



SWK 513: Human Behavior in the Social Environment II

COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2025

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Gracie Brownell

Office Location: Henderson Rm Commerce

Office Hours: Office Hours Before or After Class or by appointment

Office Phone: (903) 468 8170

University Email Address: Gracie.Brownell@tamuc.edu (preferred)

Preferred Form of Communication: **E-mail**

Communication Response Time: **Within 2 business days**

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to TELUS Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available for guidance and support whenever needed.



QR Code TELUS

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required

Zastrow, C.H., Kirst-Ashman, K.K. & Hessenauer, S.L (2018). *Understanding human behavior and the social environment*. 11th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage.

Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (2020). 7th ed.
Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Software Required

Optional Texts and/or Materials

All MSW students need to purchase the following set of study materials to prepare for the Graduate Comprehensive Exam that they will take in their final semester. You must pass the exam to receive your degree. It is never too early to begin studying for the exam.

Comprehensive Study Guide (Masters, Clinical, Adv. Generalist) Version 9.0.
Social Work Examination Services. [www.https://swes.net/study-materials/comprehensive-study-guide-lmsw/](https://swes.net/study-materials/comprehensive-study-guide-lmsw/)

Course Description

This course is designed to provide foundation students with knowledge and theoretical understanding of the bio-physical, psychological, and behavioral aspects of human development within a variety of social systems. In this course we will study human development with attention to the interaction between individuals, families, and the changing social environment as it pertains to the phases of adulthood. Traditional approaches to life stages will be considered, as well as less traditional issues such as the impact on human development of different cultures, poverty, physical/mental disabilities, gender roles, sexism, ageism, and sexual orientation.

Relationship to Other Courses:

Student Learning Outcomes (Should be measurable; observable; use action verbs)

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) requires a competency-based approach to identify and assess what students demonstrate in practice. In social work, this approach involves assessing students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in the educational policy. Listed below are the competencies and associated knowledge, skills, values and/or cognitive and affective processes that comprise the expected outcomes for this course.

	Activity/Assessment	Dimension
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior		
Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, Relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context	In the News	Knowledge, skills and cognitive and affective
Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations	In the News	Knowledge, skills and cognitive and affective
Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and oral and written and electronic communication	In the News	Knowledge, skills and cognitive and affective
Competency 2: Engage in Diversity and Difference in Practice		
Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo and macro levels	Culture Other than their own	Knowledge, Values, Skills and Cognitive Affective
Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences	Culture Other than their own	Knowledge, Values, Skills and Cognitive Affective

Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with	Culture Other than their own	Knowledge, Values, Skills and Cognitive Affective
diverse clients and constituencies		
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities		
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies	Course Quizzes Culture Other Than Their Own	Knowledge, Values, Skills and Cognitive Affective
Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies	Course Quizzes Culture Other Than Their Own	Knowledge, Values, Skills and Cognitive Affective

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

In this class you will utilize the Learning Management Systems (LMS) D2L for instructional and learning opportunities, submitting your assignments, participating in online synchronous and asynchronous discussions, accessing resources, and completing quizzes/tests. Additionally, knowledge and skills in using Microsoft Word PowerPoint and Outlook Email, if you have any issues with using the various systems or software, it is your responsibility to contact support services and to notify the instructor of the problem.

Instructional Methods

This course will be delivered via synchronous and asynchronous sessions via D2L and will consist of live class sessions, pre-recorded lectures, group engagement activities, various assignments with some including experiential learning and practical application of the content areas. In addition, small lectures, discussion activities and workshops may be utilized to provide instruction during this course.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

As a student in this course, you are responsible to engage in active learning and reaching out to the instructor if there are problems or challenges that is interfering in optimal learning. Communication is key when engaged in a fully online, virtual environment.

Expectations for success include:

1. Always demonstrate professional behavior, including demonstrating respect for instructor and peers; being open to feedback and guidance throughout this class and in the program.
2. Adhered to the School of Social Work and University student code of conduct, along with NASW Code of Ethics.
3. Begin reading the assigned text and supplemental readings as soon as possible, with a focus on completing all readings prior to engagement with instructor or peers.

4. Prepare to engage in live class sessions, discussions, and other activities so you can be a contributor as well as receiver of knowledge and skills.
5. Actively participate in engagement activities which will include live virtual class sessions, online discussions, and interactive learning opportunities -as this is vital for learning and success in both this course and the program.
6. Work ahead when possible, completing assignments ahead of due date so you are prepared to submit on the due date.
7. Sign into the D2L course multiple times during the week to access updated announcements or posted resources.
8. Check your university email daily. This is the official method of communication by the university, department, and instructor.
9. Be open and focused on the “process” and not the “product” as earning this degree requires time, effort, work and ultimately growth in knowledge, skills, abilities along with personal and professional attributes.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100% of total points

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% or Below

Specifics for grading will have to be individualized and entered here

Assessments **(DO NOT USE AI TO WRITE YOUR PAPERS)**

1. IN THE NEWS (4 papers @ 25 points = 100 points)

SEE: APPENDIX A: RUBRIC

You will need to choose a current event story from any type of media source

that reflects the content of the readings up to this point and will need to be ready to discuss with the class. As well, you will write a one to two-page double-spaced paper applying the reading assigned for the week (see course calendar). This means you will apply and cite content in the chapter with current event. The paper should identify and critique at least two key points from the reading.

