NEUROBIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

I. Course Description

This course will cover selected findings from recent neurobiological research as it elaborates understanding of relationship dynamics with individuals, couples, families, and groups. Although this research is usually found outside the usual discourse of the social and psychological sciences, a body of scientific work useful to social service providers will be reviewed. The support that recent scientific findings provide for aspects of psychological treatment theories and differential diagnosis will be reviewed. This course will focus on using multiple perspectives in the advanced application of neurobiology research to inform clinical intervention, with emphasis placed at the micro and mezzo levels of practice. The framework of the course is based on social work values and the ethical decision-making process, as illuminated by the NASW Code of Ethics. A bio-psycho-social and cultural emphasis will be applied to the various problem areas and disorders covered.

II. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate the ability to:

a. understand how recent scientific findings guide and inform social service interventions;
b. critically compare and analyze therapeutic and social service implications of recent scientific findings related to the impact of the relationship experiences on/in the human brain;
c. evaluate, select, and design a social service intervention which takes into account both the appropriate psychological theory and the scientific research which supports the use of that particular theory;
d. adapt social service intervention methods to activities/programs which are designed to sensitively differentiate the needs of the client/client system as influenced by age, gender, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnic/cultural background, socioeconomic status, physical challenge, and other individual differences.
III. Teaching Methods

This course is designed to include a variety of teaching methodologies to achieve the expectation of student mastery of the skills involved in the examination of social work practice theory as it is supported by selected scientific findings. Readings, discussion, lecture, experiential exercise, videos, audio CDs, case examples, and presentations are designed to enhance the learning experience.

IV. Required Texts, Recommended Texts, and Course Materials

*Required Texts:*


*Suggested Texts:*


(Appendition: available in paperback)


V. University Policies

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HONOR CODE. The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM. The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another’s opinions. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

UNANTICIPATED DISTRESS. Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students’ participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at https://cmhc.utexas.edu/.

POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION. Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image.
Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students’ social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including any information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in any way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

**POLICY ON SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY.** Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/).

**USE OF COURSE MATERIALS.** The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor may be a violation of the University’s Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

**DOCUMENTED DISABILITY STATEMENT.** Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471- 6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/.

**RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS.** By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, examination, work assignment, or project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
**TITLE IX REPORTING.** In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct based on gender. Faculty, instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University’s Title IX Coordinator and/or the Title IX Deputy for the SSW, Professor Tanya Voss. Students, faculty and staff may contact Professor Voss to report incidents or to obtain information. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at [http://socialwork.utexas.edu/dl/files/academic-programs/other/qrg-sexualharassment.pdf](http://socialwork.utexas.edu/dl/files/academic-programs/other/qrg-sexualharassment.pdf).

**CAMPUS CARRY POLICY.** The University’s policy on concealed fire arms may be found here: [https://campuscarry.utexas.edu](https://campuscarry.utexas.edu). You also may find this information by accessing the Quick Links menu on the School’s website.

**CLASSROOM CONFIDENTIALITY.** Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

**USE OF E-MAIL FOR OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO STUDENTS.** Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible for keeping the university informed about a change of e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at [http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php](http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php).

**SAFETY.** As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.
BEHAVIOR CONCERNS ADVICE LINE (BCAL). If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership between the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY. Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

GRADING SCALE

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94.0 and above</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0 to 93.999</td>
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<td>84.0 to 86.999</td>
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VI. Policy on attendance, participation, and due dates for assignments

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in the class discussions by contributing meaningful questions and discourse with fellow students and the instructor. Readings are expected to be completed prior to class. Role will be taken; leaving class at the break will be considered an unexcused absence unless arrangements have been made with the instructor for the absence to be the excused. Points will be deducted from the final grade for unexcused absences. The student is allowed one unexcused absence without penalty. Students will not be permitted to make up work missed during unexcused absences. Late assignments will not be accepted without penalty; some exceptions may be made by the instructor. Failure to attend class regularly and demonstrate through class discussion that one has read the assigned material will be considered in assigning the final grade. Use of a laptop computer should only pertain to class and not personal matters/interests.

VII. Course Assignments

Evaluation based on:
Reading assignment completion
Class participation.
Class attendance
Successful completion of assignments.

Paper #1 = 40% (due Saturday noon, June 26)
Paper #2 = 35% (first ½ due July 15 at noon; second ½ due July 25 at 12 midnight)

Text summary and presentation=15%
Article summary and presentation-6%
Participation and attendance= 4%

Student generated handouts:

Text Summary (12% of final grade)

Each student will be required to prepare a written summary of the major points of a portion of chapters from the texts and provide copies (via email is fine) for fellow classmates and the instructor (hard copy required). Each emailed summary is due to fellow students the Sunday before the week the assignment is due and a hard copy to the instructor the day the assignment is due.

