Core Concepts in Trauma Treatment for Children and Adolescents

SWGS 6436

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the common concepts (general theory and foundational knowledge), components (intervention and treatment elements) and skills (practitioner skills) underlying evidence-based treatment for traumatized children and adolescents. Trauma is broadly defined, and includes children and adolescents exposed to traumatic events including, but not limited to natural disasters, war, abuse and neglect, medical trauma and witnessing interpersonal crime (e.g. domestic violence) and other traumatic events. The course will highlight the role of development, culture and empirical evidence in trauma-specific interventions with children, adolescents and their families. It will address the level of functioning of primary care-giving environments and assess the capacity of the community to facilitate restorative processes.

Place of Course in the Curriculum

This course is an elective in the clinical practice concentration.

Course Objectives (incorporates Core Concepts)

Students will be able to:

1. Explain how traumatic experiences are inherently complex and require differential interventions for children and adolescents who may exhibit a variety of responses following exposure to a traumatic event.

2. Describe and give examples of the neurobiological consequences of exposure to trauma.

3. Illustrate how trauma can interact with and exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities (e.g., history of prior trauma, loss, or psychopathology) across development.

4. Describe and give examples of how pre-existing protective and promotive factors (e.g., positive attachment relationship with primary caregiver, family cohesion, social support, adaptive coping, social competence) can reduce the adverse impacts of trauma exposure across development.

5. Recognize and name how trauma exposure may generate adverse life events and circumstances (secondary adversities) that may continue to transmit the adverse effects of trauma over time and across development.
6. Recognize and demonstrate how interventions with trauma-exposed children and adolescents include promoting the children or adolescent’s external (objective) safety and internal (psychological) safety.

7. Explain how cultural factors and processes may profoundly influence trauma exposure and should be systematically considered at all stages of intervention.

8. Choose a framework for interventions which address the level of functioning of primary care-giving environments, including the parent/caregiver, family unit, and their relationship with the child or adolescent.

9. Recognize how interventions with trauma-exposed children and adolescents need to address ethical and legal issues as these arise, as well as to describe the profound effect institutions can have on the course of children’s post-trauma adjustments and how to intervene in these systems.

10. Provide examples of how interventions with trauma-exposed children and adolescents impact the practitioner, and to identify and practice appropriate self-care techniques.

Required Texts


Course Requirements/Assignments

Students are expected to complete all course readings prior to the date for which they are assigned. There will be five brief written assignments due throughout the course, as well as a final paper. In addition students must complete the Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Treatment course available on the web. These are outlined in detail in the assignments section of this syllabus.

Course Structure

The objectives of the course will be met through regular attendance and participation in the class which will combine an intensive examination of 5 case vignettes with brief
lectures, role play, class exercises, the use of films and videotapes, and class discussion. The structure of the course is divided into 3 units organized according to developmental age.

**Grades**
Grades will be based upon:

- Class participation: 20%
- Group Presentation: 10%
- Two reflection papers: 20%
- Trauma-Focused CBT web course: 10%
- Final paper: 40%

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

**Session 1:**

- Orientation to the course and syllabus review
- Overview of core concepts and how they are used in the course
- Course structure and expectations

**Session 2, 3 and 4:**

**Unit I - INFANCY AND PRESCHOOL**

Case 1
- **Amarika:** One and one-half year old African American female; witness to community violence (mother shot); historical trauma

**Learning Objectives**
At the conclusion of unit one, the learner should be able to:

1. Know that very young children, including babies in the first year of life, are affected by traumatic events in their physiological, emotional, social, and cognitive functioning and enact the traumatic experience through their behavior even when they are unable to describe it verbally.
2. Understand that caregiver and child functioning are inter-connected and influence each other, especially during the first five years of life.
3. Identify specific ways in which the young child’s biological, emotional, social, and cognitive development may be affected by the experience of trauma.
4. Appreciate that historical trauma and other preexisting ecological stressors can affect the family’s perception of and response to the trauma.
5. Identify engagement skills used with infants and caregivers.

**Required Readings (for sessions 2, 3 and 4)**
Fontes (2005). Chapter 1
Lieberman, A. & Van Horn, P. (2008). Chapters 1, 2 and 5

Resource Readings (for sessions 2, 3 and 4)


Zero to Three National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

Sessions 5 and 6:

Case 2
- **Juan** – Three year old Latino male: victim of paternal sexual abuse

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of class session six, the learner should be able to:

1. Appreciate the impact of sexually inappropriate and possible traumatic events on a pre-school child.
2. Understand the impact of the parent/caregiver’s reaction to the suspected sexual abuse and how that impacts the child’s experience of and recovery from the traumatic event.
3. Be aware of the behavioral manifestations of exposure to sexually inappropriate material (through witnessing) or as a consequence of sexual molestation.
4. Learn how to enlist parent/caregiver in the therapeutic process.
5. Appreciate the role of external, authoritative systems (e.g. CPS) in securing a safe environment for the child and family.
6. Identify the manner in which culture affects and interacts with the child and family response to the trauma, and to helping professionals.
Required Readings

Session 5:
Fontes (2005). Chapter 2

Session 6:

Resource Readings (for sessions 5 and 6)

Sessions 7, 8, and 9:

Unit II - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE
Case 3

- **Geraldine** - 9 year old, African American female, witness to murder of mother.

