how people were included or marginalized. Describe your observations about the beliefs, assumptions and values of yourself (and if relevant, your family) regarding spirituality and religion.

STUDENT WRITING ANALYSIS: Review instructor comments on ALL of the written assignments you have submitted in this course for this semester, carefully observing the kinds of comments made on your writing. Write a brief 2-3 page analysis of your own writing based on what you have observed from this review. Comment on the kinds of writing skills you have, common errors in writing you make, other writing skills you need to develop. Indicate what you plan to do to improve your writing and the likelihood you will carry out this plan. BRING THIS ESSAY AND YOUR PAPERS TO CLASS.
Informed consent to participate in an interview about disability

As part of a college course in understanding human behavior in the social environment, I am conducting an interview with someone who has a disability. I am interested in finding out about your experiences.

I would expect our interview to last about one hour.

Your identity will be kept confidential. I will disguise your name and any other identifying information in my notes and in my paper. I will use our interview in the following ways always keeping your name and other identifying information confidential:

I will take notes after our interview.

I will write a paper in which I use your knowledge and submit that paper to my professor.

I may share some of what I have learned from you with my classmates.

If you decide during our interview that you would like to stop participating, just let me know and we will end. If you would like me to not take notes and not use our interview for my paper, just let me know and I will follow your wishes.

You may contact my professor at the number below if you would like to ask any other questions.

Thank you for participating.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT CONDUCTING INTERVIEW

INITIALS OF PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED: I understand this project as explained above.

Rhode Island College School of Social Work
Bachelor of Social Work Program
Social Work 324 Fall, 2010
Wendy Becker  456-8171
Informed consent to participate in a life span interview

As part of a college course in understanding human behavior in the social environment, I am conducting an interview with someone over 65 about their life since age 50. I am interested in finding out about your experience growing older.

I would expect our interview to last about one hour.

*Your identity will be kept confidential.* I will disguise your name and any other identifying information in my notes and in my paper. I will use our interview in the following ways always keeping your name and other identifying information confidential:

- I will take notes after our interview.
- I will write a paper in which I use your knowledge and submit that paper to my professor.
- I may share some of what I have learned from you with my classmates.

If you decide during our interview that you would like to stop participating, just let me know and we will end. If you would like me to not take notes and not use our interview for my paper, just let me know and I will follow your wishes.

You may contact my professor at the number below if you would like to ask any other questions.

Thank you for participating.

______________________________

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT CONDUCTING INTERVIEW

______________________________

INITIALS OF PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED: I understand this project as explained above.

Rhode Island College School of Social Work  
Bachelor of Social Work Program  
Social Work 324 Fall, 2010  
Wendy Becker 456-8171
Informed consent to participate in a human behavior and social environment interview about sexual orientation

As part of a college course in understanding human behavior in the social environment, I am conducting an interview with someone who is lesbian or gay about their life as a lesbian or gay person. I am interested in finding out about your experience.

I would expect our interview to last about one hour.

Your identity will be kept confidential. I will disguise your name and any other identifying information in my notes and in my paper. I will use our interview in the following ways always keeping your name and other identifying information confidential:

- I will take notes after our interview.
- I will write a paper in which I use your knowledge and submit that paper to my professor.
- I may share some of what I have learned, keeping your identity confidential, with my classmates.

If you decide during our interview that you would like to stop participating, just let me know and we will end. If you would like me to not take notes and not use our interview for my paper, just let me know and I will follow your wishes.

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