Advanced Direct Practice Using Brief Solution Focused Therapy
19:910:911

I. Catalogue Course Description

In this course, students will learn to apply this strength-based, brief model of treatment to assist adults, children, couples and families to discover their own resilience and problem solving abilities. Although the focus of this course will be on clinical practice, implications for case management as well as intervening with larger systems, such as agencies and communities will also be addressed.

II. Course Overview

This course starts with a review of the origins of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy and the shift from problem-solving to a solution building paradigm by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg, the work of Milton Erickson et al. at the Mental Research Institute on Pal Alto California to its current form and contributors such as Elliott Connie, Harvey Ratner, Bill O’Hanlon, Johnnie Kim, and many others. The method and process of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy are covered and grounded in the importance of the therapeutic relationship, hope, and the client’s preferred future, while acknowledging that the client’s problems need not be understood as is traditionally taught for them to find a solution to their struggles. The client’s capacity to utilize existing resources, to at least start the process of finding solutions, is reviewed and put into the proper context of the professional relationship. The course concludes with a review of how this process is appropriately applied to various client populations.

III. Place Of Course In Program

This course is a Clinical Concentration elective. Clinical Social Work I is a pre or co-requisite for this course.
IV. Program Level Learning Goals and the Council of Social Work Education’s Social Work Competencies

The MSW Program at Rutgers is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE’s accreditation standards can be reviewed at www.cswe.org. In keeping with CSWE standards, the Rutgers School of Social Work has integrated the CSWE competencies within its curriculum. These competences serve as program level Learning Goals for the MSW Program and include the following. Upon completion of their MSW education students will be able to: demonstrate ethical and professional behavior; engage in diversity and difference in practice; advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice; engage in practice informed research and research informed practice; engage with individuals, families, groups organizations and communities; intervene with individual, families, groups organizations and communities; and evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.

This course will assist students in developing the following competencies:

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

V. Course Learning Goals

Course level learning goals primarily relate to the aforementioned competencies/program level learning goals as the course addresses policy analysis skills and competencies as well as addresses human rights and social, economic and environmental justice through the study of the evolution of the US welfare state and the emergence of the social work profession. (Note: Faculty, please add brief statement that highlights the alignment of the course learning goals with the competencies/program level learning goals above)

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to: (Note: Faculty please use active language, per Bloom’s taxonomy)

1. Identify strengths in client and client systems that can assist in resolving problems.
2. Help clients identify and capitalize on their own strengths through various interventions including the miracle question, exception questions, pre-session change questions, etc.
3. Successfully apply this model of practice to various client groups including child welfare clients, mental health clients, clients struggling with substance abuse, clients in crisis and involuntary clients.
4. Select, apply and critically evaluate interventions in solution focused practice with various client systems including individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations and communities using client feedback, theory, and empirical literature.
5. Apply the model in a flexible manner that incorporates the clients’ diversity, cultural backgrounds and environmental constraints.
6. Apply the model in a manner which is in compliance with social work values and ethics.
7. Apply solution-focused principles to strengthen environmental interventions such as advocacy, brokerage, and community practice.

VI. **School of Social Work Mission Statement and School Wide Learning Goals**

The mission of the School of Social Work is to develop and disseminate knowledge through social work research, education, and training that promotes social and economic justice and strengthens individual, family, and community well-being, in this diverse and increasingly global environment of New Jersey and beyond.

School Wide Learning Goals: Upon graduation all students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior;
2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice; and
3. Engage, Assess, and Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

VII. **Required Texts and Readings**

**Required**


Supplemental Texts


Other required readings (separate from textbook) are available through the Rutgers University Library “Reading List” that is integrated into your Canvas course. To find your readings:

Click on the “Reading List” tab in the Canvas navigation bar to the left hand side of the course. Please note: this list contains links to articles and other required readings separate from the textbook (if applicable). Please follow the syllabus and/or Canvas Readings and Resources page in each module for more specific required readings and resources for each week (including textbook/media).

