

COURSE OUTLINE – Fall 2026

SW1120(A2): Social Work with Children – 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR: Johnathon Fortune

PHONE:

OFFICE:

E-MAIL:

**OFFICE
HOURS:**

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: This course prepares students for social work practice with children. Students will explore developmental stages from a cross-cultural and social work perspective. Students will also examine the roles of parents and society and an overview of child welfare legislation, policies, and services.

PREREQUISITE(S):

Complete all of the following:

Complete the following:

SW1000 Introduction to the Practice of Social Work 3

A minimum grade of C (GPA 2.0) in the above course.

COREQUISITE(S):

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Perry, B.D. (2017). The Boy Who Was Raised As a Dog (3rd ed.). Basic Books.

Webb, N. B. (2018). Social Work Practice with Children (4th ed.). Guilford Publications, Inc.

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply developmental theories and analyze the impact of trauma, environment, and systemic factors on children.
- Examine diverse child-rearing practices and develop culturally responsive social work strategies.
- Analyze policies, legislation, and services, identifying challenges and proposing solutions within the child welfare system.
- Construct and interpret genograms to assess family dynamics and child wellbeing.
- Address ethical dilemmas, advocate for children's rights, and navigate family and societal roles.
- Synthesize research and present findings effectively through written and group work.

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page

<http://www.transferalberta.alberta.ca>

**** For courses with alpha (letter) grading, a grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

EVALUATIONS:

Assignment	Description	Grade	Due Date
Assignment 1	Understanding Trauma in Children	20%	October 2nd
Assignment 2	In Class Case Study x2 with reflection papers	20%	October 16th and October 30th
Assignment 3	Genogram	20%	Nov 6 th
Assignment 4	Cultural Considerations in Child welfare	30%	Dec 1, 3, or 8th
Participation	Students will submit a 1-page paper on participation in class	10%	December 9th

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most institutions will not accept your course for transfer credit **IF** your grade is **less than C-**.

Grading Chart

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100	C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94	C	2.0	63-66

A-	3.7	80-84		C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79		D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76		D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72		F	0.0	00-49

Note: A minimum grade of C- in SW1000 is required as a prerequisite for SW1120. The Social Work Diploma program requires a minimum grade of C- in all SW courses to successfully complete the program.

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Sept. 10			
Sept. 15/17	Challenge of meeting children's needs; challenges for practitioners in helping children	Chapter 1&2 SW Practice with Children	
Sept. 22/24	Building relationships with all relevant systems; the biopsychosocial assessment of the child	Chapter 3,4, SW Practice with Children	
Sept. 29/Oct. 1	Connecting, planning interventions, and tracking progress	Chapter 5 SW Practice with Children	Assignment 1 due October 2
Oct. 6/8	Helping the family help their child Igniting spiritual fires Colonial Past in social Work	Chapter 6, SW Practice with Children The Mothering Project - APIN - Adolescent Parent Interagency Network Chapter 6 Growing a child	Assignment 2 class discussion - reflection paper for first discussion due October 16th
Oct. 13/15	Group work with children; school based interventions	Chapter 8, 9 SW Practice with Children	
Oct. 20/22	Children living in kinship and foster home placements; children in	Ch 10, 11 SW Practice with Children	Assignment 2 class discussion - reflection paper for second discussion due October 30th

	single parent, divorcing and blended families		
Oct. 27/29	Children in families affected by illness and death; Children in substance-using families	Chapter 12, 13 SW Practice with Children	
Nov. 3/5	Child victims and witness of family and community violence Genograms overview	Chapter 14 SW Practice with Children Home Fire Video	Genograms Assignment 3 overview
Nov. 10/12	Winter Break – No Class		
Nov. 17/19	Genograms	Provided in class	Assignment 3 due November 20th
Nov. 24/26	Miyawata Family Teachings on Turtle Island	Chapter 2 Growing a Child	
Dec. 1/3	Immigrant and Refugee Children	Chapter 16 SW Practice with Children	Presentations
Dec. 8	The impact of a changing world on practice with and for children	Chapter 17 SW Practice with Children	Presentations

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Since both the lectures and in class discussion cover a significant amount of material, attending all classes is highly recommended to ensure success and preparedness for the practicum, as this course is a prerequisite for it. If you are not able to attend all classes we may not be able to assess your suitability for practicum. **A 5% late penalty will be given for each day an assignment is late**

It is expected that each student show up for class, if they miss more than 3 classes they risk losing out on important information.

