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SW 505.01: Foundation and Skills of Integrated Social Work Practice

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**Social Work 505:
Foundation and Skills of Integrated Social Work Practice**

Professor: Maxine Jacobson, Ph.D.
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Phone: 243-6384
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Office Hrs: Thurs – 1:00-3:00 or by appointment
Class Time: Thursday – 11:10-1:00
Prerequisites: Admission to MSW program or permission of instructor

Course Overview

This course is first in a series of five practice courses focusing on bridging theory, values, policy, and practice. The course is an overview of the practice course sequence and begins with an examination of the characteristics of the integrated practice model that ground practice in a social-justice oriented approach. These include conceptualizing work with individuals, families, groups, neighborhoods and organizations within a community context; using strengths- and empowerment-oriented perspectives and alternative approaches informed by critical theory as the foundation for social work practice; bringing a historical perspective to bear on the practice of social work; understanding a range of social work roles such as animator/activator, learner, collaborator, teacher, negotiator, researcher, facilitator, and bricoleur; learning skills of effective teamwork and leadership; and, recognizing the need for citizen participation and collaboration in the decisions that concern their lives as well as the need for comprehensive, integrated services planned and coordinated in partnership with community members.

Course Content

Students will be introduced to an historical perspective and its importance for social work practice. Social work's rich history of tensions, struggles, and contradictions between social control and social change will provide a focus for applying an historical perspective and help students generate critical questions to pose of the profession's history, and also the history of particular social problems, practices and policies. Students will learn about and apply the five key concepts (*meaning, context, power, history, and possibilities*) that form the foundation of integrated practice. They will use these as analytical tools to assess their own practice, the circumstances, events and situations of those they work with, and the theories, perspectives, strategies, techniques and skills of practice.

Students will be introduced to the seven core processes of integrated practice (*engagement, teaching/learning, action, accompaniment, evaluation, critical reflection and celebration*) and the skills and techniques of these processes. Emphasis is placed on establishing collaborative working relationships; understanding how positionality influences the choices one makes regarding practice and interpretations of particular circumstances and situations; critically examining power and its varied meanings and influence on practice; and drawing on the explication of social work in other contexts where celebrating the beauty of our work is an essential element of practice. Students will make use of stories, narratives, case studies and a series of action/reflection exercises that illustrate particular concepts and require students to examine and assess personal awareness and the implications therein for practice.

Relation to Other Courses

This course introduces the integrated practice model and is the foundation for advanced courses in integrated practice taught at more advanced levels.

Course Objectives

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

1. Demonstrate the centrality of a historical perspective to social work practice.
2. Understand the history of the social work profession, its tensions, struggles and contradictions, and the relevance of this history for contemporary practice.
3. Consider the different ways in which social work has been conceptualized in diverse cultural and national contexts and the implications for practice.
4. Demonstrate understanding of an integrated approach to social work thought and action that considers the linkages between the immediate, local context of practice and the larger historical, political, cultural, and social forces shaping context.
5. Define the key themes of justice-oriented integrated practice and apply these as an analytic tool to pose questions of particular circumstances and situation relevant to social work.
6. Critically examine the core values of social work and their development in U.S. and international sites of social work.
7. Compare social worker values in historical and cross-national context, and critically examine the relationship between social work values, human rights, and questions of difference.
8. Understand difference as a key social work concept and use theoretical and practical tools for communication and translation across boundaries of difference.
9. Identify and support spaces for collaborative social participation.
10. Demonstrate the place of theory and theorizing in everyday life and in social work inquiry.
11. Describe and analyze dominant and alternative theoretical frameworks in terms of their strengths, limitations, and adherence to the value base of the profession and attention to issues concerning oppression, difference, and diversity.
12. Understand the core processes of integrated practice (engagement, teaching/learning, action, accompaniment, evaluation, critical reflection and celebration) and their translation into skills and tools that include listening surveys, power analysis, evaluation schemas, popular education, and ethnographic observation.
13. Demonstrate the relationship between processes of and forms of knowledge development and relations of power and the implications for social work practice.
14. Understand and articulate research as a practice process.
15. Understand the principles of social justice work.