For further instructions please click here for a video tutorial

VIII. **Course Attendance and Participation Policies** (all classes should have them)

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to complete readings on a timely basis so that they can participate effectively in class discussions. More than three absences may result in the failure of the class. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the entire duration of class. More than 3 late arrivals or early departures will result in grade deductions... In addition, students are expected to take leadership roles in class discussions and exercises.

Faculty: Please ensure that there is clear and specific language re: attendance policies and lateness/early departure on the master syllabus.

Instructors, please add your cell phone/laptop policies here

IX. **Diversity Statement**

The RUSSW supports an inclusive learning environment where diversity, individual differences and identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) are respected and recognized as a source of strength. Students and faculty are expected to respect differences and contribute to a learning environment that allows for a diversity of thought and worldviews. Please feel free to speak with me if you experience any concerns in this area.
X. **Assignments and Grading**

Classes will consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, videotapes, and skill-building exercises. **All assignments for this class must reflect social work values and ethics including awareness of issues of diversity and economic and social injustice.**

Brief Discussion Papers. Students will do 3 reaction/discussion papers 2-3 pages in length (not including bibliography and title page) double spaced and answering specific questions related to the readings. You will use these papers to prepare for class discussions so bring a hard copy to class for your own use. Brief papers should refer to all of the readings assigned for the topic. **Written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Papers must be cited and referenced properly (APA style).**

Papers not submitted by the due date and time will receive a 0. Please submit them under “Assignments” on the Canvas website.

Final Paper. The final assignment is an expository paper in which the student is asked to present a case study that incorporates solution focused therapy. More specific information about assignments will be forthcoming.

Final papers are due at the beginning of Class 15. Late final papers will be penalized ½ a letter grade for each day they are overdue. Papers not received in the first 60 minutes of class on their due date but submitted before the end of class will be considered a full day late and will be penalized accordingly. Papers overdue by five days or more will not be accepted and will result in a “0” grade. Students are urged not to wait until the night before the due date to write the paper as personal emergencies occurring two days or less before the due date will not be considered grounds for an extension.

**Penalties**

Class Discussion
As this class will be seminar style, each of you will be called upon to give your impressions of the readings and to engage in class discussions. **Please note that if you are called upon and it becomes clear that you have not done the reading assignment, you will lose points for class participation. If this happens three times, your final grade will be reduced one letter grade.**

Use of PDA’s
All cell phones, iPads, iPhones, and laptops must be silenced and stored out-of-sight before class begins. Use of cell phones is prohibited in the classroom. **Texting during class will NOT be allowed.** Failure to comply with these rules (along with any rude behavior) will result in point deductions in grade for class participation and you may be asked to leave class at the instructor’s discretion.

Students are urged not to wait until the night before the due dates to write their assignments as personal emergencies occurring two days or less before they are due will not be considered grounds for an extension.
Professional social workers keep case records, write treatment reports for referral sources and managed care companies, correspond with judges and other professionals, develop policy, and advocate for their clients. Each of these tasks requires excellent writing skills. Therefore proper grammar, syntax, spelling, and appropriate referencing are expected for all assignments. You must adhere to the style guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Edition). Failure to do so will result in substantial deductions from your paper’s grade.

**Attendance is required.** One point will be deducted from a student’s class participation score for each unexcused absence. Absence, early departure, or lateness to class is acceptable only for compelling reasons, such as illness but not for vacations, outside employment or field work obligations as field work is not to interfere with class. Five or more absences (excused or otherwise) will result in course failure. Multiple unexcused departures or late arrivals will also result in course failure.

**Furthermore, as graduating professional social workers, you are expected to practice in compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics. Papers that reflect egregious violations of social work values and ethics will result in course failure and will impede graduation.**

**Grading:** Grades for the class will be calculated based on the following breakdown:

- Brief Papers: 30 points (10 points each)
- Final Paper: 65 points
- Attendance and Class Participation: 5 points
- Total: 100 points.

