EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
School of Social Work and Human Services

COURSE SYLLABUS

Brief Interventions                      Diane Davis, PhD, LSWIC
SWKG 563, 4 Credit Selective            E-mail: ddavis@ewu.edu
Winter, 2005                              509-359-7488
Monday 6-9:50 pm                          Office Hours: Before, after class

Course Description

This 4 credit Selective is designed for MSW students who want to integrate a cognitive and practical understanding of brief intervention strategies within their practice with individuals, couples, and families. The class process will be experiential, intensive, and practical, with brief periods of didactic training. Content areas will include an overview of the theoretical underpinnings and the assumption base of the brief treatment model of intervention, the professional debate regarding the use of the short-term model, and the potential benefits of its application in the health-care reform environment. The solution-focused model will be studied and practiced in class as an effective example of brief interventions.

Course Rationale

The increasing demand for cost-effective and time-limited mental health service delivery, and the research that supports the efficacy of brief therapy approaches, provide the support for creating this course. Social workers and other mental health professionals need to be on the cutting edge of current methodologies for providing services.

Course Objectives

Students will have successfully completed this course when they have demonstrated:

1. An understanding of the underlying assumptions and theory that drives the brief model, in contrast to other prevailing modalities.

2. An understanding of how the solution-focused model of brief interventions supports social work values of self-determination, dignity, clients as experts on their own lives.

3. An ability to assist the client in identifying specific goals and to develop and apply brief intervention planning and practices in meeting these goals.
4. Skill in developing goals and contracting in the first session in each potential client configuration (individual, couple, and family)

5. Skill in assisting the client (client system) to identify solutions and in providing appropriate feedback to the client.


7. An understanding of how to apply these models to specific populations that typically present in a social work practice, such as children and youth, the client who is required to “receive” services, the client who has been oppressed by violence, substance misuse, and other situations that are presented by students for class consideration.

**Required Text**


**Recommended Readings**

Journal articles found on Proquest include:


**Expectations**

This course is designed as a theory and practice skills class. This places considerable responsibility for learning upon students to participate in the therapy simulations, to join in class discussions, to be informed by the reading assignments, to engage in the learning process, and to practice between class sessions.

Class participation counts for 10% of the final grade for the course. Criteria include: presence in class, frequency and quality of contributions to discussions, especially in the “what’s new and different” discussion, evidence that the student is reading and contemplating the materials, quality of participation in therapy simulations, willingness to
risk trying new behaviors, and willingness to support and nurture others in their learning process. Participation points will be deducted for missing class. Students who miss more than two classes can earn no more than 2.5 for their final grade.

**Grades** will be assigned by the instructor based on the following points:

- Specific Learning Goals and Strategies Contract: 15 points
- Case Presentation Paper: 20 points
- Quiz (2) (20 points each): 40 points
- Evaluation of Learning Goals: 15 points
- Participation: 10 points
- Therapeutic letter: No grade

**Criteria for grading written assignments:**

1. Writing proficiency: organization, focus on assignment, clarity and support of main points, depth of analysis, and thoughtfulness given to the assignment.
3. Creative effort: involvement with/sensitivity to topic, and style.
4. Paper turned in on time

**Assignments**

1. **Specific Learning Goals and Strategies Contract.** Based on the criteria in the Berg text, Chapter 5 and 6 (use of miracle question, characteristics of well-formed goals, described in concrete, behavioral, measurable terms, scaling), formulate your learning goals for this course. The beginning part of the 5-page paper will be developed in class with a partner who will interview you using a format that will be passed out in class.

2. **Therapeutic Letter Writing.** Criteria will be discussed in class.

