NYU SILVER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

CHAI Center for Health and Aging Innovation

**Healthy Aging Specialization**
**NYU Silver School of Social Work**

The Healthy Aging Specialization at NYU Silver aims to build a strong cadre of social work scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and advocates to maximize opportunities for health and longevity for individuals and society. Students will gain expert understanding of aging in the United States, policies and programs that impact diverse populations, and an introduction to global aging and cultural contexts. All students will gain foundational and advanced understanding of theories, research, policies, and programs that bring younger and older generations together to solve critical issues, such as ending ageism and other forms of prejudice; social isolation; housing and economic security; and mental health. Another unique feature is that students gain a strong foundational understanding of key concepts in child and youth development (e.g., trauma informed practice). Students will learn about the unique needs and effective modes of social work practice grounded in theory and evidence to use with individuals, families, and groups across the lifespan. Across these courses, intergenerational theories, critical race theory, intersectionality, standpoint theory, anti-oppressive practices, and social justice are the hallmarks of the Silver curriculum to work competently and with humility across communities. The Healthy Aging Specialization has six main components:

1. **Academic courses** that bolster knowledge in aging and intergenerational theories, research, policies, and programs.
2. **Practicum placements in the second year** with an emphasis on aging and/or intergenerational practice.
3. **Seminars** to introduce students to experts in the field and to expand your social network.
4. **Mentors** we will identify leading scholars and practitioners in the area of intergenerational programming to mentor these students and expand their knowledge, social capital, and cultural awareness;
5. **Capstones** will accumulate different perspectives on intergenerational social work practice with presentations ranging from the micro to the macro. Capstones will span theoretical conceptualizations of a project to real-world demonstrations of a project that a student completes while at Silver;
6. **Stipends** are awarded to students by application. More information on this can be found on page 2.

Information Sessions will be held online on:

1. January 9th, 2024 from 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
   Meeting ID: 976 8527 9075
   Meeting Link: https://nyu.zoom.us/j/97685279075
2. February 5th, 2024 from 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
   Meeting ID: 929 8549 0521
   Meeting Link: https://nyu.zoom.us/j/92985490521

Please note, the due date for applications for most students is **February 1st**; for 16-month students, the due date is **March 1st**. Application materials must be sent by email to: Allison Merz (amm1554@nyu.edu), Professors Ernest Gonzales (geg2000@nyu.edu) and Peggy Morton (peggy.morton@nyu.edu).

**To apply, students must:**

1. Be in good academic standing.
2. Indicate interest in this specialization on the Specialized Practice Paperwork.
3. Submit a current resume.
4. Submit one (1) professional reference.
5. Submit a 1-page Personal Statement of Interest (detailing any previous experience with the field of aging and/or intergenerational programming, plus describing your professional interest in this area).
6. Optional: Please submit a 1-page essay to be eligible for a stipend (more information below).

**Applying for a Stipend**.

With the generous support of The Eisner Foundation, we are able to provide stipends to students in the Healthy Aging Specialization. The purpose of the stipend is to increase affordability, accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to recruit students who are passionate about intergenerational work. Students interested in applying for a stipend are asked to submit an additional one (1) page single-spaced, statement with the rest of the Specialization application materials. Please discuss your experience and/or interest with intergenerational research/practice/advocacy/policy, and how this stipend would impact your ability to achieve your professional goals.

**Questions?**

Please reach out to Allison Merz (amm1554@nyu.edu) with any questions.

**2023 Cohort Student Perspectives**.

Below are a few quotes that describe students' motivation to this specialization:

> *"My interest in this field is driven by my desire to understand the biological, psychological and social changes that occur during the aging process. My goal is to…help the elderly and their families navigate through the complexities of aging. I believe the healthy aging specialization will help me accomplish this."* –A. Mao
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> *"Two years ago, my 79-year-old father fell and was unable to get up on his own. Troubled by the injustice of the Medicare coverage gap, I began to explore the field of aging through my MSW. I would like to continue learning in the Healthy Aging Specialization about aging issues as they arise in clinical and policy work."* –M. Office
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> *"I want to combine these passions of mine, working with younger children and with older adults. I want to be in this Specialization to strengthen my knowledge, to listen and participate in seminars, and engage with peers who have similar interests. There are so many different ideas that I have for myself as a future social worker and believe that having a healthy aging specialization will help me grow exponentially."*–K. Handler