SSW MSW Grading Scale:  
Below is the grading scale for the MSW program  
A 92-100  
B+ 87-91  
B 82-86  
C+ 77-81  
C 70-76  
F 0-69  

**XI. Academic Resources**

**Library Research Assistance**

**Meredith Parker** is the social work the social work librarian on the New Brunswick campus Meredith.parker@rutgers.edu, 848-932-6124; **Natalie Borisovets** is at Newark, Dana Library natalieb@rutgers.edu 973-353-5909; **Katie Anderson** is at Camden, Robeson Library: Katie.anderson@rutgers.edu 856-225-2830. They are all available to meet with students.
Writing Assistance
Success in graduate school and within the larger profession of social work depends on strong writing skills. Several resources are available to help students strengthen their professional and academic writing skills. Writing assistance is available to all MSW students as described below.

All MSW SSW students (New Brunswick, Camden, Newark, Intensive Weekend, online and blended) are eligible to access writing assistance at the New Brunswick Learning Center. Online tutoring may also be available.
https://rlc.rutgers.edu/student-services/writing-tutoring

Newark Campus
The Newark writing center is available for MSW students on the Newark campus by appointment.
http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter

Additional Online Resources

APA Style
All students are expected to adhere to the citation style of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th edition (2020). It can be purchased at APA Manual 7th Edition. The Purdue OWL website also provide assistance with APA style
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Email Etiquette for Students
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/694/01/

XII. Course Evaluation
Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and instructor. This survey is completed by students toward the end of the semester, and all answers are confidential and anonymous. The instructor may also choose to conduct a mid-point evaluation.

XII. Academic Integrity
As per Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, “Students are responsible for understanding the principles of academic integrity and abiding by them in all aspects of their work at the University. Students are also encouraged to help educate fellow students
about academic integrity and to bring all alleged violations of academic integrity they encounter to the attention of the appropriate authorities.” All SSW students are expected to review and familiarize themselves with the RU Academic Integrity Policy in its entirety.

As per Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, “The principles of academic integrity require that a student: make sure that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student’s own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations; properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, images, or words of others; properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work; obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with the student’s interpretation or conclusions; treat all other students ethically, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This principle requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress; uphold the ethical standards and professional code of conduct in the field for which the student is preparing.”

Students should review all types of Academic Integrity Violations per the RU Academic Integrity Policy. Below are some of the more common violations, as articulated in Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy:

“Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, images, or results, no matter the form or media, without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, a student must identify every direct quotation using quotation marks or appropriate indentation and cite both direct quotation and paraphrasing properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are: Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution: Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one’s own words another person’s written words or ideas as if they were one’s own, regardless of the nature of the assignment; Incorporating into one’s work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other non-textual material from other sources, regardless of format, without proper attribution.”

“Cheating: Cheating is the use or possession of inappropriate or prohibited materials, information, sources, or aids in any academic exercise. Cheating also includes submitting papers, research results or reports, analyses, and other textual or visual material and media as one’s own work when others prepared them. Some common examples are: Prohibited collaboration: receiving research, programming, data collection, or analytical assistance from others or working with another student on an assignment where such help is not permitted; Copying another student’s work or answers on a quiz or examination; Using or having access to books, notes, calculators, cell phones, technology, or other prohibited devices or materials during a quiz or examination; Submitting the same work or major portions thereof to satisfy the requirements of more than one course without permission from the instructors involved; Preprogramming a calculator or other device to
contain answers, formulas, or other unauthorized information for use during a quiz or examination.; Acquiring a copy of an examination from an unauthorized source before the examination; Having a substitute take an examination in one’s place; Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement; Submitting as one’s own work a term paper or other assignment prepared, in whole or in part, by someone else.”

Any faculty member or academic administrator who becomes aware of a possible academic integrity violation must initiate a formal complaint with the Office of Student Conduct and the SSW’s Academic Integrity Facilitator (Laura Curran at lacurran@ssw.rutgers.edu). The AIF deciding the case (the “adjudicator”) shall notify the accused student of the allegation in writing or by electronic communication within fifteen working days of the time the faculty member becomes aware of the alleged violation.

Once the student has been notified of the allegation, the student may not drop the course or withdraw from the school until the adjudication process is complete. A TZ or incomplete grade shall be assigned until the case is resolved. For more information, see RU Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures for Adjudicating Academic Integrity Violations.