3. **Case Presentation Paper.** Briefly describe a case (or client system) that still evokes some curiosity and wondering. This may be a current case or one in the past that haunts you in some way. Briefly, (one to two paragraphs) identify pertinent details regarding family constellations, presenting problem and referral source, the setting in which service was provided, and the piece that is unfinished for you. Speculate on how a solution-focused intervention approach may be (or might have been) helpful, and what specific questions or steps you think would be useful. You can write out a script for a particular intervention, for example. In any case, write in enough detail so that the instructor can “get a feel” for the case and how you would specifically use solution-focused techniques. Change the name of the client and any identifying context so that the situation and your speculations may be shared in class. Limit to 5 typewritten, double-space pages.
4. Evaluation of Learning Goals. Using the Specific Learning Goals and Strategies Contract developed in the first assignment, evaluate the extent to which you reached your learning goals. Organize this paper by using the headings in the Specific Learning Goals assignment. Describe specifically what you did that was helpful and supportive to you in moving up the scale, for example, class attendance, participation in “what’s new and different,” additional learning projects, practice sessions at work or home, internet browsing (please attach copies of anything interesting you found), networking with professionals, support from others, etc. In addition, describe anything that became problematic or a barrier to your learning. Limit to 4 typewritten, double-space pages.

5. Quizzes on required reading. There will be 2 quizzes (True/false; multiple choice, short essay) on the required text readings. Study questions to guide your attention to important areas are found on Blackboard.

COURSE OUTLINE

January 3

Syllabus and resources available for course
Theoretical framework and assumptions of brief interventions
1st session goals and techniques, a simulated goal setting exercise
How solution-focused model supports social work values

January 10

What’s new or different?
Assignment: Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4 in deJong & Berg text; Chapter 1, 7 in Selekman.
Developing a learning contract based on solution-focused goal setting
Collaborative conversations
Film: “I Love my Kids”

January 17 – Holiday Martin Luther King

January 24

Assignment: Chapter 5, 6, 7,8 in deJong & Berg text; Chapters 2 & 3 in Selekman text
Due: Learning Contract
What's new or different?
Focus on interviewing skills: not knowing, miracle question, exceptions, scaling questions
Relationship types
January 31

Quiz 1 on Chapters 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 in DeJong & Berg; Chapt. 1,2,3,7 in Selekman
Assignment: Chapter 4, 6 in Selekman text.
What's new or different?
Client Feedback
Later Sessions

February 7

Assignment: Chapter 4, 6 in Selekman
What's new or different?
Skills practice of selected techniques
Therapeutic letter-writing
Film: “I’m not leaving you”

February 14

Assignment: Chapter 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 in deJong & Berg
What's new or different?
Involuntary clients
Crisis situations
Film: Working with a mandated client

February 21 Holiday President’s Day

February 28

Assignment: Chapter 5, 8 in Selekman
Due: Case paper
What’s new or different?
Working with children
Film: Over the Hump

March 7

Test: Chapters 9,10,11,12, 13, 14 in deJong & Berg; Chapters 4,5,6,8 in Selekman
What's new or different?
Working with substance misuse, trauma issues
March 14

What’s new or different?
**Due:** Written evaluations of learning contract
Agency practice
Shifting paradigms
Evaluation of course and learning objectives

**Additional Resources**

Northwest Training Programs, PO Box 175, Salem, Oregon, 97308, 503-370-7706, FAX: 503-838-1673

**Websites:**
- brieftherapy.com/websites.html
- briefFTC@aol.com (Insoo Kim Berg & Steve de Shazer)
- talkingscure.com (Scott Miller’s website)
- possibill@aol.com (Bill O’Hanalon)
- amazon.com (numerous texts on special focus areas such as schools, children, substance abuse, etc.)

**Articles of interest**


Lethem, Jane Moved to Tears, Moved to Action: Solution focused brief therapy with women and Children. London: BT Press (Chapter 1,3,4)


Other Books Recommended


How to Join Diane Davis' SWKG 563 Brief Interventions Course on Blackboard

1. On your web browser, type the following: Blackboard.ewu.edu
   If you already have a Blackboard account, skip step 2 and go to step 3.

2. On the left side of the Blackboard screen are buttons. Click on the button labeled "create an account." At a minimum, fill in all the boxes with asterisks next to them.

3. Once again back at the Blackboard front screen, click on the button labeled "Course Catalog."
   The courses are listed in alphabetical order by course identification, not title/name. Scroll down to SWKG 563 and click on the underling phrase "Social Work Practice."

3. Now you are at the social work practice Blackboard Course main page and you need to enroll. Click on the bottom button on the left side of the screen "Enroll in this Course." Then enter your password and then click on the "Login Key."

4. Now you are part of the course, so click around on the button on the left side of the screen and see what you can see!