IMPORTANT: (See RUBRIC)

- Points will be deducted for a not citing the text two times at a minimum.
- Points will be deducted for using first person.

2. ENGAGE WITH A CULTURE OTHER THAN YOUR OWN: (50 points)

SEE RUBRIC: APPENDIX B

You need to have a cultural experience with a culture other than your own. This could be a celebration, religious service, theater production, LGBTQIA+, AA/NA open meeting, or other event that meets the criteria. **Please step outside your comfort zone.** Write a paper 2-3 pages reflection paper detailing your experience. You need to have evidence (a ticket stub or program) to demonstrate that you attended. This reflection paper can be written in first person. Please correct any grammatical errors on the paper prior to submission.

- Describe the event – what you saw / experienced.
- Describe your impressions – what you liked and did not like – whether anything surprised you or made you feel uncomfortable.
- The paper should conclude with what you learned from the experience.

3. QUIZZES: (Eight Quizzes @ 10 pts each TOTAL: 80 points)

Quizzes will be given which reflect content from all weekly assigned material, including lectures, videos, hand-outs and class readings. Each quiz will consist of 10 questions from the corresponding chapters and you will be given extended time to complete, once you enter the quiz. **The reason for this is that I want you to learn the material and just memorize it.** Each quiz will open with the course, but will close on Sunday nights at 11:30 pm of the week that corresponds to the chapter assigned. You must take the quiz within the allotted time period. You cannot make up a quiz if missed. The format may include multiple choice, true/false, short answer and essay questions.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your instructor via email. Instructor will respond to email queries within two business days

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)
[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce
Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or

veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

School of Social Work and Council on Social Work Education Specific Policies

Course Engagement

Final Evaluation and Grade Depends on both Classroom attendance and Participation
Inadequate participation or lack of required time commitment in each class significantly

affects students' grades. No matter the course venue, students must engage in a comparable amount of time. Expectations of both Face-to-Face classes and those with Online components include time spent reading and studying course material. To earn a level of competency within a specific course, students must demonstrate both mastery of content and active engagement.

Mastery of content areas is evidenced by successful completion of course assignments such as written papers, group project deliverables, tests/quizzes and other tangible products designed by instructors to evaluate knowledge and skills.

Additionally, the Social Work Profession is built upon human interactions and building human relationships – which is defined as engagement. Engagement is defined as meaningful involvement in interactions with instructor, peers, outside stakeholders as appropriate (such as contacting a social worker to interview for a required assignment). Within the classroom setting, whether virtual or F2F, students must actively participate in 80% of engagement activities as outlined by individual instructors. These activities may include, but are not limited to participation in live, synchronous virtual classes, attending a Face-to-Face course when appropriate, interacting with peers in posted discussions and collaborating in group interactive projects.

Students must meet standards for content mastery on tangible assignments and meet the threshold of active engagement of the time set during a semester by the instructor.

Instructors are experts in each course content area and set the standards for students to meet for successful completion of the course.

Student Conduct

Students preparing to become professional social workers must adhere to the *University Code of Conduct*, *Department Code of Conduct* and *National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) Code of Ethics*.

Department Code of Conduct

"Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class/lab/internship practicum or to block access to online courses and may refer offenses to the [Academic and Professional Issues Committee (API)] or to the Department Head. More serious offences by be referred to the University Police Department and/or the Judicial Affairs Office for disciplinary action" (Student Guidebook p 35)

Social Work students conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner.

Closely linked with professional recognition is the social worker's compliance with the profession's ethical standards. It is imperative for professional social workers to be competent and ethical in practice if the profession is to maintain the public trust. It is essential that each social work student gain a thorough understanding of the ethical principles that guide practice and actively demonstrate in behavior, both in and out of the classroom. Student conduct is to reflect the tenets of *NASW Code of Ethics* (located at <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>) on the NASW website: <https://www.socialworkers.org>

University Code of Conduct *located in the Student Guidebook at* <http://www.tamuc.edu/campuslife/documents/studentGuidebook.pdf> (pp 34- 66). On the University Website under Campus Life Documents
To become aware of university policies related to student academic and behavioral expectations for students refer to the Guidebook

Appendix A: Grading Rubric

Rubric for In the News Assignment

Score	Possible Points	Point breakdown	Area	Consisting of
	5	Introduction of current event topic and direction or purpose of your paper (thesis statement). This should be in general of what your paper is about. This should include the mention of the two topics that will be cited from the text.	Subject	Identification
	10	5 pts. each – Discussion of the two topics provided according to directions, Cite the text two times, showing your comprehension of the information from the text to the current event information	Demonstration of Assimilation of Knowledge	Discussion
	5	Conclusion: Show utilization of critical thinking by synthesizing all material discussed into a cohesive summation of what was learned WITHOUT USING FIRST PERSON	Critical Thinking	Your Conclusion
	5	Grammar, spelling, and paragraphing are correct; headers provide a correct map for the reader, APA used	Writing Competency	Professional Presentation
	25			