Below, please find courses students take to gain the necessary skills to acquire the Healthy Aging Specialization.

| Year 1 – Courses | | | |
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| **Semester** | **Title** | **Credits** | **Description** |
| **Fall** | **Human Behavior in the Social Environment I** | **3** | This course incorporates a lifespan perspective of human development theories from pre-natal to midlife. |
| | **Diversity, Racism, Oppression, and Privilege** | **3** | Intersectionality and standpoint theories allow students to learn how multiple identities, including age, set the stage for advantage and disadvantage in the United States. |
| | Practicum I | 4 | Students learn a variety of professional social work roles and how to work with individuals, couples, families, agencies, and communities through the use of modalities that are appropriate to the agency setting. |
| | Social Work Practice I | 4 | The Generalist Practice practicum placement provides the opportunity for students to integrate the knowledge and practice the skills learned in every Generalist Practice course. |
| | Social Welfare Programs and Policies I | 3 | Students will learn about the major social policies and programs that affect people's well-being or quality of life and various aspects of social service delivery. |
| | **Total Credits:** | **17** | |
| **Spring** | **Human Behavior in the Social Environment II** | **3** | The focus of this course is on mid to later life and as such, will incorporate a focus on healthy and innovative aging, grounded in theories of development. |
| | Social Work Research I | 3 | This course covers basic research concepts and methods, with the goal of preparing students to be critical consumers of research for social work practice. |
| | Practice with Groups | 3 | This course provides students with knowledge and skills for beginning, middle, and ending stages of evidence-based social work practice with groups. |
| | Practicum II | 4 | Students learn a variety of professional social work roles and how to work with individuals, couples, families, agencies, and communities through the use of modalities that are appropriate to the agency |

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| | Social Work Practice II | 3 | The Generalist Practice practicum placement provides the opportunity for students to integrate the knowledge and practice the skills learned in every Generalist Practice course. |
| | **Total Credits:** | **16** | |

| Year 2 | | | |
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| **Fall** | **Elective: Theories and Issues in Aging** | 3 | A theoretical based course on psychosocial perspectives on aging in the United States. |
| | **Social Work Practice III** | | This course focuses on building and deepening assessment and intervention skill sets, incorporating theory and evidence-based practice models that are used in clinical practice with individuals and families. |
| | **Practicum III** | 4 | Students will be at a social work agency with aging and/or intergenerational programming and practice. |
| | Human Behavior in the Social Environment III | 3 | This course introduces students to the theoretical and empirical knowledge base that underlies contemporary concepts of mental health and illness. |
| | Social Work Research II | 3 | In Social Work Research II, students learn to apply the basic concepts and methods taught in Social Work Research I for the evaluation of practice and programs. |
| | **Total Credits:** | **16** | |
| **Spring** | **Advanced Social Policy in Aging** | 3 | This course introduces historical, current, and future policies (federal, state, municipal) related to aging and advocacy for policy change. |
| | **Elective: ie, Sexual and Gender Minorities: Past, Present, Future** | 3 | Students will take an elective specifically focusing on social work theory, policy, or practice related to youth and young adults. |
| | **Elective: ie, Community Organizing** | 3 | This course prepares students for trauma informed evidence-based practice by enhancing students' empathic understanding of trauma from the child's perspective and learning how trauma influences the child's life (18 months to 13 years), from a variety of ethnic and racial groups representing urban and rural environments. |
| | **Practicum Instruction IV** | 4 | Students will continue in the aging and/or intergenerational practicum placement and incorporate theories learned during the practicum seminar. |

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| | Social Work Practice IV | 3 | This course prepares students to synthesize what they have learned about social work values, ethics, and advanced social work practice roles; to consolidate their social work identity and prepare for professional pathways; and to terminate from their clients, practicum placement, and student status, as they enter the social work profession. |
| | **Total Credits:** | **16** | |
| **Total Credits Across 2 Years: 65** | | | |

Students take Theories and Issues in Aging and Advanced Social Policy as a core part of the curriculum. They can then choose two 3-credit electives:

