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### SW 410.01: Ethics and the Helping Professions

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**SW 410: Ethics and the Helping Professions  
Spring 2002**

**Instructor: Mary Birch**

**Office Hours:** by appointment

**NOTE:** The last day to drop/add by Cyberbear is **February 15**. The final last day to drop/add by paper drop/add form is **March 11**. No refund for courses dropped after February 15.

**Students with special needs please contact instructor for assistance.**

**Course Goal:** The goal of this course is to develop skills identifying and analyzing ethical dilemmas experienced by practitioners in the helping professions and to develop skills exploring the public policy implications of those ethical dilemmas.

**Learning Objectives:**

Through class participation, completion of reading assignments and discussions with individuals affected by the ethical dilemmas explored in class, students will:

1. Clarify personal ethical beliefs and the value choices related to these beliefs.
2. Identify ethical principles governing their professional field and the value choices implicit in these principles.
3. Identify current ethical dilemmas experienced by professional practitioners and the conflicts and complexities involved resolving these dilemmas.
4. Develop critical thinking skills analyzing, articulating and defending relevant dimensions of ethical decision-making.
5. Develop an understanding of and a tolerance for the diversity of opinions related to ethical decision-making.
6. Clarify ethical dimensions of various public policies impacting the activities of practitioners in the helping professions.
7. Explore the expectations and limits of personal and professional responsibility related to social action.
8. Develop personal and professional stances related to ethical issues in public policy and in professional activities.

**LEARNING PROCESS**

1. Five approaches to learning will be emphasized in this course.
  - a. Peer learning will be encouraged through structured class discussion.
  - b. Students will identify and explore aspects of their own ethical beliefs through written assignments, comparing these beliefs to other ethical perspectives and applying these beliefs to current ethical dilemmas.
  - c. Lecture presentations and assigned readings are designed to integrate written assignments and class discussion.
  - d. Students will have an opportunity to explain and discuss their ethical perspective in oral presentations.
2. Class time will be used to review and discuss ethical positions presented in readings and in written assignments, and the application of these positions to current issues.
3. Students will complete reading assignments as indicated and keep a journal critiquing each article. Reading outlines should be completed by Tuesday of the week the readings are assigned.
4. The final few weeks of the semester, students will share their experience exploring a selected ethical dilemma through class presentations.

### **REQUIRED READING**

Reading assignments are designed to focus attention on personal and professional ethical decision-making and to raise awareness of the public policy dimensions of these decisions.

Margaret L. Rhodes, Ethical Dilemmas in Social Work Practice.

Readings for Ethics and the Helping Professions. Pick up at UM Bookstore. Handouts will be distributed in class.

### **COURSE OUTLINE**

## **Week #1 (January 29 and 31)**

Introduction to class: review course content and assignments. Introduction of class members.

Clarify definition of ethics/morality. Begin developing a criteria for evaluating ethical dilemmas. Identify current ethical issues.

### **Reading Assignment:**

Susan Manning, "The social worker as moral citizen: Ethics in action"

**Thought Paper #1, due Thursday, January 31. Defining morality: What is an ethical person?**

## **Week #2 (February 5 & 7)**

Exploring ethical theories and ethical principles. Developing a conceptual framework.

### **Reading Assignments:**

Margaret Rhodes, Ch. 2, "Unraveling ethical assumptions."

Cheri Pies, "Ethical dilemmas in HIV disease: A conceptual framework"

Video: "Controversial Koop." Personal ethics, professional responsibility and public policy.

**Thought Paper #2, due Thursday, February 7. Where do your ethical principles come from and how have they changed over time? Who and what has been most influential in the development of these principles? What value choices are implicit in your ethical principles?**

## **Week #3 (February 12 and 14)**

Cultural perspectives on ethics and morality.

Reading Assignments:

**Buddhism:**

Thich Nhat Han, "Precepts as a way of life"  
Joanna Macy, "Three lessons in compassion"

**Native American:**

T.C. McLechan, readings from Touch the Earth

**Thought Paper #3, due Thursday, (February 14). Compare and contrast western ethical principles with non-western principles and relate this to your own ethical principles and value choices identified in Paper #2.**

**Week #4 (February 19 and 21)**

Gender differences in ethical decision-making. Real or myth?