A minimum of 3 references is expected in all written assignments and presentations.

Assignment 1: Understanding Trauma in Children (20%)

Students will explore the effects of trauma on children's mental health and behavior, analyze the role of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and apply social work interventions to support affected children. Research Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Define ACEs and explain their significance in child development. Explore how ACEs affect brain development, emotional regulation, and social behavior. Examine the long-term effects of trauma on health, education, and relationships. Select a case study (from research, media, or a fictional scenario) of a child who has experienced trauma. Provide background on the child's experiences, including family dynamics, social environment, and support systems. Identify signs and symptoms of trauma in the child's behavior and emotional well-being. Discuss the child's needs based on their trauma history and risk factors. Identify evidence-based social work interventions, such as trauma-informed care, play therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), or family support services. Explore the role of resilience and protective factors in mitigating trauma's impact. Consider ethical and cultural considerations when working with traumatized child. This will be showcased through a 7–8-page paper utilizing APA formatting.

Assignment 2: Child Development Case Study – In-Class Work 1 & 2 (20%)

This assignment will take place during **two scheduled classes throughout the semester**. Each class will focus on a different case from Bruce D. Perry and Maia Szalavitz's *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*.

All students will participate in both case study activities.

During each of the two classes, students will be divided into small groups. Each group will be assigned a case from the book and will work together to analyze the child's development using concepts and theories discussed in class.

Groups will discuss:

- The child's cognitive, emotional, social, and relational development.
- Important experiences in the child's developmental history.
- Behaviours or responses that may be understood in the context of the child's experiences.
- How a child development theory, such as Piaget, Erikson, Bronfenbrenner, attachment theory, or another relevant theory, can help explain the child's development and behaviour.
- Environmental and social factors that have affected the child's development and well-being.
- Risk factors, strengths, relationships, and supports in the child's life.
- What social workers should consider when supporting this child and their family.

Sharing With the Class

At the end of the small-group discussion, **each group will briefly share its main observations with the class**. This is an informal class discussion rather than a formal presentation. Students do not need to prepare slides or a separate presentation.

The purpose of sharing is to compare perspectives and consider how different theories and social work lenses can lead to different understandings of the same child.

Individual Reflection

After each in-class case study, **each student will submit an individual 1–2 page reflection** based on the case, their small-group discussion, and the larger class discussion.

The reflection should address:

- What stood out to you about the child's development?
- How did applying a developmental theory help you understand the child's behaviour or experiences?
- Did anything from your group or the larger class discussion change or challenge your initial understanding of the case?
- What did this case teach you about working with children and families from a social work perspective?

How the Two Activities Work

Students will complete this process **twice during the semester**, using a different case from *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog* each time:

In-Class Work 1 – 10%

Case Study + Small-Group Discussion + Class Sharing + Individual Reflection

In-Class Work 2 – 10%

New Case Study + Small-Group Discussion + Class Sharing + Individual Reflection

There are **no formal group presentations**. All students participate in both activities and submit **two individual reflections in total**.

Total Value: 20% of final grade

Assignment 3: Genogram and Family Dynamics in a Dyad (20%)

This assignment has **three parts: an individual genogram, a partner discussion, and an individual written paper**. Each student will create and analyze their **own family genogram** and then work with a classmate to explore how family structures, relationships, patterns, and experiences can influence childhood development and well-being.

Part 1: Create Your Individual Genogram

Each student will independently create a **three-generation genogram of their own family system** (e.g., self, parents/caregivers, and grandparents).