- Theories and Issues in Aging (required)
- Advanced Social Policy in Aging (required)
- Clinical Practice with Aging Populations
- Clinical Practice with Children and Their Families
- Social Work Practice with Traumatized Children and Adolescents
- Core Concepts in Child and Adolescent Trauma
- Community Organization
- End Ageism
- Political Social Work for Advocacy and Social Change
- Practice with Spanish Language/Latino Families (in Spanish)
- Social Work Practice with Immigrants and Refugees (online)
- Clinical Practice with Substance Abusers & Their Families
- Current Approaches to Trauma
- Depression: Conceptual Issues
- Homelessness in Perspective
- Introduction to Art Therapy
- Exercising Leadership in the Non-Profit and Public Sectors
- Sexual and Gender Minorities: Past, Present, Future

A few models are below. Students are encouraged to tailor their elective choices to their professional interests. For example:

- A student interested in working with Queer older adults in an intergenerational context can take
    - Theories and Issues in Aging [required]
    - Advanced Social Policy in Aging [required]
    - Sexual and Gender Minorities: Past, Present, Future [elective]
    - Community Organizing [elective]

- Another student who is interested in intergenerational work overlapping children, trauma, and the arts could take:
    - Theories and Issues in Aging [required]
    - Advanced Social Policy in Aging [required]
    - Core Concepts in Child and Adolescent Trauma [elective]
    - Introduction to Art Therapy [elective]

- A third student could focus their attention on healthy aging in the context of homelessness and substance issues:
    - Theories and Issues in Aging [required]
    - Advanced Social Policy in Aging [required]
    - Homelessness In Perspective [elective]
    - Clinical Practice with Substance Abusers & Their Families [elective]

Below are course descriptions to the electives:

- **Advanced Social Policy in Aging –** Advanced Social Policy courses examine social problems from the perspective of their impact on individuals, families and communities, focusing on at-risk populations in the context of an urban environment. The course builds on the policy content offered in MSWPF-GS 2003 and links policy to practice and research skills that have been developed. Emphasis is placed on the link between social and economic justice and issues relating to diversity. This course focuses on policies and programs for older adults, including the multiple constituencies involved in and affected by them. The course covers the history of aging policy in the United States including; processes of policy development, implementation and analysis; and the current status of the aging network, income security, health, employment, housing and long-term care policies and programs. The first part of the course is an examination of the policy making cycle, inclusive of social problem definition, policy formulation, implementation and critical analysis of policy. A detailed section on evaluation of policies as they affect societal structures, communities, agencies, clients and practitioners is then discussed. Finally, a major section of the course presents strategies for practitioners to influence policies and promote change at the client level, the agency level, the community level and the broader society.

- **Theories and Issues in Aging** – This course examines a broad range of theories and contemporary issues in aging that relate to social work practice with older adults and their families. Domains of inquiry include biological, psychological, and sociological perspectives of aging and older adults. There is a critical examination of the social constructions of old age, social work values and ethics, and social work practice within an aging society at the individual, community, and institutional level. Specific consideration is given to heterogeneity of the older adult and aging population in the areas of age, gender, race and ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religious, physical or mental disability, and national origin. Additionally, the diversity of experiences, activities, roles, and responsibilities of older adults are evaluated as they relate to aging theories and issues such as productive aging, intergenerational relationships, and cultural norms. Social and economic justice, evidence-based practice, and capacity building are highlighted throughout the course. Students will participate in community/applied learning projects as an integral part of this course. Professional communication skills will be practiced. Throughout the course, we will discuss how to apply the tenets of evidence-based practice and prevention to the theories and issues that impact aging.

- **Clinical Practice with Aging Populations** – This course provides an introduction to theoretical frameworks and practice of clinical social work interventions with older adults and their families. It is designed to familiarize students with the biological, psychological and social aspects of the aging process. Emphasis is placed on understanding late-life problems and mental disorders, on developing skills in diagnostic assessment, and on formulating and implementing treatment plans. Students are expected to develop proficiency with the core competencies in geriatric social work, including the provision of comprehensive assessment and intervention skills.

