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SW 200.01: Introduction to Social Work Practice

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Social Work 200 - Fall Semester 2002
Introduction to Social Work Practice

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Prerequisites: SW 100

“The philosophy of social work cannot be separated from the prevailing philosophy of a nation, as to how it values people and what importance it sets up in for their welfare. . . Practice is always shaped by the needs of the times, the problems they present, the fears they generate, the solutions that appeal, and the knowledge and skills available.”

--Bertha Capen Reynolds, 1951

Introduction: At its most basic level, social work looks at the interrelatedness of what social theorist C. Wright Mills referred to as “private troubles” and “public issues” (Mills, 1959, *The Sociological Imagination*). Attention to the intersection of private troubles and public issues establishes social work’s uniqueness among other helping professions, and describes the context for its practice. Social work is also unique for its emphasis on social justice and addressing forms of injustice forged through practices of discrimination, inequality, and oppression. Social work roles, practices, and its community and organizational contexts are shaped and influenced by these elements.

Course Description: This course is the first in a series of three practice courses designed to prepare students for direct social work practice. Its primary goal is to present a generalist practice framework and introduce key themes and core concepts and values that incorporate a justice-oriented approach to social work practice. Major organizing themes of the course include: the societal goal of social justice, understanding the human condition, the contextual nature of social work practice, and ways of connecting with people in processes of change. Course readings and activities focus on the development of the basic knowledge, skills, and values of the profession. Students are introduced to a four-phase model for influencing change in diverse contexts. Through a range of experiential learning activities, class members will apply the model, practice skills of listening, relationship building, assessment, and intervention, and evaluate the process and outcomes. This class is experiential in nature and students will be both teaching and learning in the process. Therefore, attendance is vitally important to achieve course objectives.

Course Objectives:

1. Describe social work as a profession, its purpose and goals, and how it differs from other helping professions.

2. Demonstrate an understanding of a generalist approach to social work practice.
3. Articulate the core values of the profession and discuss the challenges and possibilities for realizing the goal of social justice in social work practice.
4. Describe a range of social work perspectives (e.g. strengths, empowerment, ecosystems, feminist, structural) and discuss their differences, commonalities, and contributions.
5. Describe key principles in the NASW Social Work Code of Ethics, identify ethical dilemmas, and reflect on own ethical self-knowledge and stance.
6. Articulate connections between contemporary social work practice and the historical development of the profession.
7. Explain concepts of economic and social justice and their relationship to social work practice.
8. Discuss examples of the contributions to contemporary understandings of diversity, empowerment, and social justice made by social work's progressive foremothers and fathers.
9. Critically reflect on personal experiences, values, and beliefs as they relate to the knowledge, values, and skills base of social work practice.
10. Discuss the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual identity, age, citizenship and other constructions of difference on social work practice with individuals, families, groups, and communities.
11. Discuss key aspects of the organizational context of social work practice and describe strategies for effective practice within the organizational context.
12. Describe how structural arrangements of inequality and practices of oppression and discrimination shape the context of social work practice.
13. Describe elements of a helping relationship and demonstrate competence in use of basic helping skills.
14. Describe phases of a change process and the key understandings, skills, roles, and activities associated with each.
15. Explain purpose and use of the genogram, ecomap, social network map, and other social work assessment tools and critically assess their strengths and limitations.

Course Readings:

Locke, B., Garrison, R. and Winship, J. (1998) *Generalist Social Work Practice: Context, Story, and Partnerships*. Pacific Grove, Ca: Brooks Cole Publishing Company.

Excerpt from: Hilda Satt Polacheck (1991) *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull House Girl*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 49-104. (On reserve at Mansfield Library)

Course Pack of required readings.

Course Assignments and Grading:

Class Engagement (10%): Due to the experiential nature of this class and the reliance on students as both teachers and learners, completion of reading assignments, regular attendance, and class participation are basic expectations. Students will work in pairs and groups to assist one another in the learning process. Students' engagement with the course material will be assessed via in-class discussion and activities and occasional, *unscheduled*, in-class writing exercises or short homework assignments.

Lessons from History: Due 9/26 (15%)

Contemporary social work has been shaped by a dynamic legacy of people, practice, and possibilities. An appreciation of our professional roots can enrich social work thinking and practice today. This assignment promotes critical reflection on aspects of that history. Students will read following selections.