To promote a strong culture of academic integrity, Rutgers has adopted the following honor pledge to be written and signed on examinations and major course assignments submitted for grading: On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination/assignment.

XIII. Disability Accommodation

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’ disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

XIV. Other Resources

Our school is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and
stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students’ academic success and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need.

Confidential support and academic advocacy are available through the Rutgers Office on Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance, 848.932.1181, http://vpva.rutgers.edu. Services are free and confidential and available 24 hrs/day, 7 days a week.

XV. Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction to the course

Week 2: Introduction continued


Chapter 1: From problem solving to solution building. pp. 1-12.
Chapter 3: Skills for not knowing. pp. 20-58

Chapter 4: Getting started: How to pay attention to what the client wants. pp. 59-81

Week 3: Interventions


Chapter 5: How to amplify what clients want: The miracle question. pp. 84-108
Chapter 6: Exploring for exceptions; Building on client strengths and successes. pp. 109-121.
Chapter 7: Formulating feedback for clients. pp. 122-146

Week 4: Beyond the First Session

Chapter 8: Later sessions: Finding, amplifying, and measuring client progress. pp. 147-177

Chapter 11: Evidence Base. pp. 242-254

Week 5: **Emotions in Solution-Focused Therapy: A Kinder, Gentler Approach?**


**Crisis Intervention**

Chapter 12: The solution focused approach to crisis. pp. 198-212.


Week 6: **Involuntary Clients**

***Brief Discussion Paper 1 Due***

1) **How does one use solution-focused therapy to work with involuntary (mandated) clients?**


Week 7: **Agency and Community Solution-Focused Practice**

(Date)
Week 8: Use of the Model with Children

**Brief Discussion Paper 2 Due**

How can solution-focused therapy be applied to working with children?


Chapter 4: Assessing your clients, agreeing on goals. pp. 31-47.

Chapter 5: Let’s get to it! . pp. 48-67.

Chapter 6: Communicating with children on their own terms. 68-116.

(Date) No Class—Spring Break

Week 9: Use of the Model with Children (cont.)

(Date)


Chapter 7: Treating children with uncommon needs. pp. 117-182

Chapter 8: Making a difference with teenagers. pp. 183-229.


Week 10: Applying the Model to Persons with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness.

(Date)

***Brief Paper Discussion Paper 3 Due**

How can solution focused therapy be applied to working with persons with severe mental illnesses?


Chapter 1: A hopeful approach to chronic and severe mental illness. pp. 3-18.


Chapter 4: Reevaluating people’s experiences. pp. 55-64.
Chapter 5: Collaborating with clients, their families and others in their environments. pp. 67-84

Week 11: (Date) Applying the Model to Persons with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (cont.)
Chapter 6: Creating a new vision of the future. pp. 87-94.
Chapter 7: Handling dangerous and violent situations. pp. 97-110.
Chapter 9: Relapse recovery and relapse prevention. pp. 127-137.
Chapter 10: General principles for working with chronic and severe mental illness. pp. 141-145.

Week 12: Applying the Model to Persons with Addictions (Date)
Chapter 7: Strategies for maintaining and enhancing progress, pp. 128-148.

Reading 5: It’s a Matter of Choice (de Shazer, S. & Isebaert, L.) 328-333.

Week 13: Applying the Model to Couples (Date)
Step 1: Establishing a Destination. pp. 15-23
Step 2: Connecting with the Couple. pp. 25-32
Step 3: Honeymoon Talk: Reviewing a Couple’s Successful Past. pp. 33-47
Step 4: The Preferred Future: Envisioning the Best Tomorrow. pp. 49-64

Week 14: Applying the Model to Couples (cont.) (Date)
Step 5: Scaling Toward the Preferred Future. 75-82
Follow-Up Sessions: What to Do After the First Meeting. 83-94
The Questions: Building Questions That Lead to Meaningful Responses

Week 15: Applying the Model to Couples (cont.) FINAL PAPER DUE
(Date)
Chapter 2: Intersection of SFBT and trauma, pp. 10-23
XVI. Bibliography