- **Core Concepts in Child and Adolescent Trauma** – This course will prepare MSW students for trauma-informed evidence-based practice by enhancing students' empathic understanding of trauma from the child's perspective and how trauma influences the child's life. The course focus is on the impact of trauma on the child and family and provides a foundation for assessment, crisis intervention, and intervention. The curriculum is based on twelve guiding core concepts developed about trauma and utilizes a problem-based learning approach, in which in-depth case studies about the impact of trauma are presented so that students experience "real" cases as they actually unfold in practice. The cases focus on children and adolescents, aged 18 months to 17 years, from a variety of ethnic and racial groups representing urban, suburban and rural environments and illustrate a number of different trauma types, including interpersonal trauma such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and witness to both stranger and domestic violence. The Problem-Based Learning approach used in this course involves students in active, collaborative, team-oriented self-directed learning.

- **Current Approaches to Trauma** – This course will be an introduction to the assessment and diagnosis of psychological trauma, with an emphasis on its physiology. It will provide an overview of the history of psychology's understanding of traumatic experience and how that has shifted over time. Dissociative disorders, as traumatic sequelae, will be discussed. New diagnostic categories of Complex PTSD and DESNOS, Disorders of Extreme Stress Not Otherwise Specified, will be explained. Then, an in-depth exploration will highlight cutting edge research into current treatment modalities, including body-oriented psychotherapies and EMDR. Vivid clinical case material will be presented and films will be used to illustrate phase-oriented treatment of trauma.

- **Depression: Conceptual Issues** – This intensive course will critically examine selected recent developments and controversies over how depressive disorder and pathological grief are defined, diagnosed, and treated. The emphasis will be on evidence-based practice. Videos will be used wherever possible to learn and critique specific clinical approaches. We will also examine the changes to the diagnosis of mood disorders and grief disorders in DSM-5 and the upcoming DSM-5-TR, and the intense debates that swirled around these diagnostic changes. Readings will draw on both the empirical-research and conceptual-theoretical literature. Theories to be considered tentatively include Interpersonal Psychotherapy, Evolutionary Psychological Approaches, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Behavioral Analysis, Acceptance and Commitment/Mindfulness Therapy, Brief Psychodynamic Therapy, and Complicated Grief Treatment. The format is combined lecture/seminar.

- **Ending Ageism** – Ageism is alive and well. A growing and consistent body of research has documented how ageism and other forms of prejudice and oppression undermine health, educational and employment opportunities, as well as compromises health care delivery across systems of care. Only until recently has evidence begun to support theories for interventions and at key developmental life stages and across the ecological framework. The objectives of this course are to a) incorporate theories and supporting evidence on prejudice and discrimination broadly, with an emphasis on ageism; b) identify psychological, social, organizational, legal, cultural, and developmental theories on how to overcome ageism, inclusive of Standpoint Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Social Justice perspectives; c) propose real-world interventions to overcome ageism. Pedagogical approaches include lectures, discussions, and experiential learning opportunities. Professional communication skills will be practiced. Throughout the course, we will discuss how to apply the tenants of evidence-based practice to the theories and issues that impact aging.

- **Political Social Work for Advocacy & Social Change** – Section 6.04 of the NASW Code of Ethics states that social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure all people have access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs. It also states that social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for social justice. This one-credit elective serves as an introduction to political social work and offers an overview on the role of social workers in the political sphere. Taught by one of the very few social workers currently serving in the New York State Legislature, the course will cover multiple aspects of the political process including running for office, crafting legislation, and utilizing public policy for social change.

- **Exercising Leadership in Nonprofit & Public Sectors** – A key premise of the course is that leadership requires helping communities and organizations make the adaptations needed to thrive and survive in rapidly changing contexts. Effective management must be deployed to preserve successful institutional behaviors whereas leadership is needed to ensure that practices no longer serving organizational or community interests are discarded and that new innovations are pursued to generate greater impact. However, such adaptive work can be extremely challenging when longstanding practices are hardwired into the DNA of organizations through years and even decades of practice. In this context, the work of leadership is about accompanying people through the realities and losses of necessary change while opening them up to the promise of the future. The course will introduce students to a set of tools and strategies for effectively bringing about that change within organizations

and communities, without getting sidelined in the process.

