Childhood and Families in Difficult Circumstances

Code: 102582
Credits: 6

2026/2027

Degree programme	Type	Course
Psychology	OP	4

Contact lecturer

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Teaching staff

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Group languages

You can consult this information at the end of the document.

Prerequisites

No prerequisites and / or knowledge required to follow the subject correctly.
The students are asked for a minimum knowledge of the Spanish language to facilitate the monitoring of the classes.

Objectives

Contemporary family structures are increasingly diverse and complex, encompassing single-parent, same-sex parent, blended, and transnational families, among others. Many families also face challenging social circumstances, including social exclusion, the weakening of community support networks, unemployment, economic hardship, neglect, and other adverse conditions that may affect child development.

This course provides both the theoretical foundations and practical tools required to understand and intervene in these situations from an eco-systemic and psychodynamic perspective, with particular emphasis on cases of intrafamilial child maltreatment.

The teaching team is composed of experienced professionals working in the field of child protection and family intervention in Catalonia. Teaching is therefore strongly practice-oriented, combining theoretical sessions with seminars based on real clinical and professional cases.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

a) Analyse the impact of adverse social contexts on human development.

b) Understand family dynamics from both eco-systemic and psychodynamic perspectives.

c) Identify key communication processes and their main difficulties within family systems.

d) Apply the acquired knowledge to the assessment and analysis of cases of intrafamilial child maltreatment through real-life case studies.

e) Understand the role of psychologists in psycho-social and educational intervention with children and families.

Learning outcomes

1. Relate the different socio-historical and cultural factors that enable development in general, of emotional nature and of gender.
2. Analyse the relationship between the family system and other related systems.
3. Analyse the interactions within the family groups considering the generational, gender and culture perspective.
4. Apply theoretical concepts in the analysis cases.
5. Describe the processes and stages of individual development and family groups.
6. Recognise and analyse the psychological and social mechanisms for addressing the vital tasks according to the stages and processes of development.
7. Link the data to the theoretical approach adopted to articulate the data obtained with the intervention to be performed.
8. Assess the results of an evaluation process.
9. Assess the possible impact that evaluations have on the people evaluated.
10. Propose suggestions for improvement of those assessments.
11. Identify elements of functional and dysfunctional communication.
12. Make proposals for improving communication processes.
13. Show an open disposition and a favourable attitude to cooperation.
14. Identify the elements that influence communication and organization of work.
15. Make proposals for improving teamwork
16. Use appropriate language and expression to facilitate understanding of the reports by the recipients.
17. Pay special attention to age and cultural identification of the persons to whom the reports are addressed.
18. Use adequate tools for communication.
19. Work in a team.
20. Apply knowledge, skills and acquired values critically, reflexively and creatively.
21. Explain the explicit or implicit deontological code in your area of knowledge.
22. Critically analyse the principles, values and procedures that govern the exercise of the profession.
23. Assess the impact of the difficulties, prejudices and discriminations that actions or projects may involve, in the short or long term, in relation to certain persons or groups.
24. Propose projects and actions that are in accordance with the principles of ethical responsibility and respect for fundamental rights and obligations, diversity and democratic values.
25. Identify the principal forms of sex- or gender-based inequality and discrimination present in society.
26. Assess how stereotypes and gender roles impact professional practice.
27. Communicate in an inclusive manner avoiding the use of sexist or discriminatory language.
28. Identify situations in which a change or improvement is needed.
29. Analyse a situation and identify its points for improvement.
30. Propose new experience-based methods or alternative solutions.
31. Propose ways to evaluate projects and actions for improving sustainability.

Contents

BLOCK 1. Understanding Child Development in Context

Topic 1. Child Development in Contexts of Adversity

Topic 2. The Family as a Developmental Context

Topic 3. Attachment, Bonding, and the Construction of the Internal World

BLOCK 2. Understanding Family Relationships and Childhood Symptoms

Topic 4. The Family as an Evolving System

Topic 5. Communication, Family Dynamics, and Symptoms

Topic 6. A Psychodynamic Understanding of Childhood Symptoms

BLOCK 3. Child Protection and Intervention with Children and Families

Topic 7. Child Maltreatment and Child Protection Concerns

Topic 8. Child Sexual Abuse

Topic 9. Child Protection Systems

Topic 10. Clinical Assessment and Decision-Making

Topic 11. Intervention with Children and Families

Learning activities and methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
1/12 group: participated in a clinical session	24	0.96	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
small group tutorials	21	0.84	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
readings, preparation and presentation of works	93	3.72	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
Seminars, small groups	12	0.48	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

This course is organised around a range of teaching and learning activities, structured into two main formats:

- Lectures: Whole-class sessions introducing the key theoretical concepts of the course and linking them to practical examples drawn from real clinical and professional cases.

