Prerequisites: All 500 Level Courses Completed.

Course Description:

This is an advanced level methods course designed to help students attain a mastery of the central concepts in direct social work treatment of children. The course will address the various modalities available for clinical social work practice with children, and will focus upon individual treatment of children. Direct work with parents and significant others will be addressed as an essential component of treatment plans for children. This course also addresses the treatment of children under three years old. Particular attention is given to vulnerable children, who experience a range of biopsychosocial difficulties, including severe mental illnesses, learning disabilities, abuse, and behavioral disorders. The theoretical base of the course draws on an eco-systemic perspective, which has been developed in previous course work (i.e. SOWK 500, 501, 503, and 504), modern relational psychodynamic theories, and neurobiology. Since behavior modification and cognitive approaches are often utilized with children, students will have the opportunity to become acquainted with some application of those theories as well (through required readings in the assigned text and through course assignments).

Readings draw from classics in the field as well as from more recent work. Material on child development and research on practice with children informs all readings, so that the course also fosters student integration of content from the Human Behavior in the Social Environment and Research Sequences with the practice emphasis of this course. The course also draws from ethnic-sensitive practice, which recognizes the many ways in which ethnicity and race influence child development and hence, treatment of children. Gender identity issues and issues of gender bias as they affect treatment of children also will be addressed throughout the course, and issues of social justice will be addressed as they pertain to issues such as access to resources necessary for children and their families to function well.

Recognizing that treatment of children occurs in many different settings, ranging from outpatient clinics to schools to residential centers, the course content is designed to be applicable to treatment within a variety of contexts. Case material, presented by both
students and instructor, will be drawn from diverse settings. This course affirms the value and dignity of all persons, including children and family members. As an extension of this value, students are taught the role of clinical social workers as advocates for their clients through assigned readings in the required text and from case discussions. In contrast to the course Social Work with Children (SOWK 515), which focuses primarily upon child welfare systems and interventions targeted upon larger systems affecting children, this course, while including environmental interventions, focuses primarily upon direct interventions with children.

This course provides essential conceptual and practice skills necessary for competent clinical practice with children. It relates to the Clinical Social Work domain for each of its specializations, and will assist beginning clinicians in working with children and their families. The course can be helpful to students who elect the Leadership and Development in the Social Services domain if their career goals are to function as mezzo or macro practitioners in settings that serve children. In addition, the course also assists students in integrating learning across the curriculum since material from other Practice courses, HBSE, Research and Social Welfare Policy and services are utilized.

**Learning Objectives:**

In this course, students should demonstrate through assignments their mastery of the following objectives:

**Knowledge:**

1. Understand the theoretical dimensions of psychosocial assessment and treatment planning in social work treatment of children.

2. Understand the parameters of the professional relationship in social work treatment of children, including legal, ethical, confidentiality and advocacy issues, as well as integrate cultural, racial, socio-economic status, and gender influences as they affect children and their caretakers.

3. Understand the theoretical dimensions of psychosocial assessment and treatment planning in social work services for children’s caregivers.

**Values:**

1. Respect for the dignity and rights of individuals, including those of children and family members.
2. To affirm that the pursuit of social justice is integral to the practice of clinical social work with children and that society is obligated to care for and protect all children.

3. To appreciate the diversity of backgrounds, abilities and disabilities in children and the impact these have on the social work assessment and treatment process.

Skills:

1. Develop the central clinical skills necessary for interviewing children and providing clinical services of different developmental levels, backgrounds and circumstances as they relate to the clinical purposes and context for the interviews.

2. Assess the psychosocial functioning of children and their families in relation to their developmental levels, cultural and class backgrounds, and to formulate treatment plans that address their presenting problems. These plans will incorporate the major systems involved, including reorganizing the diversity of family systems, and utilize community resources on behalf of these children.

4. Critically evaluate one’s practice with children and their care givers.

Teaching Methodology:

The course will utilize lecture, discussion, and student presentations. Because the emphasis of the course is on helping students to develop their clinical skills in treatment with children, the course will rely heavily on the analysis of clinical material in the light of social work practice theories. The instructor will utilize clinical material from a variety of sources, including case materials which exemplify practice with diverse populations of children.

Respect for Diversity:

The instructors are committed to the recognition and respect for variations in racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and in class, gender, age, physical and mental ability, religion, and sexual orientation. Further, the instructors value ethnically sensitive and culturally competent social work education and practice. The instructors uphold the ethical standards set forth by the profession and the Jesuit ideals of the University. This is demonstrated through readings, lectures, case presentations, and assignments. The instructors expect that students will demonstrate comparable respect for diversity of their classmates, faculty and clients, and commit to address issues of marginalization, oppression, prejudice and discrimination.
Students with Special Needs:

Any student with special needs or difficulties in learning and completing course assignments is strongly encouraged to see the instructor as soon as possible. Please refer to the Graduate School of Social Work Student Handbook for student rights and available resources pertaining to assistance with special needs or disabilities.