1) Excerpt from: Hilda Satt Polacheck (1991) *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull House Girl*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 49-104. (On reserve at Mansfield Library)

2) Course Pack #3 Peebles-Wilkins, W. & Frances, E. (1990) Two outstanding black women in social welfare history: Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells-Barnett. *Affilia* 5(4), 87-100.

Students will then write an essay no longer than **three** pages responding to the following questions:

- a) What did the reading teach you about the nature of social work practice?
- b) What did you learn about the qualities of an effective social worker from these examples?
- c) What three lessons for social work practice in 2002 can you draw from the reading?
- d) How would you compare these lessons for practice with those you learned from reading Paulo Freire's article, "A Critical Understanding of Social Work"?

2. First 15-minute Taped Interview: Due 10/10 (10%)

Students will work in pairs outside of class time and take turns interviewing each other about “Why I Want to be a Social Worker.” Students will turn in a tape of themselves as the interviewer and a one-page typed report of what it was like to conduct the interview, the strengths you bring to the interview context, the greatest challenges you faced in conducting the interview, and basic helping skill goals you have for this semester.

Note: Students need to audio record interview. Recorders can be checked out through IMS.

4. Exam: 10/31 (15%)

There will be one in-class exam covering course readings for the first part of the semester.

5. Second 15 minute Taped Interview: 11/21 (10%)

Students will work in pairs outside of class and interview each other on the topic of “My Strengths, Challenges, and Goals as a Developing Social Work Practitioner.” Each student, as the interviewer, will turn in an assessment no longer than 2 typed pages that compares their skills development from the First 15 minute taped interview. Comments should be directed toward those skills addressed during the class lectures, readings, and in-class practice sessions.

Note: Students need to audio record interview. Recorders can be checked out through IMS.

6. Skill-building teams: In-class experiential learning, 10/10 – 11/7 (15%)

Beginning week 6, students will be introduced to a four-phase model for influencing change. Over the course of the next five weeks, students will use the second hour of class on Thursday for an in-class learning lab. Students will be assigned to small groups. Group members will complete specific skill-building exercises related to the four phases and provide one another with constructive feedback. The emphasis here is on participation, practice, and reflection. Attendance and participation is expected. A more detailed description of the skill-building teams will be presented in class.

7. Teaching-learning teams: The Community and Organizational Context of Practice Presentations 12/ 5-12 (15%)

During week 10 class members will be assigned to teams to learn about social work practice in the context of a particular arena of practice (e.g. hospital social work, housing and homelessness, family support and advocacy, child welfare and development, social work and the elderly, welfare advocacy, etc.). Team members will do background research on best practices in the field, learn about a local program and its practices, and give a 30-minute in-class presentation to teach others about this arena of practice. The presentation will include a practice exercise (role play, simulation, etc) that engages other class members in hands-on learning. Teaching-learning presentations will be scheduled for weeks 14 and 15 (Dec 5, 10, 12). A more detailed description of the skill-building teams will be addressed in class.

8. Final take-home essay: Personal Perspective on Social Work: Due 12/20 (10%)

Based on the course material addressed during the semester, and your personal life experience, develop a personal perspective on social work practice. This essay (4 pages) should address the following content areas:

- a) Motivation for Practice: Connecting Personal History and Professional Commitment
- b) The Place of Relationship in Social Work
- c) Beliefs about the Process of Change
- d) Self-Assessment in Light of Social Works Value Base

Determination of final grade:

Percentage	Final Grade
92-100	A
84-91	B
75-83	C
65-74	D
< 65	F

Course Outline and Reading Assignments: Note: assignments and schedule may be modified during the course of the semester.

Week One: 9/3-5 Social Work and Social Justice: Introduction to Practice

Overview of course; a social-justice perspective; key principles of social work
Readings for week one: GSWP, Ch. 1; Course pack #1 Freire (1999), "A Critical understanding of social work, #2, Witkins (1998), "Human rights and social work."

Week Two: 9/10-12 Key Values and Concepts

Social Justice as societal goal; the human condition; ways of connecting people; basic skills. Readings for week two: GSWP Ch. 2, Course Pack #5, Deegan (1990) "Spirit breaking;"#6 Abramson (1996), Reflections on knowing oneself ethically. #34, "White Privilege."

Week Three: 9/ 17-19 Historical Perspective on Social Work Practice

Social work practice in historical context; tensions and contradictions, learning from our foremothers and fathers. Readings for week three: GSWP Ch. 3, Course Pack #3 Peebles-Wilkins & Frances (1990). Reserve reading at Mansfield library (see assignments).