Grading Rubric for Culture Other Than Your Own Assignment

Score	Possible Points	Point breakdown	Area	Consisting of
	10	Introduction of the cultural experience and cover the following: - Describe the event – where you went/ what you saw / experienced. - Describe your impressions – what you liked and did not like – whether anything surprised you or made you feel uncomfortable.	Subject	Identification
	20	10 pts. each – Cite the text two times, showing your comprehension of the information from the text to the cultural experience. This can be from any portion of the text that aligns with your experience: Example: Culture or the particular population, etc. HINT: There is a subject index and “Culture” is in there in a number of places. As well if attended something that revolved around something from Chapter 9 you could cite from that area of the text.	Demonstration of Assimilation of Knowledge	Discussion
	10	Conclusion: Show utilization of critical thinking by synthesizing all material discussed into a cohesive summation of what was learned and overall impression of the experience.	Critical Thinking	Your Conclusion
	10	Grammar, spelling, and paragraphing are correct; headers provide a correct map for the reader, APA used (Cover Page, in text citations and Reference page are A MUST).	Writing Competency	Professional Presentation
	50			

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Weeks	Class Meetings (Zoom)	Topics & Instructional Materials	Activities, Assignments & Examinations
Week 1 8/25-31	1 st Zoom Meeting TUESDAY 8/26 at 6:00 pm	Course Overview	- Review Course Syllabus and Expectations - Participate in the Meet/Greet Zoom Meeting
Week 2 9/1-7	ONLINE	Chapter 9: Gender, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexism	- Read Chapter 9 - Chapter 9: Quiz (Covers content from weeks 2 and 3) Due: 9/7 by 11:59 pm.
Week 3 9/8-14	2 nd ZOOM Meeting Tuesday Discussion #1 9/9 at 6:00 pm	Chapter 10: Biological Aspects of Young and Middle Adulthood	Chapter 10: Quiz (Covers content from weeks 4 and 5) Due: 9/14 by 11:59 pm. "In the News:#1" covers content from Ch. 9 or 10 Due 11:59 pm 9/14 If you missed Discussion #1: Please upload a video by Sunday 9/14 regarding your thoughts,

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The syllabus/schedule is subject to change.

			observations and comments.
Week 4 9/15-21		Chapter 11: Psychological Aspects of Young and Middle Adulthood	Chapter 11: Quiz (Covers content from week 4) Due: 9/21 by 11:59 pm.
Week 5 9/22-9/28	3 rd ZOOM Meeting Tuesday 9/23 6:00 pm	Chapter 12: Sociological Aspects of Young and Middle Adulthood	Chapter 12: Due: 9/28 by 11:59 pm. In the News:#2" Choose a topic from Ch. 11 or 12 Due by 11:59 pm on 9/28
Week 6 9/29-10/5	ONLINE	Chapter 13: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	Chapter 13 Quiz Due: 10/5 by 11:59 pm.
Week 7 10/6-12	4 th ZOOM Meeting Tuesday Discussion #2 Tuesday 10/7 at 6:00 pm "Conversion Therapy"	Chapter 13: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Continued.	If you miss Discussion # 2 video Check-In, upload a video of your observations, comments and by 11:59pm Sunday 10/12
Week 8 10/13-19		Chapter 14: Biological Aspects of Later Adulthood	Chapter 14: Quiz Due: 10/19 by 11:59 pm. In the News #3" Ch. 13 or 14 Due 11:59 pm 10/19

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Week 9 10/20-26	5th ZOOM Meeting Tuesday 10/21 6:00 pm "The Opioid Epidemic"	Chapter 15: Psychological Aspects of Later Adulthood	• Chapter 15: Quiz Due: 10/26 by 11:59 pm Discussion #3 Check-In If you were unable to attend Discussion 3 please upload a video with your comments, observations, etc. by 10/26
Week 10 10/27-11/2	ONLINE	Chapter 16: Sociological Aspects of Later Adulthood	• Chapter 16: Quiz Due: 11/2 by 11:59 pm.
Week 11 11/3-9	ONLINE	Chapter 16: Sociological Aspects of Later Adulthood	In The News #4 Chapter 15 or 16 Due:11/9
Week 12 11/10-16		Put it all together	Finish Cultural Experience paper
Week 13 11/17-23	6th ZOOM Tuesday 11/18 at 6:00 pm Cultural Experience Presentation for the class 4/16/2024 at 6:00 pm.		Cultural Experience Paper Due Cultural Experience Presentation for the class 11/17 at 6:00 pm.

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The syllabus/schedule is subject to change.

Week 14 11/24-30 Happy Thanksgiving! 11/27-29		Wrap Up Cultural Experience Paper Presentation	• Complete Cultural Experience Presentation feedback
Week 15 12/1-7	7 th ZOOM Discussion #3 Tuesday 12/2 at 6:00 pm Practicing Social Work outside of the US.		• Complete online class evaluation
Week 16 12/8-12			• Complete online class evaluation

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