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is essential to a student’s professional development, their ability to serve others, and to the University’s mission. Therefore, students are expected to conduct all academic work within the letter and the spirit of the Statement on Academic Honesty of Loyola University Chicago, which is characterized by any action whereby a student misrepresents ownership of academic work submitted in his or her name. Responsibilities of Academic Honesty and Integrity are detailed in the Graduate Manual of Loyola University Chicago and The Graduate School of Social Work Student Handbook. This commitment ensures that a student of the School of Social Work will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thereby, affirming personal and professional honor and integrity. Students may not plagiarize or use the same assignment content to fulfill different course requirements.

Assignments:

There will be a mid-term and a final assignment for the course. Each will focus on the clinical application of course material. The mid-term focuses on application of course material to clinical assessment. The final assignment requires students to use their developing assessment skills as guides to clinical interventions.

Grades:

Grades will be derived from a composite of the grades received on the mid-term assignment, the final paper, and class participation. The weighting of grades is as follows;

- Mid-term: 40%
- Final Paper: 40%
- Participation: 20%

While class participation is necessary in order to complete this course, it does not directly constitute the grade for class participation. Participation is defined as an active engagement in the course material and a professional orientation toward one’s learning. Indicators of participation are quality of class comments, use of the instructor as an educational resource, extending one’s study
beyond assigned work to meet related professional needs, and comportment in accordance with professional ethics.

**Required Textbooks:**

(The instructor can choose from among the following)


**Recommended Textbooks:**


Clinical Social Work Practice with Children
SOWK 620

Weeks I - IV Overview: Assessment and Treatment Planning

Weeks I – II: Introduction

- Unique and common aspects of clinical social work with children, including: necessity of working with caretakers, child serving institutions such as schools, varying developmental capacities, etc.
- The nature of confidentiality in working with children and families
- Theoretical perspectives: psychodynamic, ecological and dual perspective.

Required Readings:


The Assessment Process

- Age appropriate materials and their uses
- Establishing an alliance with children and significant others
- Assessing domains of functioning and developmental level
- The evaluation of the family system
- The impact of the quality of family relationships on the child=s physical as well as, psychological development

Required Readings:


  Chapter 2: Framework for systematic observation of the child.
  Chapter 3: Chronological age and phase/ appropriate indications for each observational category
  Chapter 5: Conducting the interview
  Chapter 6: Constructing a formulation based on a developmental approach.

  Chapter 6: Parent Interviews
  Chapter 7: Child interviews in biopsychosocial assessment and planning
Week III  Treatment Planning and Communicating Assessment Findings to Parents

- Framework for considering the utility of direct and indirect services.
  Addressing concerns of parents and others in formulating treatment plans.
- Promoting feedback and discussion by parents and other caretakers of treatment plans.
- Clarifying expectations of services and roles of all participants.

Required Readings:

Chapter 7  The interview with the parents

Chapter 6:  Parent Interviews

Week IV  Considerations in Interviewing Children for Reporting Child Abuse and Ascertaining Custody Issues

The effects of abuse on the child:

- Recognizing and reporting indications of abuse and neglect.
- Maintaining the therapeutic alliance with parents and children in abuse and neglect situations.
- Engagement and work with child protective workers and other child

Required Readings:


Interview Techniques in Cases of Abuse:
**Required Readings:**


Chapter 12: Post-traumatic stress disorders, pg 295-317


**Week V Evaluation of Practice In Relation To Treatment Approach And Goals**

- The critical use of research data to inform practice decisions.

**Required Readings:**

Chapter 13. Psychotherapy for Children and Adolescents.


Ch 13: Evaluating Therapeutic Change

and Behavioral Research: The Heuristic Paradigm. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.]


**Weeks VI-X General Principles of Treatment**

- The role of play and other forms of communication
- Understanding and uses transference, countertransference and other reactions
- Techniques for facilitating children’s exploration of concerns
- Addressing similarities and differences in client-worker backgrounds
- Conducting culturally sensitive interviews with children and families
- Handling client initiated and worker initiated terminations
- Determining when treatment should end
- Introducing termination to children and their families

**Required Readings:**


Chapter 1: Developmental play therapy in clinical social work  
Chapter 2: Therapeutic alliance and developmental change process  
Chapter 3: Play objects and symbolic metaphor: Tools in developmental change  
Chapter 4: Developmental change process across treatment stages

**Weeks X - XII  Interventions with the Family System: Parental Counseling**

- Engaging parents in ongoing treatment of their children  
- Dealing with systemic family problems in child treatment  
- Assisting parents with personal difficulties as part of child treatment.
Required Readings:


Week XIII  Considerations in Treatment with Infants and Children Under 3

- Similarities and differences in working with very young children and their families.
- Differential uses of consultation, coaching, and direct intervention.

Required Readings:


Chapter 9: Attachment problems
Week XIV  Crisis Intervention with Children

- Understanding how children mourn
- Intervening with children and their caretakers

Required Readings:


Week XV  Group Treatment of Children

- Utilizing groups as a therapeutic modality with children
- Reviewing different forms of group treatment of children
- Handling problems in group treatment (e.g. scapegoating, limit setting)
- Issues in concurrent use of individual and group treatment of children

Required Readings:


Bibliography