In addition to summarizing the text/articles, each student should choose 3 points they consider most important, emphasize them in some way in the summaries, and be prepared to particularly highlight those points in the class discussion.

Presentation to class
Choose two points from your text material and find film example(s) to illustrate it to the class.

Define and give example of a neurobiological concept.
Text summary critical thoughts:

Additionally, each student’s text summary should address both in writing and in class discussion, the following as it is related to the material summarized:

a. see Appendix (pp.279-281 in Schore, text, Affect Regulation and the Repair of the Self, 2003, in LRC on reserve) for principles of Regulation Theory
i. re-state a principle of Regulation Theory which most closely relates to section of text summarized and apply to example from film of student’s choosing
ii. speculate on how information in section of text summarized affects or is affected by one of the following characteristics: age, class, culture, ethnicity, country of origin, language(s), educational attainment, religious background, sexual orientation, physical or mental challenge, economic oppression, social oppression.

Note: although the above commentary should be on the summary, this material will not be reviewed during the presentation.

Article summaries (6% of final grade)

Each student will summarize major points from an article on the syllabus and provide copies of their notes to fellow classmates and the instructor the Sunday before the week the assignment is due.

The notes should include the following critical thought:
(b.) 1 speculation regarding relevant scientific findings that (i.) supports and (ii.) calls into question the scientific basis of selected principles of the treatment theory in the article summarized. The scientific findings can be from any of the material in the textbooks or in classmates summaries (reference this). When the article is discussed in class, the student is expected to actively support the discussion.

Note: although the above commentary should be on the summary, this material will not be reviewed during the presentation.

Presentation to class
Choose two points from your article material and find film example(s) to illustrate it to the class.

For the text and article summaries, create a 6 question “quizlet” for the class to answer at the end of the presentation. (3 points)

Paper #1, Saturday noon, June 26 (40% of final grade): The focus of the examination is the application of selected neurobiological concepts as related to treatment considerations as well as to evaluate, select, and design a social service intervention.

The 10 (or so) page paper (excluding bibliography) will be informed by any material assigned. Additionally, 1 reference should be from the list of suggested texts found at beginning or syllabus or from the recommended reading list found at the end of the syllabus; 1 reference from the articles reviewed by students, and also reference your own article (5 points).
The material will be the case of Karen. The paper should include the following:

1. **(10 points)** Make a diagnosis of the client, using DSM 5 format.

   List the criteria met by Karen’s symptoms (give examples) and list 5 of the defenses that help establish your diagnosis.

   For each criteria met and 3 of the defenses employed by Karen, speculate on the neuroscience supporting them.

   Describe **both** the behaviors of the speculated attachment category of childhood and adulthood and the neuroscience that accounts for the behaviors.

   Discuss briefly the attachment category most similar to the diagnosis/diagnoses with examples of **how it is similar to the diagnosis** and to the linking neuroscience.

   Choose a case from Montgomery text and discuss & give examples of 3 symptoms, defenses or issues (or some combination) that are similar to Karen’s.

2. Give an example of the client’s stressful symptom, memory, wish, experience, and/or defensive maneuver and describe principles and/or techniques, and/or strategies using Regulation Theory (specify which Principle) could be clinically useful in addressing same and explain why the principle would be useful. Mentions 2 neurobiological findings that support the use of this principle/technique to treat Karen. **(5 points)**

3. Evaluate the above technique’s potential positive and negative effect on the treatment issue. For the negative impact aspect of using this technique, design and evaluate an appropriate clinical intervention from any other theory that would correct the negative impact. Briefly describe and give citation for theory. **(5 points)**

4. Using the dyadic experience between Karen and her therapist, find an example of at least 5 of the steps of projective identification.

   Definition & neurobiology of projective identification (include the defenses that are involved in projective identification and their definitions, examples, & neurobiology, as well) and Schore’s step-by-step description of projective identification, see p. 262 of Montgomery text (and the neurobiology of each step, to be in class discussion); how is this related to transference/countertransference, neurobiologically? Additionally, choose a case from Montgomery text and speculate on the client’s projected material toward the therapist. **(10 points)**

5. Give 1 example of the psychological defense of dissociation that was erected in the face of therapist intervention (describe intervention and behaviors that suggest dissociation occurred), which could include therapist error; define & describe the neurobiological underpinnings of the dissociative experience.

   From the Montgomery text, choose an example of a dissociative moment or experience of the client. **(2 points)**
6. Describe an ethical conflict and quote the ethical guideline from NASW Code of Ethics that could be a result of the interface between the particulars of the client (Karen) and something about you, the student, such as ethnicity, religion, family issue, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, class, cultural background, language, socioeconomic status, physical challenge, and/or other individual differences; speculate on how the interplay you describe between you and Karen could be explained neurobiologically. Note: a clinical conflict is not necessarily an ethical conflict, though it could be. Additionally, choose a case from the Montgomery text with whom you may have a strong reaction(counter-transference) that involves something about you, as well. Briefly describe your speculation. 
(3 points)
COURSE OUTLINE

June 1 & June 6

HISTORY, CONTEXT, AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE NEUROBIOLOGY OF ATTACHMENT THEORY


June 8

ATTACHMENT, SEPARATION, AND LOSS


THE NEUROBIOLOGY OF ATTACHMENT - I


June 20 & 22

ATTACHMENT & CAREGIVING STRATEGIES AND STYLES


June 27 & June 29

TRAUMA, DISORGANIZED/DISORIENTED ATTACHMENT AND DISSOCIATION


July 6 & July 11

ATTACHMENT, CAREGIVING, CULTURE, AND ISSUES IN ADULT PSYCHOTHERAPY


July 13 & July 18

APPLICATION I: ATTACHMENT-BASED CAREGIVER/INFANT PREVENTION AND TREATMENT STRATEGIES

Schore, A.N. (2012). Chapter 4 The right brain implicit self lies at the core of psychoanalysis (118-151)


APPLICATION II: ATTACHMENT-BASED RELATIONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY & ATTACHMENT-BASED RELATIONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY


Paper #2: Application of Attachment Theory, Research and the Neurobiology of Attachment to a Fictional Character

The clinical data is taken from the “case material” on Suzanne, the character in Postcards from the Edge. This examination is intended to represent a working draft of a clinical assessment of the forces that have had an effect on the client’s presenting problem. Charts or other schematics to present material are acceptable. For any question, use an article from the Reference list at end of syllabus, the text material and article that you presented, and/or any material presented by fellow classmates. (2 points)

First ½ of Paper due Saturday, July 16 at noon

Draft of assessment interviews with client: (#1-4 = 1 point)

1. Social Work Setting:
2. Referral Source:
3. Presenting Problem:
4. Identifying data: Create a description of Suzanne from the following list of qualities, characteristics and stressors: age, gender, culture, ethnicity, country of origin, language, educational attainment, religious background, sexual orientation, physical or mental challenge, economic oppression, and social oppression. Additionally, describe her general physical and mental health, previous treatment (if relevant), employment situation, living situation, relevant relationship issues, and other important issues.

5. (1 point) Mention any three of the above descriptors (question #4) which may have an effect on the diagnosis and give neurobiological explanation for why this might be so.

6. (5 points) Make a diagnosis listing criteria met with examples and at least 3 defenses with examples and the neurobiological description which is the mechanism for the criteria and defenses.

7. (5 points) What may be the neurobiological significance of the diagnosis as it relates to the attachment category? Speculate on the childhood and the adult attachment category with examples of behavior(s) and note the relationship to the Autonomic Nervous System.

8. (2 points) Give an example of your own right brain reaction to an example of any material on this case and explain it from any neurobiological perspective as referenced from any principle of Regulation Theory; include countertransference challenges as they relate to the therapist’s attachment history and style and strategies.

9. (1.5 points) Define and give examples from movie of 4 neurobiological concepts.
Second ½ of paper due July 25 @ midnight

10. (4 points) RE: 2nd kissing scene
   a. From the encounter between Suzanne and Jack, speculate on the adult attachment category of both people, with some detail.
   b. Give a neurobiological explanation for the biology of affect regulation that is implicit in their attachment category.
   c. What disowned part of a conflict/ambivalence might each one be likely to project onto the other?
   d. Why would each one tend to keep the other side of the conflict/ambivalence (make your best clinical speculation)?

11. (1 point) Give a neurobiological explanations for the exchange between Suzanne and Doris when Suzanne comes in late one night. Give some dialogue, such as, “Do you mind if I drink?…Do you mind if I drop acid? Or “I hardly think that my drinking can be compared with your drug taking” in order to illustrate the neurobiology implicit in the encounter.

12. (1 point) From the Evelyn Ames conversation, “I’m in it for the endorphin rush…” Describe and explain Suzanne’s reaction (from neurobiological perspective) at any point in the conversation.

13. (1 point) Using the neurobiological information regarding the shame experience, explain Jack and Suzanne’s reactions during their argument (e.g., “You know what this is, it’s a jealous tantrum….”) Or any other interactions or dialogue within that argument.

14. (10.5 points) For projective identification, take the step-by-step approach as found in Ch. 8 Montgomery, p. 262 (2013) using the argument on the stairs with mother. Describe the neurobiological mechanism behind each step with examples from scene.
Reference List


Robertson, J. (1958c). *Going to Hospital with Mother* {Film}. London: Tavistock Child Development Research Unit.