Reading Assignments:

David Cooper, "Gender differences in ethics"  
Margaret Rhodes, Ch. 1, "Facing ethical dilemmas"

**Week #5 (February 26 and 28)**

Moral theory and professional ethics. In class discussion of Code of Ethics.

Reading Assignments:

NASW Code of Ethics  
Kimberly Strom-Gottfried, "Ensuring ethical practice: An examination of NASW violations, 1986-97"

**Week #6 (March 5 and 7)**

Ethical issues in professional practice.

Reading Assignments:

Margaret Rhodes, Ch. 4, "Influencing the client: whose values are promoted"

**Prep-paper #1, due Thursday (March 7)** Literature Review. Identify and briefly discuss the contents of three readings concerning an ethical issue you are considering for your final paper or three readings concerning different ethical issues of interest to you. Clearly identify the ethical dilemma(s) and the evidence presented in the readings that exemplifies the various positions on this dilemma. Where possible include readings that support different perspectives of the dilemma(s) you are considering. Use APA format to cite your references.

**Week #7 (March 12 and 14)**

Professional practice and ethical conflicts.

Reading Assignment:

Margaret Rhodes, Ch. 3, "Violating confidentiality"

**Week #8 (March 18 – 22) Spring Break**

**Week #9 (March 26 and 28)**

Professional practice and ethical conflicts.

Reading Assignments:

Margaret Rhodes, Ch. 5, "Directing the client: When is coercion justified?"

Kia L. Bently, "The rights of psychiatric patients to refuse medication"

Marilyn Rosensen, "Social work and the right of psychiatric patients to refuse medication"

Readings and case discussions:

Practice Dilemmas (Handout)

**Thought Paper #4, due March 28. Interview with a professional.** Details of interview will be discussed in class.

**Week #10 (April 2 and 4)**

Ethical dilemmas and practice examples from Missoula social workers.

Reading Assignment:

Margaret Rhodes, Ch. 7., "Creating empathy and doing good"

**Weeks #11 and #12 (April 9 and 11 and April 16 and 18)**

Ethical dilemmas concerning boundaries of life.

Reading Assignments:

Marcia Abramson and Rita Black, "Extending the Boundaries of Life: Implications for Practice"

Video: "The DAX Case"

Readings on selective abortion. (Readings may be critiqued individually or combined in a single comprehensive critique.)

Video: "The Burden of Knowledge"

**Prep-Paper #2, due Thursday, April 11. Identify and briefly discuss three interviews on your selected ethical dilemma.**

**Week #13 (April 23 and 25)**

Student presentations and discussion.

**Week #14 (April 30 and May 2)**

The political side of ethics. To what extreme? Personal and professional

responsibility to social action.

Reading Assignments:

Margaret Rhodes, Ch.6, "Dealing with bureaucracy."  
David Wolf, "Social work and speciesism"  
Dianne Dumanoski, "The animal-rights underground"  
Carla McClain, "Lab-violence: AFL tells why"

**Week #15 (May 7 and 9)**

Student presentations and discussion.

**FINAL PAPERS DUE TUESDAY, MAY 9**

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

1. 60 pts. Attendance and participation. Each class session: 1 point for attendance and 1 point for being on time.
2. 40 pts. \*Completion of journal critiques on assigned readings. Critiques include a brief identification of the primary ideas/issues raised in the reading and a more extensive critique of these ideas. One/two pages per entry.
3. 40 pts. \*Completion of four short thought papers. Papers may be handwritten and will not be graded. Limit to two to four pages.
4. 80 pts. \*Completion of two preparation papers (20 pts) and final ethics paper (typed) (60 pts). The final paper includes at least six written references and six interviews. Use APA format for reference citations.
5. 20 pts. Oral presentation on final paper.
6. 30 pts. Final exam.

\*All written assignments must be turned in on due date to receive full credit.

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