1. **Catalog Course Description**

This course will explore the developmental stage of adolescence (approximately from ages 12-19 years), with a specific focus on how at-risk youth populations navigate the normative tasks associated with this stage. Primary developmental tasks in this stage of development include: exploring and establishing a solid sense of one’s identity; a subtle shift toward the enhanced importance of peer relationships; and separating and individuating from families. Yet, for many youth, progression through this developmental stage follows an atypical course. This course will therefore examine the relationship between micro, mezzo, and macro circumstances and atypical adolescent development. In keeping with the school’s mission, the course will pay particular attention to understanding vulnerable youth populations and how social workers can help identify those in at-risk situations and how various resources can be implemented to ameliorate or minimize the harm. Although the class will focus heavily on the developmental nature of youth, implications at the mezzo and macro levels (e.g., public policies) related to at-risk groups will also be explored.

2. **Place of the Course in the Program**

This is an advanced year HBSE elective course to be taken after the completion of HBSE I and Psychopathology. The overall purpose of this course is to build on the theoretical frameworks explored in HBSE I and apply them to a specific period of development. Although this course may also draw on students’ experiences in their field placements, and will perhaps build on concepts of Practice courses, this is not a course designed to learn or enhance specific direct practice skills in working with adolescents.

3. **Course Objectives**

1. To develop and enhance comprehension of the tasks associated with "normal" and "atypical" adolescent development, by building on the knowledge and theoretical frameworks that were covered in the Human Behavior and the Social Environment and Psychopathology courses;

2. To critically examine the interpersonal and environmental etiologic factors associated with diversity of functioning in adolescence, as well as the reciprocal relationship between individual functioning and the environment. This will include analyzing different environmental contexts that affect adolescents such as cultural, familial, psychosocial, sociodemographic, and organizational.
3. To identify and analyze different points of intervention—at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels—for creating advocacy and programmatic opportunities on behalf of adolescents at-risk and adolescents with mental health challenges.

4. To increase awareness of personal attitudes, values, biases, and strengths regarding working with vulnerable adolescent populations. This will include examining professional values and ethics in support of social and economic justice as a means of promoting optimum development for vulnerable adolescents and their families.

5. To develop an awareness of positive youth development and resiliency in the face of particularly challenging interpersonal and/or environmental circumstances.

6. To build on research and scholarly writing skills by utilizing empirical research literature to explore specific aspects of adolescents-at-risk. In addition, considerable attention will be paid to the reciprocal relationship between research, policy, and direct practice.

4. Required Readings
The required text for this course is: *At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent* (1990), Edited by Shirley Feldman and Glen Elliott. Harvard University Press.

The book is available for purchase at the Rutgers University Book Store, 1 Penn Plaza, Ferren Mall, New Brunswick, Tel. 732/246-8448. New Jersey Books (at 108 Somerset St., New Brunswick) may also sell texts.

Other required readings from relevant books and journals, as identified on the syllabus, are located on the e-companion website for this course. You can download them directly from this site.

5. Course Requirements

   Attendance Requirements:
   It is expected that students will attend all class sessions having read assigned materials and fully prepared for discussion and assigned activities. In order for a student to be considered present for class, the student must attend all of the class. Students who leave during the break will be marked as absent for that class. Appropriate absences (e.g., religious holidays) are allowed with prior permission from the instructor. Consistent lateness to class will also result in being marked absent.

   The use of cell phones (including text messaging), blackberries, PDAs, or any similar type of electronic device is not permitted in class. Please turn them off prior to class. If there is an emergency and you need to leave your cell phone on, please turn it to vibrate and attend to the call in the hallway so that you will not disturb your colleagues.
Course assignments:
All assignments are to be completed by scheduled due dates at the beginning of class, not via email or through e-companion. Late assignment will not be accepted. If a due date conflicts with a religious observance, please consult with the professor prior to the assignment’s due date. All written assignments must be typed and adhere to APA format.

Specific assignments are as follows:

- **Substantive reading reflections:** Beginning in Week 3, students are to submit approximately 1 typed page per week that contains 2-3 questions, criticisms, or other comments about each assigned reading for the week. You may reflect about the article’s topic in general; how this issue may pertain to a client of yours; a point you may disagree with or emphatically agree with; something missing from the reading (lack of focus on a particular group or gender, etc.). Approximately 1 page per week, with two “passes” allowed during the semester.

- **Thought Paper I:** A 3-4 page, double-spaced analysis of a hypothetical dilemma involving an adolescent client. This paper is due at the beginning of class on February 28 (Week 7). More information on this assignment will be posted on the e-companion website for this course.

- **Thought Paper II:** A 3-4 page, double-spaced analysis of a hypothetical adolescent client, including his/her problem situation and proposed solutions/interventions to treat the problem. This paper is due at the beginning of class on March 28 (Week 10). With permission from Dr. Simmel, students may elect to do a verbal case analysis presentation—based on an actual client from student’s field placement—to the class in place of this written assignment. More details on this assignment will be posted on the e-companion website for this course.