Foundation Objectives that Relate to the Course

- Obj. 1 Provide students with analytical skills needed to critically examine the cultural, historical, political, and economic contexts that have shaped the meaning of social work and its practice.
- Obj. 2 Provide students with knowledge and skills of generalist social work practice as a foundation for assessment and intervention with diverse systems and client populations.
- Obj. 3 Introduce students to the integrated practice model and the epistemological and theoretical issues that inform it.
- Obj. 4 Develop students' knowledge of dominant theories of human behavior and social environment, their relationship to social work practice, and the challenges and possibilities posed by alternative perspectives (e.g. feminist and other critical perspectives).
- Obj. 5 Provide students with theoretical perspectives and practice frameworks to understand and address questions of difference and diversity and forms and mechanisms of oppression, inequality, discrimination, with particular attention to special populations in the region.
- Obj. 6 Socialize students to continually assess and evaluate their professional competence and pursue opportunities for self-awareness and professional growth and development.
- Obj. 7 Promote understanding of research as a fundamental component of practice and prepare students to use research to inform and evaluate practice.
- Obj. 8 Provide students with skills and strategies of participatory, collaborative practice that include the voices of client population in the decisions that affect their lives.
- Obj. 9 Provide students with the skills and strategies of participatory, collaborative practice that include the voices of client populations in the decisions that affect their lives.

Textbooks

Course Pack: Finn, J. and Jacobson, M. (in press - 2003). *Just Practice: A Social Justice Approach to Social Work*. Peosta, IA: Eddie Bowers Publishers.

Course Assignments

Reflection Essays (60 %): Students will submit 6 (2 to 3 typed pages) reflection essays over the course of the semester. Students will select a reflection exercise from that week's reading or a teaching-learning resources or case study found at the end of the chapter and use this as the basis for their writing. A list of possibilities for each chapter is provided in the weekly course outline that follows. The purpose of this assignment is to provide students with time to think about and digest the reading, challenge "certainties" about how the world works, and integrate themes from the reading. Essays are submitted at the beginning of class and relate to the week's reading.

“Scenarios of Possibility” Paper (40 %): This assignment is adapted from a reflection exercise in Chapter 9 – Just Practice - page 391 that asks you to consider how questioning taken for granted assumptions about what’s “right,” “true,” and “good” leads to refreshing, creative ways of thinking about and practicing social work. Think of an area of interest. Perhaps this area of interest relates to your practicum experience (e.g., juvenile delinquency, child and family, labor organizing, welfare reform, social policy analysis, advocacy and practice, elderly, child welfare, etc). In a paper no longer than 8 - 10 typed pages, not including references, respond to the following questions: How do the key concepts and practice principles discussed in Chapter 9 lead you to conceptualize new methods and forms of practice? Which practice principles helped you most? What new possibilities do you envision? What might be some of the constraints and points of resistance? How might you mitigate these?

Determination of Course Grade:

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Reflection Essays (10 % ea.) | 60 |
| “Scenarios of Possibility” Paper | 40 |

Total: 100

| <u>Percent</u> | <u>Final Grade</u> |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 90-100 | A |
| 89-80 | B |
| 79-70 | C |
| 69-65 | D |
| <65 | F |

Grading Criteria: As does any reader, I have difficulty with written work that is poorly constructed and thought out. The ease with which I can understand your work has a positive effect on your grade. I do not necessarily have to agree with what you say but I do have to understand your work and make sense of it. For all written assignments, I use the following criteria for grading:

- X correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- X indications of thoughtfulness and critical reflection
- X good balance between thoroughness and expressing ideas concisely
- X well organized/clarity of thought (use of headings, subheadings– for larger papers)
- X moves beyond reporting surface content to interpretation, analysis, and original ideas
- X integration of readings and course learnings; developing themes and connections

