PSY 720: SYSTEMS INTERVENTIONS with CHILDREN  
Fall Semester 2013  
THUR 7:00-9:15pm; Kennedy 013

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Office Hours:  Mon 12-1:30; Tues 2:30-4; Thur 2:30-4; Fri 12-1:30; By Appointment

REQUIRED TEXT

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will offer an opportunity to explore systemic interventions and preventative approaches with children and adolescents within the major contexts influencing their development and mental health – their families, schools, communities, and legal system. Emphasizing the fact that children and youth are particularly susceptible and dependent upon their environments, this course will attempt to provide the student with an appreciation of how these influence a child’s personal identity and actual behavior as well as an understanding of the need to take these into account in developing viable contextual and systemic interventions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
1. Develop a solid understanding of the link between theory and application of prevention/intervention strategies.  
2. Discuss the structure and role of families in the 21st century in relation to coping with adversity.  
3. Discuss impact of stressors on youth within the larger social context, including peers, schools, and community.  
4. Discuss the legal issues that affect youth and their families.  
5. Develop the skills necessary to independently propose and articulate a program aimed at preventing (or early intervention) the negative effects of a specific life stressor encountered by children and/or adolescents.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS
Blackboard and e-mail: Course announcements, assignments, and updates to the syllabus will be provided on Blackboard. This information will also be provided on my personal website: http://dradamvolungis.com/. Additional required readings and handouts will also be available on Blackboard and my personal website. Although I will also inform you of any such information in class, it is expected that you utilize Blackboard and check your e-mail to ensure that you are up to date with all class material and information (especially if you are absent). Lastly, you are strongly encouraged to e-mail me with any questions or concerns. I check my e-mail daily and will often get back to you promptly (i.e., less than 24 hours). However, I ask for at least 24-48 hours to provide a timely reply. I also do my best to reply to emails over the weekend, but please note that some weekends I may not be immediately available to reply until Sunday night or
Monday morning (e.g., an e-mail at 6pm Friday may not get a reply until 10am Monday on some weekends). Finally, please e-mail me directly at am.volungis@assumption.edu; do not e-mail me ‘through Blackboard,’ as I do not check Blackboard for e-mail.

**Course Readings:** Please refer to the “Projected Course Outline” for the due date and topic of each reading. You are expected to have completed the required textbook and journal readings by the indicated class date. In addition to the readings provided in the course outline, you may be required to read supplemental materials to enhance existing readings.

**Attendance:** Due to the topic of this course being primarily peer presentation and class discussion, it is crucial that you attend class. Much of the value of this course lies in your presence and participation in the classroom. Therefore, your presence is important for the “community within the class.” If you are absent from class, you are still responsible for all information and material covered that day. Also, class will always start and end on time, thus, the expectation is for students to be present for the full duration of class. If you must come late or leave early, please notify me before class.

- Coming late to class is an important issue. Occasionally, events like an accident, flat tire, or similar events can delay your arrival on campus. A pattern of tardiness (even 10 or 15 minutes) is unacceptable, however. You need to allow sufficient time to deal with predictable situations (like finding a parking space on campus, traffic, etc.).
- Even in circumstances where you have an acceptable reason for missing class, you will not receive credit for this class if you are absent for more than 2 classes during the semester. If you do miss more than 2 classes because of personal emergency or similar extenuating circumstances, you may petition the Dean of the Graduate School for an exception to this rule.

**IMPORTANT NOTES**

**Academic Honesty:** Representing the work of another as your own is a violation of fundamental principles of truthfulness and an offense against the academic community. Academic dishonesty may result in the student failing the course, at the discretion of the instructor. Academic dishonesty includes cheating on examinations, as well as plagiarism (failure to credit properly the ideas, organization of material or phrasing of another, including the use of term paper or reference paper services). Submitting one’s own work, in part or in whole, to more than one instructor without proper notification is also academically dishonest and subject to appropriate disciplinary action. For more information, please consult Assumption College’s Academic Honesty Police: [http://www.assumption.edu/Media/Website%20Resources/documents/StudentHandbookOnLineVersion.pdf](http://www.assumption.edu/Media/Website%20Resources/documents/StudentHandbookOnLineVersion.pdf) (p. 137). This instructor reserves the right to utilize turnitin.com if there are concerns of academic dishonesty.