Your genogram should include family members and relationships and may include relevant information such as:

- Family structures and significant relationships
- Important life events or transitions
- Relationship patterns or family dynamics
- Mental health or substance use concerns
- Intergenerational trauma
- Parenting or caregiving patterns

- Sources of strength, resilience, and support
- Other family experiences that may be relevant to understanding your family system

Use appropriate genogram symbols to represent family members, relationships, and other relevant information. Genograms may be hand-drawn or created using a digital tool such as GenoPro, Canva, or Word.

Students are encouraged to reflect thoughtfully on their family systems but are **not expected to include information they are uncomfortable documenting or sharing.**

Part 2: Partner Discussion

After completing your individual genogram, you will be paired with another student for a discussion.

Each student will take a turn sharing their genogram and discussing aspects of their family system **to the extent that they are comfortable doing so.**

Together, consider:

- What patterns do you notice within your family systems?
- What family experiences may have influenced childhood development and well-being?
- What strengths, protective factors, or examples of resilience are present?
- Are there patterns that appear across generations?
- What similarities and differences do you notice between your two family systems?
- How might family structure, relationships, values, culture, parenting, communication, or coping strategies contribute to these similarities and differences?

The purpose of the partner discussion is **not to assess or analyze your partner or their family.** Instead, it provides an opportunity to hear another perspective, recognize the diversity of family experiences, and consider how family systems influence children's development.

Part 3: Individual Paper

Following the partner discussion, **each student will independently write and submit their own paper** using APA formatting. Your paper should draw primarily from your own genogram and reflections while incorporating what you learned through the partner discussion.

Your paper should:

- Summarize key patterns, strengths, and challenges you identified within your own genogram.
- Analyze how family dynamics, such as attachment, communication, family roles, intergenerational trauma, parenting, or resilience, may have influenced childhood development and well-being.
- Compare and contrast aspects of your family experiences with those shared by your partner, while respecting their privacy and avoiding identifying or unnecessarily personal information.
- Reflect on what you learned from the experience about working with children and families in social work practice.
- Discuss how understanding family systems can inform social work assessment, intervention, and culturally responsive practice.
- Conclude with insights or questions that emerged for you about family systems, intergenerational patterns, cycles of change, or approaches to supporting children within their family contexts.

Each student is responsible for creating their own genogram, participating in the partner discussion, and submitting their own individual paper.

Assignment 4: Cultural Considerations in Child Welfare – Group Assignment (30%)

Students will work in groups to explore how cultural values, traditions, and systemic barriers impact child welfare interventions. The goal is to develop culturally responsive social work strategies that respect diverse family practices while ensuring child well-being. Form groups of 2-5 students.. Each group will select a cultural community (e.g., Indigenous, African American, Latinx, South Asian, Middle Eastern, etc.). Research child-rearing practices, community values, and historical or systemic challenges in child welfare. Investigate traditional parenting approaches, family structures, and support systems within the chosen culture. Identify common challenges in child welfare, including cultural misunderstandings, biases, or systemic inequities. Explore real-world cases or policies affecting children from this cultural background. Propose strategies for social workers to engage with families in culturally competent ways. Consider culturally appropriate interventions, strengths-based approaches, and advocacy efforts. Students will then create a presentation no more than 20 minutes and will allow 5 additional minutes for questions and discussion (total of 25 minutes). The group will also provide a one-page handout/infographic for their classmates and instructor to view.

Participation (10%)

Active participation is an essential component of professional learning in social work. Engaging in discussions, skill practice, and collaborative learning supports the development of self-awareness, communication skills, and ethical practice. This assignment encourages students to reflect on their engagement and growth throughout the course.

Throughout the semester, students are expected to:

- Attend class regularly and arrive on time.
- Contribute meaningfully to discussions, skill-building activities, and breakout sessions.
- Demonstrate respect, curiosity, and professionalism in group interactions.
- Provide and receive constructive feedback with peers.

At the end of the semester, submit a one-page reflection (approximately 300–400 words) that addresses the above expectations and give yourself a score of 1 out of 10.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/polytechnic-leadership/policies-directory>.

****Note:** all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: