Sociology, Social Work, and Family Sciences

SWK3065.1 Human Behavior in the Social Environment

Number of Units **3**

Spring 2026

Meeting days/times MWF 11:00 am – 11:55 am

Meeting location Rohr Sociology and Social Work 112

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 6, 2026, 10:30 – 1:00 pm

INFORMATION	SPECIFICS FOR THE COURSE
Instructor title and name:	**Suzanne Mondell-Cook, LCSW/MAR**
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Office location and hours:	By appointment https://calendly.com/cappyshouselcsw/plnu-related

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Department Mission

As followers of Christ, our mission is to nurture servant scholars who critically and empirically evaluate social systems, cultural patterns, and basic human needs to constructively engage as agents of hope with individuals, families, and communities.

Social Work Program Mission

At its core, the purpose of the social work program is to prepare competent social work professionals who are motivated to gracefully serve others as an expression of their faith. In the context of the intersection of the goals of the University and those of professional social work practice, this mission is further articulated:

The mission of the baccalaureate social work program is to develop competent professionals who are committed to serving others through acquisition and integration of the essential knowledge, skills, and values that form the foundation of generalist practice in the social work profession; who are motivated to promote social justice; and who understand that a Wesleyan perspective, a desire for continuous personal development, and respectful engagement in the community that empowers others are integral components of the means for relating to God through service.[1]

Course Description

Human Behavior and the Social Environment seeks to expose students to theories, knowledge, and content of human development across the life-span. Particular attention will be paid to the bio-psycho-social-spiritual development. Human development will be considered from the systems perspective, with emphasis on factors that promote or deter health and well-being among individuals, families, and groups.

Program and Course Learning Outcomes✪

By the end of the course, you should be able to do the following tasks. Statements in italics are from the Council of Social Work Education's (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS):

1. Comp. 1.2 *Understand the value base of the professional and ethical standards; make ethical decisions; utilize self-reflection and professional use of self in managing personal values and contexts*. Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations.
2. Comp. 1.3 *Understand the value base of the professional and ethical standards; make ethical decisions; utilize self-reflection and professional use of self in managing personal values and contexts*. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication.
3. Comp. 2.6 *Understand how diversity and difference shape the human experience and are critical in formation of identity. Understand the mechanisms of oppression, power and privilege.* Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.
4. Comp. 2.6 *Understand how diversity and difference shape the human experience and are critical in formation of identity. Understand the mechanisms of oppression, power and privilege.* Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.
5. Comp. 4.12 *Understand quantitative and qualitative research methods. Apply principles of logic and scientific inquiry. Translate research findings into knowledge for effective practice. Apply critical thinking to research methods and data.* Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative

and qualitative research methods and research findings.

6. Comp. 4.13 *Understand quantitative and qualitative research methods. Apply principles of logic and scientific inquiry. Translate research findings into knowledge for effective practice. Apply critical thinking to research methods and data*. Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.
7. Comp. 6.17 *Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.* Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies.
8. Comp. 6.19 *Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*. Demonstrate ability to collect, organize, and apply critical thinking to information from clients and constituencies.
9. Comp. 7.19 *Understand assessment is an ongoing component of the helping process; apply knowledge and tools to critically analyze to support diverse clients and constituencies. Value inter-professional collaboration in understanding the larger.* Demonstrate ability to collect, organize, and apply critical thinking to information from clients and constituencies.
10. Comp. 7.23 *Understand assessment is an ongoing component of the helping process; apply knowledge and tools to critically analyze to support diverse clients and constituencies. Value inter-professional collaboration in understanding the larger.* Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies.
11. Comp. 9.28 *Understand evaluation as an ongoing process. Recognize the importance of evaluation to advance effectiveness. Apply tools for evaluation of practice, including self-evaluation*. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes.
12. Comp. 10.32 *Demonstrate a practical understanding of the integration of faith and profession.* Christians who are professional social workers are able to describe and model servant leadership.