Learning Objectives
At the conclusion of this class session, the learner should be able to:

1) Describe the impact of traumatic loss of a parent in early childhood.
2) Identify secondary adversities characteristic of the loss of a parent in childhood.
3) Identify the unique characteristics of an assessment conducted during the acute phase of a traumatic experience.
4) Identify the unique legal considerations that need to be made in the case where a child witnesses one parent kill another.
5) Identify triggering experiences (both internal and external) for Geraldine.
6) Identify the ways in which Geraldine experiences this murder that are specific to her developmental level.
7) Identify the cultural factors and processes that may be influencing this family’s experience of trauma (e.g., kinship family network, spirituality, historical trauma, interactions with legal and child welfare systems).

Required Readings (for sessions 7, 8 and 9)
Fontes, (2005). Chapter, 4-5
Saxe, Ellis & Kaplow (2007). Chapters 6-8

**Resource Readings (for sessions 7, 8 and 9)**


**Sessions 10, 11, 12:**

**Case 4**
- **Ibrahim:** 10-year old Somalian male; refugee and victim of traumatic bus accident.

**Learning Objectives:**
At the conclusion of this class session, the learner should be able to:

1. Identify specific components of the child’s post-traumatic distress and the impact of the child’s developmental stage, culture, and position in the family.
2. Analyze promotive factors in the child’s environment and how to harness them for treatment.
3. Identify pre-existing vulnerabilities and describe their interaction with trauma-related symptoms.
4. Specify the child’s moment-by-moment experience of the traumatic event and how it relates to current symptoms.

Required Readings

Session 10:
Fontes (2005) Chapter 7

Session 11:

Session 12:
Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger (2006). Part II. chapters 5-10

Resource Readings (for sessions 10, 11, and 12)

Unite III - ADOLESCENCE

Sessions 13-14:

Case 5
- **James** - 14-year old Caucasian male; victim of complex trauma (physical and psychological abuse, neglect; exposure to caregiver substance abuse)

Learning Objectives
At the conclusion of this class session, the learner should be able to:
1. Describe complex manifestations of early trauma.
2. Identify key internalizing and externalizing behaviors that are indicative of a history of trauma.
3. Recognize an array of trauma exposures (subtle and overt) and their intersection with attachment issues.
4. Describe the negative impact that previous traumatic experience has on client’s ability to negotiate normal adolescent tasks (e.g. interest in sexuality, showing independence from family, etc.).
5. Describe the key role that the family system, including the caregiver’s response to the trauma, plays in helping a child to understand and cope with multiple traumatic events.
6. Identify and describe at least three developmental domains impacted by early interpersonal trauma.
7. Identify and describe at least three examples of how “symptoms” of complex trauma exposure represent functional attempts to cope.

**Required Readings**

**Session 13:**

**Session 14:**

**Resource Readings (for sessions 13 and 14)**


**Session 15: Course Review and Future Learning**

Review core concepts, TF-CBT, and TST

**Required Reading:**

Assignments  
(15 Week Traditional Model)

There will be two brief written assignments during the course, a group presentation and a final paper. Students are also required to complete the Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy web course, and are expected to actively participate in all class activities.

Grades

Grades will be based upon:

I. Class participation: 20%
II. Group presentation 10%
III. Reflection Papers 20% (10% each)
IV. Completion of web course 10%
V. Final Paper 40%

II. Group Presentation

Goal of the Assignment: To familiarize you with the literature that can inform the experience of a traumatized child, adolescent and/or their family.

Tasks: During the semester, each group will have the responsibility to identify a topic or questions that the group wants to investigate. This topic or question should emerge from the discussion of one of the cases. Individual member search the literature using on-line resources to answer to the question or topic. Findings are summarized in the small group in preparation for the presentation to the class.

Format: This is a 10-15 minute oral presentation by the small group to the class, followed by facilitation of class discussion.

Weight: 10% of course grade

III. Reflection Papers

Goal of the Assignment: To demonstrate the ability to identify and explore a question, theme or concept of interest and apply that to your understanding of a case.

Tasks: Choose a case and identify a question, theme or concept that you wish to investigate further. Use the literature to explore the question, theme or concept for yourself. Discuss why this was of interest to you. Relate the themes/concepts to either the case discussed in class or one of your own cases.
Format: Each paper should be double-spaced, type-written and approximately 4-5 pages in length.

Due: Insert date
Insert date

Weight: 20% of course grade (each paper is worth 10%)

IV. Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy Web Course

Go to the website for Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CF-CBT) http://tfcbt.musc.edu/ (you can always find this if you Google “tf-cbt”).