**Students with Disabilities:** Assumption College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a disability (or think you have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation participate in this class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the College’s programs or services, then you should speak with me and contact the Director of Disability Services, Sharon deKlerk, at x7500. All information regarding disabilities will be treated with confidentiality. Documentation guidelines are available at: [http://www.assumption.edu/academics/resources/disabilityservices](http://www.assumption.edu/academics/resources/disabilityservices). **Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me with any questions.**
**Smart Phones/Cell Phones/Pagers/MP3 Players and the like:** All of these electronic devices should be powered off while class is in session. You are expected to devote your attention to each class for its full duration. A ringing/vibrating phone, texting, listening to music, etc. is not only a distraction to me, but more importantly, to your peers. Use of such devices may result in being asked to leave for the remainder of class. If you are expecting an emergency phone call, please notify me before class, sit near the door, and leave the room quietly and quickly if you receive a call.

**Laptops in Class:** Students are allowed to use laptops in class only if they consult with the class instructor and sign an honesty statement for appropriate class usage. Thereafter, you are welcome to bring and use your laptop in class to follow along with the presentation material and take notes. However, it should only be used to facilitate your learning of the class material. Engaging in other activities that are not related to your learning of course material (e.g., Facebook, e-mail, games) is not only a distraction to me, but more importantly, to your peers. Inappropriate laptop use may result in no longer being able to use your laptop in class.

**METHODS of EVALUATION**

1. **Attendance, Class Participation, & Blog Posts (25%)**: This course depends greatly on student preparation and participation. To facilitate preparation, students are urged to read all of the material assigned for a given class prior to the day it is to be discussed, and to come to class with notes about the readings. Additionally, with the exception of the first and last class, and the day of your presentation, each student is expected to complete a blog post in response to a question provided by the instructor by the beginning of each class. At least two replies to your peers’ posted responses is also required, no later than two days after the original post due date. The discussion board will be available on my personal website: [http://dradamvolungis.com/](http://dradamvolungis.com/). These reflections are required in the spirit of assuring each student keeps up with the assigned readings and is prepared to engage in class discussion. Taking good notes and participating in the blog discussions prior to class will facilitate ready access to the thoughts you want to share with your classmates.

2. **Class Presentation (35%)**: Each student will be required to complete a class presentation on a selected topic related to youth and systems (groups of 2). Most of these presentations will coincide with the particular topic assigned for date indicated in the Course Outline. Each presentation should last approximately 25-30 minutes and will require additional research (i.e., references) outside of the class readings. Additionally, following your class presentation you will be expected to help co-facilitate the class discussion with the instructor for the remainder of the class. A more detailed description of the expectations for the presentation and co-facilitation of class discussion will be provided within the first 1-2 weeks of class. See page 7 for proposed presentation topics and dates.

3. **Final Paper (40%)**: Your final for the class is a 10-12 page paper proposing a specific environmental/social change or program aimed at preventing and/or minimizing the negative effects of any one of the stressors covered in class this semester. It is expected that in addition to the pertinent readings covered in class, supplemental research (i.e., references) should be used to support the position of your paper. Following APA guidelines is very important. For APA formatting see: APA Publication Manual (6th ed.),
A more detailed description of the expectations for the final paper will be provided at least 4 weeks before the due date of 12/12. This assignment will only be accepted through e-mail at am.volungis@assumption.edu.

PROJECTED COURSE OUTLINE

Date          *Topic/Assignment*

9/5/13   INTRODUCTION to SYSTEMS & CHILDREN

Introduction & Review of Syllabus

The Child in Context – Mechanisms of Influence, Assessment Factors, & Clinical Implications

(a) Text Chapter 2 – Clinical Views of Family Normality, Health, and Dysfunction: From Deficit to Strengths Perspective


9/12   The Child in Context – Mechanisms of Influence, Assessment Factors, & Clinical Implications (cont.)