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

Zastrow, C., & Krist-Ashman, K. K. (2018). Understanding human behavior and the social environment (Ninth ed.). Belmont: Brooks/Cole.

Additional articles and chapters will be assigned by the professors and posted on the Canvas.

Course Credit Hour Information

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 3-unit class delivered over 15 weeks. Specific details about how the class meets the credit hour requirement can be provided upon request.

Course Schedule and Assignments

1. Attendance and Respectful Class Participation (10 points): *(See attendance section below for how excessive absences affect your grade.)* To earn full points for discussion participation, you must be present for the full discussion, come prepared to hand in the assignments at the beginning of class, and engage in class dialogue. Your regular attendance and participation in the discussion sessions and in classroom activities is critical to the success of the class. You should plan to attend class and have read the material and be prepared to discuss, debate, and develop thoughts each class session. *Attendance alone does not equal participation. Distracting behaviors like excessive side conversations, rudeness to the class members and/or professor, working on tasks unrelated to the current class discussion, or texting will not be tolerated due to their lack of respect.*

2. Personal Milestones Paper (15 points): This paper will focus on the major people, events, and influences that have shaped your life. Key questions to consider are who most influenced you? How does your environment, your social context, influence how you think and act? Why were the events you selected milestones? The goal is to provide time for you to critically assess how you have become the person you are and how this will influence your work. The paper should not exceed 10 doubled spaced pages, using a 12-point font. Page borders must not be less than 1 inch. All reference must be in the format of the American Psychological Association.

3. Weekly Journal Article Critiques (15 points): A goal of the course is to expose you to the major debates in social work and related disciplines. The best new and emerging information is found in the major scholarly journals. Each week you will be expected to identify read and summarize one journal article related to the course content for the week. You will select an article from a respected, scholarly journal relating to your assigned chapter. You will write a brief summary not to exceed 250 words. You are encouraged to discuss journals and articles with the instructor if needed. Be prepared to discuss them. Each submission is worth 2 points. **Due by 9:00 AM every Friday of the semester.**

   To find an article, go to the library or to an electronic reference database and review journal articles that have been published within the last 5 years. Select an article that peaks your curiosity and relates to your assigned chapter. Here are a few links to that might be helpful: Social Work Journal Rankings, NYU's School of Social Work Journal Rankings, Campbell Collaboration, Cochrane Collaboration.

   Include: An APA-6th-edition citation and a 250-word summary of the article. Your answers should be in complete sentences. Consider the questions below as you analyze each article.

Analyze the article and answer the following questions in your outline:

1. How are the authors building a theory or doing historical work?
2. Who is the audience? (The journal should tell you this; it may require you to do further research at the library or on the web).
3. What theories are the foundation of their work? Name the theory.
4. What is the hypothesis of the study?
5. What are the key independent and dependent variables?
6. How do the researchers define the variables they are researching?
7. Is it a qualitative or quantitative study? How? Give an example.
8. How do the authors go about answering the questions they are asking?
9. Where did the authors get their study sample? How many people are in their sample? Did people drop out of the sample, and do they try to hide this at all?
10. Assess the tables, figures and charts. How do they support the analysis?
11. Does the logic and constructs make sense? Why?
12. Were there any obvious biases in the authors' reasoning? Give an example.
13. What were the findings? How do they support the hypothesis?
14. How can the articles' findings be built on by future researchers?
15. How do the conclusions make sense for practice and theory by practitioners, social workers etc.?
16. What are the articles' strengths and weaknesses?
17. How does the article relate to the class?
18. What did you think about the findings? Did they change your thinking?

4. Mid-term exam (15 points): Consisting of multiple choice, essay, and short answer questions.

5. Weekly Wellness (15 points): Self-care is vital for long term success in social work practice. Every week you are responsible to do something to take care of yourself. Due by 9:00 AM every Friday of the semester.

6. Off-Site Practical Application Required (10 points): This course includes practical application and exposure human behavior in the environment. Through the PLNU ministry system, you will participate in off-site experiences for at least 3 hours, volunteering with children/teenagers and older adults. Reactions must be posted on Canvas and will be discussed in class. **Due on week after the event.**

7. Social History Paper (20 points): A goal of the course is to encourage the application of social history paper.
   Focus Competencies on Practice Behaviors:

   I. EP 2.1.3c - Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues
   II. EP 2.1.4c - Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences

III. EP 2.1.7a - Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation
IV. EP 2.1.10a - Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
V. EP 2.1.10b - Use empathy and other interpersonal skills
VI. EP 2.1.10d - Collect, organize, and interpret client data
VII. EP 2.1.10e - Assess client strengths and limitations

A. Brief Description Life History Interview: You will select and interview an individual while following an outline that indicates the information you need to solicit. The information reflects the types of information typically gathered by social workers in practice when doing a social history. Social histories reflect the important aspects of an individual's development and help social workers assess the nature of a client's problems.

a. Objectives: This exercise will enable you to:

i. Identify those aspects of human development that are important in shaping an individual's life situation and issues.
ii. Recognize the complexity and necessity of assessment in social work practice.
iii. Experience the process of interviewing and recognize the need to develop interviewing skills.

b. Procedure:

Choose a person over 65 years old to interview. This could be a friend, a relative, or an acquaintance. Describe this assignment to the person, and ask the person for permission (informed consent) to do the interview. Feel free to show the person these guidelines or your proposed outline ahead of time. Make it clear that his or her real name will not be used and that the information will be kept confidential.

In practice, a social history involves "an in-depth description and assessment of the current and past client situation, often included in the case records and medical records of client" (Baker, 2003, p. 404). The purpose is not to learn every intimate detail of the client's personal life but rather to gain a generalized understanding of what a client's life is like in addition to gaining more specific information related to the client's problem.

The Social History Outline developed for this assignment is not a complete social history but only portions of one. There are no sections that relate to problems or to recommendations. This assignment does not focus on a client's problem, because you have neither client nor problem to work with. However, this assignment is designed to give you a chance to interview someone, obtain development and social information, and summarize this information in an organized, informative manner.

c. One requirement of the assignment is to go the library and do some related research on interviewing techniques. Look for information on what is involved in interviewing and how to do it. Summarize the research and information you reviewed and include it in the "Research Applications" section of the paper. Apply this research and information to

your own interview where possible. For example, which techniques did you find useful or could you have used? How were they, or might have been, helpful in your interview situation? Include a brief reference page of these sources at the end of the paper.

d. Write:

Write a paper that summarizes the information you've gathered. The paper should be typewritten, double-spaced, and eight to 12 pages in length. Use an outline form for topic headings followed by a narrative presentation of information for each heading. Make sure each underlined topic heading is included in your paper. This paper should be in APA 6th edition format with a title page, abstract, main body (in the form of the outline), and a reference page.

DATE PRESENTED	CLASS CONTENT OR ASSIGNMENT	ASSIGNMENT DUE DATE
January 12	Introduction to Human Behavior in the Social Environment	
January 14	Introduction to Human Behavior in the Social Environment	Read: Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman Chapter 1
January 16	Systems Theory	Chapter 1 Classroom Notes on Systems Theory
January 19	MLK Day No Class	Listen : MLK's Christmas Sermon from 1967
January 21	Systems Theory Cont'd	Find an item from the news and bring to class be ready to identify systems terms and themes
January 23	Strengths Based Practice	Saleeby Strengths article
January 26	Assets Based Development	McKnight and Kretzmann Develop an assets map for a community
January 28	Community Change	**Personal Milestones due**
January 30	Normal Development	
February 2	Biology and infancy and childhood	Chapter 2 Inside the Human Body
February 4	Biology – Debate -- Abortion	
February 6	Biology – Debate – Infertility issues	
February 9	Psychology and infancy and childhood	Chapter 3 Freud' conceptions and Theory evaluation
February 11	Psychology and infancy and childhood	Self-theories -- Carl Rogers
February 13	Psychology and infancy and childhood	Feminist perspectives
February 16	Psychology and infancy and childhood	Cognitive Development – Piaget and Vygotsky

February 18	Psychology and infancy and childhood	Emotional Development, Attachment and bonding
February 20	Psychology and infancy and childhood	Intelligence and Learning Disabilities
February 23	Social Systems and infancy and childhood	Chapter 4 Families
February 25	Social Systems and infancy and childhood	Conditioning and reinforcement
February 27	Social Systems and infancy and childhood	Socialization and Play
March 2	Social Systems and infancy and childhood	Child abuse and maltreatment https://brownschool.wustl.edu/data-show-disparities-in-referrals-to-child-protective-services-largely-a-result-of-risk-not-racism/
March 4		
March 6	**Mid-Term**	No Class
March 9-13	**Spring Break!**	
March 16	Ethnocentrism and Racism	Chapter 5 White Privilege
March 18	Ethnocentrism and Racism	Cultural Competence
March 20	Biology and adolescence and young adulthood	Chapter 6 Inside the Human Body 39:07
March 23	Psychology and adolescence and young adulthood	Chapter 7 Identity Formation
March 25	Psychology and adolescence and young adulthood	Moral Development What Science Says about the Age of Accountability
March 27	Psychology and adolescence and young adulthood	Suicide
March 30	Gender Roles and Sexism	Chapter 9
April 1	Gender Roles and Sexism	
April 3	Social Systems and adolescence and young adulthood	Chapter 8 Noel Anaya's Story
April 6	Biology in middle adulthood	Chapter 10
April 8	Psychology in middle adulthood	Chapter 11 Choice Theory
April 10	Psychology in middle adulthood	Motivational Interviewing

April 13	Social Systems in middle adulthood	Chapter 12
April 15	Sexual Orientation	Chapter 13 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1yT9apMepQ
April 16-20	Easter Break	No Class
April 22	Biology in later adulthood	Chapter 14
April 24	Psychology in later adulthood	Chapter 15
April 27	Leadership Styles	
April 29	Social Systems in later adulthood	Chapter 16
May 1	Death and Dying	**Community Action Reflection Due April 28**
May 6	Final Exam	**Life History Presentation**

Assessment and Grading

Grades will be based on the following:

Sample Standard Grade Scale Based on Percentages

A	B	C	D	F
A 93-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F Less than 59
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the Traditional Undergraduate Records: Final Exam Schedules site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Content Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In [class name], all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include [list topics]. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of [subject/major], and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Trigger Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In [class name], we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics include [list topics]. Each time this topic appears in a reading or unit, it is marked on the syllabus. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of [subject/major], and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Incompletes and Late Assignments

All assignments are to be submitted/turned in by the beginning of the class session when they are due—including assignments posted in Canvas. Incompletes will only be assigned in extremely unusual circumstances.

Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the Office of Spiritual Life and Formation.

State Authorization

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma

Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on State Authorization to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.]

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See Academic Policies for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to generate ideas, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy✪

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation

Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. The EAC makes accommodations available to professors at the student's request.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any special accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced a bias incident regarding language, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/title-ix.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an "F" grade.

Loma Writing Center

The Loma Writing Center exists to help all members of the PLNU community cultivate transferable writing skills to engage their academic, professional, personal, and spiritual communities. We work toward this goal by conducting one-on-one consultation sessions, supporting writing education across the PLNU community, and participating in ongoing writing center research.

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you're in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar and polishing final drafts, and more. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see Loma Writing Center webpage or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

- Appointment Calendar: https://plnu.mywconline.com/
- Website: https://www.pointloma.edu/centers-institutes/loma-writing-center
- Email: writingcenter@pointloma.edu