Login and complete the course. This web based course complements the readings and class content. At the end of each module there is a post-test. You will have to complete the post test before you can move on to the next module.

Print out and hand in the certificate of completion by (insert date).

Weight: 10% of course grade

V. Final Paper

Goal of the Assignment: To demonstrate your ability to apply the course content, including the core concepts and the framework incorporating an understanding of both individual and system factors, to one of your own cases.

Tasks:

1. Identify one of your own child or adolescent cases. Summarize the presenting problem and relevant history.
2. Provide a trauma-informed assessment of your client. Be sure to highlight developmental and cultural factors that are salient to the assessment.
3. Using the core concepts (see handout) as a guide for prioritizing treatment issues, identify the most immediate treatment issues for your client. Describe the phase of treatment you are in with your client (see Saxe, chapter 8).
4. Discuss the degree to which you have been able to work within a treatment team. If that is not possible in your setting, describe efforts you have made to develop a treatment plan in collaboration with other systems involved in the child’s life.
5. Summarize the treatment planned or underway with the client. Be sure to address the following in your discussion:
- Engagement
- Stabilization
- System advocacy
- Role of pharmacology
- Building emotional regulation skills
- Building cognitive process skills
- Building meaning-making skills

6. Summarize the work with the client (and family if appropriate) and identify (briefly) next steps.

Format: Type-written, double spaced paper of 15-20 pages with bibliography in APA style.

Due Date: Outline due (insert date)
Paper due (insert date)

Weight: 40% of course grade
APPENDIX C: PLAGARISM

University Policies of Academic Integrity

A university, by its nature, strives to foster and recognize originality of thought. Originality can only be recognized, however, when people acknowledge the sources of ideas and works that are not their own. Therefore, students must maintain the highest standards with regard to honesty, effort and performance. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating on exams, false authorship and destruction of library materials needed for a course. This policy gives definitions and instances of violations of academic integrity, the procedures used to arrive at a judgment, possible sanctions and the processes of appeal. This policy will be enforced rigorously and without discrimination.

Violations of Academic Integrity:

A. Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when individuals attempt to present as their own what has come from another source. Plagiarism takes place whether such theft is accidental or deliberate. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to:

- Using the ideas of another person, whether or not such ideas are paraphrased, from whatever source including oral, print, broadcast or computer-mediated communication.
- Rewriting borrowed material by simply dropping a word here and there, substituting a few words for others, or moving around words or sentences.
- Presenting borrowed material without placing quotation marks around borrowed material in the approved style. It is no defense to claim that one has “forgotten” to do so.
- Presenting as one’s own an assignment, paper or computer program partially or wholly prepared by another person, whether by another student, friend, or by a business or online service that sells or distributes such papers and programs.

B. Cheating: Cheating occurs when individuals share course materials or information when it is unauthorized or prohibited. Examples of cheating include but are not limited to:

- Having or using unauthorized material at an examination, test or quiz, or copying another student’s assignment or laboratory report.
- Permitting another student to copy an assignment, paper, computer program, project, examination, test or quiz.
- Obtaining and/or using an examination, test or quiz prior to its administration.
- Having another person act as proxy and take an examination, test or quiz.
C. Additional Violations of Academic Integrity: Additional violations of academic integrity include but are not limited to:

- Theft, destruction or tampering with library materials, audio and videotapes, computer hardware or software, or other materials necessary for a course.

- The submission or presentation of a falsified excuse for an absence from a course requirement, examination, test or quiz.

- The presentation of false identification or credentials in order to gain admission to a course, examination, test, quiz or degree program.

- Submission of a paper or project to more than one course during the time in which a student is attending Fordham University, without explicit permission from the instructors. The penalty for students found guilty of plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity may range from failure for the assignment or course to dismissal from the program.
Office of Disability Services  The Office of Disability Services at Fordham University helps to ensure equal educational access and opportunity for all members of our community. In the Jesuit tradition of cura personalis, members of the ODS staff work individually with each student to understand his or her strengths and limitations in order to develop their most effective and comprehensive accommodation plan. In addition to working in a direct service capacity with our students, the Office of Disability Services also collaborates with administrators, faculty, and staff to ensure that the facilitation of reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities is provided. As a University, Fordham will offer reasonable and appropriate auxiliary aids and services to assist otherwise qualified persons in achieving access to its programs, services, and facilities once documentation is submitted to ODS and an intake appointment is conducted to develop an accommodation plan directly with the student in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The Office of Disability Services believe that their policies and mission carry out the intent of Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, which states:

"No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in section 7(20), shall solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Please go to the Office of Disabilities for documentation guidelines according to type of disability. The website address is: http://www.fordham.edu/campus_resources/student_services/disability_services/

You can also contact the Office of Disability at 718-817-0655.
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE
Guide for Grading Policy and Recommended Grade Equivalents

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