- Seminars (mandatory): Small-group sessions in which students will work with case studies and selected readings to develop clinical interviewing skills from eco-systemic and psychodynamic perspectives.

Supervised activities consist of the supervision of group assignments. These sessions provide ongoing guidance throughout the learning process and are conducted in small groups.

Independent learning activities include required readings, individual study, and further exploration of the course content. Students are also expected to prepare course assignments and study for the final examination.

Annotation: within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continuous assessment activities

Title	Weight	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Evidence 2: group work where students will have to apply the theoretical concepts with the analysis of a case.	35%	0	0	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30
Evidence 3: Group project on a systemic circular interview protocol based on a real case.	30%	0	0	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
Exam (first assessment period)	35%	0	0	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31

Assessment Components

Assessment 1 - Written Examination (40%)

A written examination consisting of multiple-choice questions and short essay questions.

Assessment 2 - Group Assignment (30%)

Students will work in groups to apply the theoretical concepts covered in the course to the analysis of a real case.

Assessment 3 - Group Assignment (30%)

Group submission of a systemic circular interviewing protocol.

Evidence Code Name Weight Format Authors/timing Feedback

EV 1	Exam	40%	Exam	individual/	week 7	week 12
EV 2	Analysis of a case	30%	Written	Group /	week 19	week 21
EV 3	Systemic circular interview guide	30%	Written	Group /	week 18	week 21

Assessment Regulations

This course does not offer a single-assessment option.

In accordance with the assessment regulations of the Faculty of Psychology, students will pass the course through continuous assessment only if they achieve both:

- a minimum overall final grade of 5.0/10, and
- a minimum grade of 4.0/10 in each on-campus assessment activity that contributes 20% or more to the final continuous assessment grade.

Failure to meet these requirements, together with any additional assessment criteria established for the course, will result in a maximum final grade of 4.5/10 being recorded on the student's academic transcript.

Attendance at all seminars is mandatory. Absences may be compensated by completing an alternative assignment agreed upon with the teaching team.

In accordance with Article 266.9 of the UAB Academic Regulations, a student who has not provided sufficient evidence of learning may be awarded a Not Assessed grade. For this course, this applies to students who fail to submit any of the three assessment components, fail to attend all seminars (or complete the corresponding make-up activity), or fail to participate in at least one role-playing activity.

Translations of on-campus assessment activities will only be provided if the requirements established in Article 263 of the UAB Academic Regulations are met and the corresponding request is submitted electronically through the official e-form. Further information is available on the Faculty website.

Restricted Use of Artificial Intelligence

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is permitted only for support purposes, such as literature and information searches, proofreading, or translation.

Students must clearly identify any sections of their work generated using AI tools, specify the technologies used, and include a critical reflection on how these tools influenced both the development process and the final outcome of the assignment.

Failure to disclose the use of AI in an assessed activity will be considered a breach of academic integrity and may result in a partial or total reduction of the grade for the assignment, or more severe disciplinary measures in cases of serious misconduct.

Resit Assessment

Students will be eligible for the resit assessment provided that they:

- have completed all assessment components of the course; and
- have obtained a final grade below 5.0 but equal to or above 3.5.

Only Assessment 1 (Written Examination) and Assessment 2 (Group Assignment) are eligible for resit.

The mark obtained in the resit assessment will replace the original mark for the corresponding assessment component, and the final course grade will be recalculated using the same weighting criteria as those applied in the continuous assessment.

Individual circumstances will be considered by the teaching team during scheduled office hours.

Students enrolled in the course for a second or subsequent time will not be assessed through a single non-recoverable comprehensive examination.

For further information on the assessment regulations of the Faculty of Psychology, please refer to:

https://www.uab.cat/web/estudiar/graus/graus/avaluacions-1345722525858.html

Bibliography

Core Bibliography

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Complementary Bibliography

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Software

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Course groups and languages

The information provided is provisional until November 30. After this date, you will be able to consult the language of each group through this link. To access the information, you will need to enter the course CODE

Type of teaching	Group	Language	Semester	Shift
(TE) Theory	1	Spanish	second semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	5	Spanish	second semester	afternoon
(SEM) Seminars	111	Spanish	second semester	morning-mixed
(SEM) Seminars	112	Spanish	second semester	morning-mixed
(SEM) Seminars	511	Spanish	second semester	afternoon
(SEM) Seminars	512	Spanish	second semester	afternoon