COURSE SYLLABUS

Systems Theory and Analysis  
(18:820:508:01)

Meeting Times: Wednesdays, 9:15 – noon
Instructor: Cary Cherniss, Ph.D.
TA: Christina Mele

Course Objectives

The goals of this course are to help students:

a) use systems theory to better understand and deal with the social forces that affect them and their clients;

b) become familiar with the organizational dynamics of schools, clinics, hospitals, and other human service organizations where clinical psychologists work;

c) learn about how systems concepts are used as a theoretical foundation for work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities;

d) become familiar with the systemic factors that affect the implementation and dissemination of evidence-based treatment programs;

e) learn about the basic principles of community psychology;

f) become familiar with evidence-based prevention programs.

Expectations and Assignments

1. Attendance - Students should attend all class sessions and be on time. Illness, family emergencies, and religious holidays are the only acceptable reasons for tardiness or missing a class session, and students cannot miss more than one class session during the term. Students who miss more than one class session or who are tardy more than twice will have their final average reduced 10 percent (see paragraph on “Grading” below).

2. Class participation - Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss critically the assigned readings. Full involvement in class activities also is expected. Students should not send text messages, do email, or
“surf the internet” during class sessions because this reduces the level of overall engagement in the room.

3. **Papers:** There will be three short papers. Each paper should be 3-5 pages long with double spaced pages, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. The first paper is due on **2/19**. The next is due **4/1**, and the final paper is due **5/6**. Specific instructions for each paper can be found in the Assignments section of our Sakai site. **Note that papers must be submitted through the Assignments tool, not the Drop Box tool.**

4. **Grading:** Each paper will be graded on a 0 to 100 scale. The final letter grade will be based on the numerical average. Students with an average of 90 or above will receive an A in the course. Students with an average of 87 to 89 will receive a B+. A final average of 80 to 86 will receive a B. Extensions and incompletes are strongly discouraged and will be granted only after a conference with the instructor.

**Readings**

The schedule of reading assignments and topics follows below. There are two books that you will need to buy or borrow, *Beyond Burnout: Helping Teachers, Nurses, Therapists, and Lawyers Recover from Stress and Disillusionment* by Cary Cherniss (Routledge, 1995) and *The Power of Collaborative Solutions* by Tom Wolff (Jossey-Bass, 2010). For a third book, *Community Psychology* (3rd edition), by Kloos et al. (Wadsworth, 2012), you will need to borrow or buy either the whole book (hard cover or e-book editions) or individual “e-chapters.” The e-book version or individual e-chapters can be purchased at [https://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/search/9781111352578](https://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/search/9781111352578). It is also possible to rent the book through the same web site. The other readings will be available online through the Resources section of our Sakai site.

For each session, you should read the starred items first. (Note that for some of the assigned chapters or articles, you only need to read certain pages.) Once you have read the starred items, you can read anything else that piques your interest. The optional readings are presented roughly in order of importance, but feel free to read anything on the list that seems engaging.

**Session 1 (1/20): Introduction to the Course**


Session 2 (1/26): Systems Theory – General Concepts

*Forman, S. G., & Selman, J. S. (2011). Systems-based service delivery in school psychology. In M. Bray & T. J. Kehle (Eds.), The Oxford Handbook of School Psychology (pp. 628-646). New York: Oxford University Press. (Read pp. 3-14, up to last paragraph at bottom of page.)


*Beacon School case.


Session 3 (2/2): Applying Systems Theory in Family and Couples Therapy: Intro and Overview


**Session 4 (2/9): African-American Families in Therapy**


**Session 5 (2/16): Community Psychology: Basic Tenets and Historical Origins**

*Kloos et al., Chap. 1 (pp. 5-18, 25-35); Chap. 2 (pp. 39-41).*


*Wolff, Chap 5 (pp. 109-121).*


**Session 6 (2/23): Community Psychology: The Impact of Environments on Psychological Well-being**

*Kloos et al., chap. 5 (pp. 139-141; 144-147; 149-153); chap. 6 (pp. 175-
176; 179-182; 185-186; 190-203)


**Session 7 (3/2): Community Psychology Perspectives on Diversity**

*Cincinnati Race Relations case.

*Diversity Consulting Case


**Session 8 (3/9): Stress, Coping and Social Support**

*Kloos et al., Chap. 8 (pp. 250-285)


**SPRING BREAK (3/16)**

**Session 9 (3/23): Prevention and Promotion: Basic Concepts and Applications**

*Kloos et al., Chap. 9 (pp. 287-317)*


**Session 10 (3/30): Intervention Strategies: Organizational Consultation, Community Consultation, and the Creation of Alternative Settings**


*Wolff, Chap. 6 (pp. 144-154); Chap. 7 (pp. 179-181)*


**Session 11 (4/6): The Problem of Early Career Burnout**


*Deinstitutionalization case*
Session 12 (4/13): Work and Organizational Factors That Help Professionals Recover from Burnout


Session 13 (4/20): Power and Authority in Human Service Organizations


Session 14 (4/27): Intergroup Conflict in Social Systems


*Jefferson DD Center case

Sunnyvale case
Session 15 (5/4): Final class

TBD