Week Four: 9/24-26 Context and Social Work Practice

A framework for understanding context; community, organizational and interpersonal contexts; political, economic and socio-cultural contexts; questions of difference and diversity. Readings for week four: GSWP Ch. 3 cont. Course Pack # 10 Williams & Ellison (1996) "Culturally informed social work,"#13 (Community Context of

Practice,”#17 “locating Ourselves in Organizational Context,”#21 “Interpersonal Context of Practice,” #35 Heterosexual questionnaire.

Week Five: 10/1-3 Theoretical Perspectives on Practice

Generalist, systems, strengths, and empowerment. Contributions and challenges from structural and feminist perspectives. Theory and questions of difference, power, and positionality. Readings for week five: Course Pack #7 “Defining Theory...,” #8 “Critiquing Theory,” #9 “Generalist Perspective,” #11 “Understanding empowerment practice.”

Week Six: 10/8-10 Creating Change: Introducing the Phase Model

A participatory approach to influencing change; models and language; process and relationship. Skills lab: Basics skills for preparation and engagement. Readings for week six: GSWP Ch. 4, Course Pack #12 “Bridging Difference,” #18, Cohen (1998) “Perceptions of Power,” #19 “Comparing approaches,” #20 “Comparison of pathology and strengths,” #37 “Checklist for assessing first contacts.”

Week Seven: 10/15-17 Telling and Exploring the Story

Setting the stage; reframing diagnosis and assessment; the teaching-learning process; Knowledge, skills and values for exploring the story; power in the helping relationship; tools for assessment and co-learning. Skills lab: assessment and understanding. Readings for week seven: GSWP Ch. 5, Course Pack #15 “Diagnosis and Analysis,” #22 “A short list of Interpersonal Communications Skills,” #23 “Case example,” #24 Stevens (1996) “Welfare Organizing Saved My Life,” #38 “How Are You Feeling Today?” #39 “Basic Attending/Listening Skills.”

Week Eight: 10/22-24 Describing a Preferred Reality

Lending vision; planning and participation; trust building; confronting barriers; Critical reflection on self, relationship, and process; goal setting and contracting Skills lab: knowledge of resources and possibilities, creating an atmosphere for change; honoring resistance; timing and pacing: Skills lab: brainstorming, mediating, decision-making, commitments and responsibilities. Readings for week eight: GSWP Ch. 6, Course Pack # 25 “The Story of WEEL,” #27 “On becoming an effective teacher-learner,” #28 “Maricela’s Story,” #40-44 (series of skills and techniques resources)

Week Nine: 10/29-31 Making Plans and Dreams Real

Action and accompaniment; social worker as facilitator, animator, broker, mediator, advocate; Accessing resources; challenging and changing oppressive practices and structures; families and social work practice. Skills lab: teaching-learning, keeping track of process and relationship; demands for work; revisiting plans; ongoing assessment Creating new possibilities. Readings for week nine: GSWP Ch. 7, Course Pack #31 “Importance of Teamwork,” #36 “Engagement, Discovery, etc..” #45-48 (series of principles and techniques for working with families). Exam on 10/31.

Week Ten: 11/5-7 Evaluating Outcomes

Critical reflection, evaluation, and celebration; endings and transitions; supporting and maintain successes; use of research to inform practice and vice versa. Skills lab: tools and methods for evaluation. Readings for week ten: GSWP Ch. 8, Course Pack #16 Lazzari, Ford, & Haughey (1996) "Making a Difference," #30, "Remembering Al."

Week Eleven: 11/12-14 Organizational Context of Practice

Understanding the organizational story; positionality and organizational context; understanding your organization; creating organizational change. Skills lab: preparing for teaching-learning teamwork. Readings for week eleven: GSWP Ch. 9, Course Pack #29 Cheakalos (2000) "A family of neighbors."

Week Twelve: 11/19-21 Community Context of Practice

Models of community practice; linking local and global issues; recognizing community assets; toward a just society. Skills lab: assessing your community. Readings for week twelve: GSWP Ch. 10, Course Pack #14 Checkoway (1997) Core concepts for community change; #26 Kretzmann & McKnight (1996) "Assets-based community development," (also review #14 and #25 assigned earlier).

Week Thirteen: 11/26 Community context of Practice continued.