- **Final Paper:** A 12-14 page, double-spaced research paper based on an actual client situation OR an analysis based on a movie (list to be circulated by Dr. Simmel at later date). This paper should incorporate library research that involves a critical analysis of a relevant theoretical framework(s) as well as empirical research. For example, you may wish to explore more about eating disorders among adolescent girls (or boys) and the impact of this disorder on adolescent development. Final papers are due in class on May 2 (Week 15), the final day of class. More information on this assignment will be posted on the e-companion website for this course.

6. **Grading**

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class attendance and participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(10) Reading Questions</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Thought Papers</td>
<td>25%</td>
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7. **Course Evaluation**
Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and the instructor. This survey is completed by students toward the end of the semester, and all answers are confidential and anonymous.

8. **Academic Integrity Policy**
All work submitted must be your own. It is unethical and a violation of the University’s Integrity Policy to present the ideas or words of another without clearly and fully identifying the source. Inadequate citations will be construed as an attempt to misrepresent the cited material as your own. It is important that you refer to the APA Style Manual for the correct procedures in citing material.

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or idea’s of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be promptly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgement is required when the material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one’s own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state “to paraphrase Plato’s comment ……” and conclude with a footnote or parenthetical note identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased materials. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. All materials cited in the body of the paper must be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the professor.

9. **Disability Accommodation**
Please Note: Any student who believes that s/he may need an accommodation in this class due to a disability should contact the designated Coordinator for the Concerns of Students with Disabilities at the School of Social Work, Arlene Hunter the Assistant Dean for Student Services [amhunter@rci.rutgers.edu] for a letter of accommodation in order to receive accommodations. Any student who has already received a letter of accommodation, should contact the instructor privately to discuss implementation of his/her accommodations immediately. Failure to
discuss implementation of accommodations with the instructor promptly may result in denial of your accommodations.

Course Outline

Week 1: January 17
Overview of course; How do you define adolescence?

Required Readings:
- Feldman & Elliott: Chapter 1: Capturing the Adolescent Experience & Chapter 5: Challenges in Studying Minority Youth;

Week 2: January 24
Historical construction of adolescence; Central developmental tasks (increasing importance of peers; identity development; individuating from family); Primary theoretical frameworks pertaining to adolescent development

Required Readings:
- Feldman & Elliott: Chapter 10: Autonomy, Conflict, and Harmony in the Family Relationship; Chapter 14: Self and Identity Development

Suggested Readings:
- Feldman & Elliott: Chapter 4: Historical Perspectives.

Week 3: January 31
The increasing importance of peer and social groups in adolescents’ lives; Family influence and family conflict.

Required Readings:
- Feldman & Elliott: Chapter 7: Peer groups and peer cultures; Chapter 11: Friendship and Peer Relations.

**Suggested Readings:**
- *Losing Generations*: Chapter 3: Families

**Week 4: February 7**
Influence of communities and neighborhoods on adolescent development

**Required Readings:**

**Suggested Readings:**

**Weeks 5 & 6: February 14 & 21**
Mental health issues: Conduct and Oppositional Defiant Disorder; Depression, Suicide; Self-mutilating behaviors; Borderline Personality Disorders; Eating Disorders; Substance abuse

**Required Readings:**


Suggested Readings:

- Feldman & Elliott: Chapter 16: Problem Behaviors

**Week 7: February 28 (Thought Paper I Due In Class)**

Interpersonal and dating violence among youth (Guest Presentation by Sarah McMahon)

**Required Readings:**


**Week 8: March 7**

Unique developmental challenges in ethnic minority and GLBT populations

**Required Readings:**

**Suggested Readings:**


**SPRING BREAK: March 14**

**Week 9: March 21**
Delinquency; Gang violence; The rise in female gang members and female perpetrated violence

**Required Readings:**


**Week 10: March 28 (Thought Paper II Due In Class)**
Youth in foster care (special guest presenters TBA); Abuse and neglect in adolescent population

**Required Readings:**


**Week 11: April 4**

Immigrant youth, especially from violent/high conflict countries; Youth with or at risk of HIV/AIDS

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


**Week 12: April 11**

Sexual behavior; Teen pregnancy

**Required Readings:**

- Feldman & Elliott: Chapter 13: Sexuality

**Suggested Readings:**


**Week 13: April 18 **** NO CLASS*****
**Week 14: April 25**
Runaway and Homeless youth; Working with hard to reach youth clients;
Termination with adolescent clients

**Required Readings:**

**Week 15: May 2 ****Final Papers Due In Class**
Promoting resiliency and positive youth development

- Feldman & Elliott: Chapters 15: Stress, Coping, and Adaptation; Chapter 19: Progress and Promise of Research on Adolescence.