Course Outline

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Week One 9/5: | Introduction and Overview |
| Topics: | Course Overview Beginnings Creating Participation Guidelines and Ground Rules Social Justice Scrapbook Just Practice Readings Discussion |
| Readings: | Just Practice: Preface and Introduction |
| Week Two 9/12: | Imagining Social Work and Social Justice |
| Topics: | Meanings of Social Work and Social Justice |

- Difference, Inequality, and Oppression
Just Practice Framework
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter One
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Shifting Meanings; Social Work in Nicaragua; Meanings of “Race” and the Making of Difference; Red Clay, Blue Hills: In Honor of My Ancestors
- Week Three 9/19: Looking Back to See Ahead**
Topics: Claiming a Historical Perspective for Social Work
Social Work in the 20th Century
Struggles for Human Rights, Peace, and Citizenship
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Two
Reflection Essay Possibilities: The Presidential Election of 2000; “What’s Love Got to Do With It?”
- Week Four 9/26: Values, Ethics, and Visions**
Topics: Meaning of Values
Examining Social Work’s Core Values
Codes of Ethics
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Three
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Case Con Manifesto; Rights, Values, and Social Justice Work; The Social Class Questionnaire
- Week Five 10/03: Theoretical Perspectives on Social Justice-Oriented Practice**
Topics: Understanding and Critiquing Theory
Contemporary Social Work Theories
Theories of Practice
Just Practice Framework and Core Processes
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Four
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Children Making Theory; Meanings of Empowerment; Crime and Punishment
- Week Six 10/10: Just Get Started: Engagement**
Topics: Engagement on Multiple Levels
Anticipatory Empathy
Engaging Through Dialogue
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Five
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Probing the Organizational Context of Practice; From Outside and Inside the Community Context; Honing Your Observation Skills; Engaging with AI; A Memorable Group Experience
- Week Seven 10/17: Just Get Started: Engagement (con’t)**
Topics: Engaging Through Dialogue (con’t)
Understanding Resistance
Engaging Groups
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Five
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Same as 10/10
- Week Eight 10/24: Just Understanding: Teaching-Learning**
Topics: What is Teaching-Learning
Mutual Aid Processes

- Power and Positionality in the Teaching-Learning Process
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Six
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Power and Powerlessness; Whose Voices Count?
- Week Nine 10/31: Just Understanding: Teaching-Learning (con't)**
Topics: The Practice of Systematic Inquiry
 Learning About Communities
 Learning Through Difference
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Six
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Same as 10/24
- Week Ten 11/7: Action and Accompaniment**
Topics: Roles for Social Justice Work
 Participatory Planning and Decision-Making
 Strategies and Skills of Social Enactment
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Seven
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Enacting the Roles of Social Justice Work; Dealing with Conflict: Fight, Flight, or Opportunity; The Meaning and Power of Anger; Bridging Differences: Skills of Multicultural Practice; The Lost Boys: Linking the Global and the Local.
- Week Eleven 11/14: Action and Accompaniment (con't)**
Topics: Strategies and Skills of Social Enactment (con't)
 Policy Practice
 The Thinking and Skills of Accompaniment
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Seven
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Same as 11/7
- Week Twelve 11/21: Evaluating, Reflecting On, and Celebrating Our Efforts**
Topics: Defining Evaluation
 Different Approaches to Evaluation
 Participatory Approaches to Evaluation
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Eight
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Making it Participatory (tie to practicum experience); Learning Letters Home
- Week Thirteen 11/28: Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class**
- Week Fourteen 12/5: Evaluating, Reflecting On, and Celebrating Our Efforts (con't)**
Topics: Why and What to Evaluate
 Critical Reflection
 Celebration
Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine
Reflection Essay Possibilities: Revisiting Voices From Just Practice
- Week Fifteen 12/12: Just Futures**
Topics: The Future of Social Work
 The Challenges Ahead
 Principles of Social Justice Work

Readings: Just Practice: Chapter Nine
Assignment: “Scenarios of Possibility” Paper Due

Week Sixteen 12/19: Endings and New Beginnings – Time to be announced

Topics: Dialogue on Scenarios of Possibility
Social Justice Scrapbook
Celebration?