9/19   THE CHILD WITHIN the FAMILY

The Structure and Role of Families in the 21st Century

(a) Text Chapter 1 – Changing Families in a Changing World: Reconstructing Family Normality

(b) Text Chapter 3 – Contemporary Two-Parent Families: Navigating Work and Family Challenges

(c) Text Chapter 14 – The Family Life Cycle

9/26   Children’s Adaptation to Divorce: Marital Breakup

(a) Text Chapter 4 – Risk and Resilience after Divorce

10/3   Children’s Adaptation to Divorce: Single Parenting & Blended Families

(a) Text Chapter 5 – The Diversity, Strength, and Challenges of Single-Parent Households

(b) Text Chapter 6 – Remarriage Families and Step-parenting
**10/10**

*Alternative Family Styles: Lesbian and Gay Families, Adoption, & Foster Placement*

(a) Text Chapter 7 – Lesbian and Gay Families  
(b) Text Chapter 8 – Adoptive Families  

**10/17**

*Families Coping with Adversity*

(a) Text Chapter 15 – Family Resilience: Strengths Forged Through Adversity  
(b) Text Chapter 17 – Mastering Family Challenges in Illness and Disability

**10/24**

*Family Violence, Child Maltreatment, & Mentally Ill Parents*


**10/31**

*Children and Families Coping with Migration, Loss, & Disaster*

(a) Text Chapter 11 – Immigrant Family Processes  

**11/7**

**THE CHILD in the LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT: SCHOOLS, PEERS, & COMMUNITY**

*Academic (& Social) Challenges*

11/14  Peer Rejection, Gangs, & School Violence

11/21  Culture, Race, Poverty, & Urbanization
(a) Text Chapter 9 – Culture: A Challenge to Concepts of Normality
(b) Text Chapter 10 – Race, Class, & Poverty

11/28  ***THANKSGIVING BREAK***

12/5  THE CHILD in the LEGAL SYSTEM
Delinquency and Children in Need of Services (CHINS)
(b) CHINS Quick Reference
(c) See web-link: http://www.masslegalhelp.org/children-and-families/chins

12/12  ***Final Paper Due***

Child Custody, Reporting Child Abuse, Abused and Neglected Children, Termination of Parental Rights, Guardianship and Conservatorship for Minors, Foster Care, Adoption, Competency to Stand Trial as Adult, Civil Commitment of Minors, Education for Gifted and Handicapped Children, & Consent-Confidentiality-Services for Minors.

Synthesis & Wrap-up

*See next page for proposed presentation topics and dates*

Right of Revision Statement: As instructor of this course, I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as needed. It may be deemed pertinent to modify the syllabus as the class progresses through the semester. You will be informed of any changes as soon as possible, during class or via e-mail and Blackboard.
PROPOSED PRESENTATION TOPICS & DATES
{Goal is to have at least one presentation per date}

9/26: Continuing with a dysfunctional marriage vs. divorce
Impact of the divorce process
Impact of divorce

10/3: Teen Parents
Single Parent
Role of the Stepparent

10/10: Grandparents as parents
Foster and/or adoption
GLBT families
Military families

10/17: Children with physical disabilities
Children with chronic illness
Children with parents with chronic illness/physical disabilities

10/24: Children with parents with mental illness
Children with parents with alcohol/drug abuse
Children with incarcerated parents
Domestic violence
Physical/sexual abuse

10/31: Children of immigrant parents
Families in countries at war
Families in natural disasters
Families of missing children/murder victims

11/7: Children with learning disabilities in school
Adolescent pregnancy and school
Bullying

11/14: Peer rejection/social isolation
Gangs
Drug use/trafficking
School violence

11/21: Role of race/culture in community/school
Inner city schools
Families in poverty

12/5: Court involved youths
Youths in group homes and/or residential treatment centers
Child custody issues
Families involved with DCF