Models of community practice, cont. Film: "Community." Skills lab: In-class planning time for teaching-learning teams. No new readings for week thirteen.

Week Fourteen: 12/3-5 Group Work and Community-based Learning

Engaging groups; introduction to mutual aid groups; case study in group work. Readings for Week 14: Course Pack #32 "Engaging Groups (review)," #33, Mather & Rivas (1996), "Deanna's Dilemma." Student teaching-learning presentation on 12/5.

Week Fifteen: 12/10-12 Community-based Learning cont.

Student teaching and learning presentations cont. Final wrap-up and course evaluation on Dec. 12.

Week Sixteen: Final exam week. Final take-home essay exam due on Friday Dec. 20 at 10:10 am.

Course Pack Readings

1. Friere, P. (199). A critical understanding of social work. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*. 1(1), 3-9.
2. Witkin, S. (1998). Human rights and social work. *Social Work*, 43(3), 197-201.
3. Peebles-Wilkins, W. & Frances, E. A. (1990). Two outstanding black women in social welfare history: Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells-Barnett 5(4), 87-100.
4. NASW Code of Ethics (1997)
5. Deegan, P. (1990). Spirit breaking: When the helping professions hurt. *The Humanistic Psychologist*. 18(3), 301-313.
6. Abramson, M. (1996). Reflections on knowing oneself ethically: Toward a working framework for social work practice. *Families in Society* 77(4), 195-201.
7. "Defining Theory and Other Ways of Organizing our Thought"
8. "Critiquing Theory"
9. "The Generalist Perspective in Social Work Practice"
10. Williams, E. & Ellison, F. (1996). Culturally informed social work practice with American Indian clients: Guidelines for non-Indian social workers. *Social Work* 41(2), 147-151.
11. Gutierrez, L., DeLois, K., GlenMaye, L. (1995). Understanding empowerment practice: Building on practitioner-based knowledge. *Families in Society* 76, 534-542.
12. "Bridging Difference:" Skills of Multicultural Practice
13. "Community Context of Practice"
14. Checkoway, B. (1997). Core concepts for community change. In M. Weil (Ed.) *Community Practice: Models in Action* Binghamton, New York: Haworth Press.
15. "Diagnosis and Analysis"
16. Lazzari, M., Ford, H., Haughey, K. (1996). Making a difference: Women of action in the community. *Social Work* 41(2), 197-205.
17. "Locating Ourselves in the Organizational Context.
18. Cohen, M. Perceptions of power in client/worker relationships. *Families in Society* 79, 433-442.
19. Comparing the Problem-Solving Approach and Empowering Approach
20. Comparison of Pathology and Strengths
21. "Interpersonal Context of Practice"
22. "A Short List of Interpersonal Communication Skills"
23. Case Example
24. Stevens, D. (1996) "Welfare Rights Organizing Saved My Life"
25. "The Story of Working for Equality and Economic Liberation (WEEL)"
26. Kretzmann, J. & McKnight, J. (1996). Asset-based community development. *National Civic Review*. 85(4), 23-29.
27. "On Becoming an Effective Teacher-Learner
28. Maricela's Story. From Werner, D. (1987). *Disabled Village Children* Palo Alto: Hesperian Foundation.
29. Cheakalos, C. (2000). A family of neighbors: Brenda Krause Eheart paired foster kids with retirees in a remarkable community. *People Weekly* 6, November, 54, 119+
30. Byington, D. (1996). Remembering Al. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 2, 21-24.
31. "Importance of Teamwork"
32. "Engaging Groups"
33. Mather, J. & Rivas, R. (1996). Deanna's Dilemma. In R. Rivas & G. Hull (Eds.) *Case Studies in Generalist Practice*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
34. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"

35. **Heterosexual Questionnaire**
36. **“Engagement, Discovery, Action, Accompaniment, Evaluation, Reflection, and Celebration.”**
37. **Checklist for Assessing First Contacts.**
38. **How Are You Feelings Today?**
39. **Basic Attending/Listening Skills**
40. **Brainstorming as a Communication Tools and a Skills**
41. **Defusing Skills**
42. **The Negotiating Process**
43. **The Person in Crisis**
44. **Techniques for Developing Relationships**
45. **Practice Principles for Engaging Families**
46. **Potential Family Strengths**
47. **The Role of Hope**
48. **Values and Beliefs of the Family Strength perspective**