- **Homelessness in Perspective** – This course introduces students to the history and current status of homelessness in the U.S. and abroad focusing on research, practice and policy implications. The course will address the following topics: 1) history and causes of the homeless 'epidemic; 2) the homeless 'industry as understood through the lens of organizational and institutional theories; 3) the rise of Housing First as paradigm shift and the systems changes that have ensued; 3) specific populations including homeless families, youths, and the chronic homeless; 4) best practices in outreach and engagement with homeless persons; 5) homeless policies and drivers of change (legal, advocacy, research); 6) research on homelessness and homeless services in the U.S. and other countries.

- **Practice with Spanish Language/Latino Families** – This one credit intensive explores both clinical and social policy considerations with respect to understanding and treating Spanish Language/Heritage families in the United States. Distinct modules address Basic Values of Respect, Dignity, and "Personalism;" Family and Kinship Organization and Dynamics; Belief Systems of Health and Illness across Ethnicities; Signs and Symptoms of Substance Abuse (includes English and Spanish "street" terms); U.S. and U.N. Immigration Classifications, and Communication Styles: Conducting the Biopsychosocial Interview across Cultures and How to Work with an Interpreter. To facilitate comprehension, students use a downloadable workbook that aids in note-taking. The method of instruction includes lecture, discussion, and role play. This course is taught in Spanish; a level of "fair fluency" is sufficient.

- **Introduction to Art Therapy** – Fundamental principles of art therapy practice will be presented through theoretical discussions and case presentations. Students will learn the historical development of the profession, its distinction from other disciplines and its commonalities to social sciences. This course will examine the art of making processes and products through basic pictorial analysis. Students will study the artistic expression of children, adolescents, adults, and geriatric populations struggling with varied emotional and physical issues in different settings.

- **Work with Sexual and Gender Minorities** – This course aims to prepare students for competency in micro and macro practice with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people by providing a deeper understanding of the history and construction of sexual and gender minority identities and communities around the world. It will also examine the experience of minority stress by members of these populations, including sources of stress as well as sources of support in families and communities. Intersectionality, social and economic justice, and a global perspective will provide a framework for understanding these issues.

- **Social Work Practice with Immigrants & Refugees** – This practice elective is designed to help students address the special needs and problems faced by immigrant and refugee clients and communities, and to develop culturally competent knowledge, skills, and values that will improve delivery of culturally sensitive and culturally responsive services for refugees and displaced persons, both domestically and internationally. This course will examine social work practice in relation to major themes, including the refugee experience; the impact of relocation on individuals, families and communities; and the psychological ramifications of war trauma. This practice elective is designed to help students address the special needs and problems faced by immigrant and refugee clients and communities, and to develop culturally competent knowledge, skills, and values that will improve delivery of culturally sensitive and culturally responsive services for refugees and displaced persons, both domestically and internationally. This course will examine social work practice in relation to major themes, including the refugee experience; the impact of relocation on individuals, families and communities; the psychological ramifications of war trauma and torture; and the phenomenon of human trafficking. Interventions with individuals, families, and communities will be explored across cultures with particularly vulnerable populations. The course will provide an overview of such issues as loss and mourning for homeland; adaptation and coping with a new culture; cross-cultural and inter-ethnic group

conflicts; resettlement and family reunification issues; and a range of worldview perspectives including acculturation and assimilation, biculturalism, marginality, and traditional ethnic identities. The course will emphasize the advocacy and empowerment roles of social workers when addressing U.S. social policies towards immigrants in the wake of 9/11, and in fighting against anti-immigrant policies, sanctions, and discriminatory practices.

- **Social Work Practice with Traumatized Adolescents** – This elective course offers students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge about traumatic events and life stressors that impact children/adolescents and their families. A bio-psycho-social perspective with emphasis on attachment and emotional regulation is used to prepare students to work with trauma in the context of their family, school, social and support systems Childrens/adolescents coping mechanisms and resiliency are examined, particularly related to children exposed to multiple and severe life stressors. Evidence-based models of treatment and prevention involving the child, family and community will be discussed. Trauma scenarios studied will include but are not limited to: community and family violence and neglect and stressors such as poverty, interpersonal violence, bullying, systemic and historical trauma, illness and loss.