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SW 200.02: An Introduction to Social Work Practice

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Social Work 200 - Fall Semester 2001
Introduction to Social Work Practice

Professor: Maxine Jacobson, Ph.D.
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Office hrs: By appointment
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

□Social justice is the end that social work seeks, and social justice is the chance for peace.□

--Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, 1988

□[The Settlement House Movement] aims in a measure, to develop whatever of social life its neighborhood may afford, to focus and give form to that life, to bring to bear upon it the results of cultivation and training; but it receives in exchange for the music of isolated voices the volume and strength of the chorus. . . The settlement, then, is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city. . . It is an attempt to relieve, at the same time, the overaccumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other.□

--Jane Addams, 1910

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 move beyond a generalist practice framework and introduce key themes and core concepts that incorporate a justice-oriented approach to practice that has applicability to a variety of social work concerns and

political, social, economic, and cultural contexts. We begin by exploring the significance of a justice-oriented approach to practice in 20th century U.S. culture and foreground this discussion in an exploration of social work history and the shaping of particular kinds of practices. We will learn from the contributions of social workers who forged linkages between personal and social change that have shaped contemporary theory and practice. We explore the dominant values and ethics of the profession and compare and contrast these with the values and ethics of alternative conceptions of practice. We examine the key themes and core processes of a justice oriented approach to practice and learn about these through their enactment. These frameworks, models and conceptualizations of practice will provide students with the skills to engage in the Just Practice Framework. 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 justice-oriented approach to social work practice and how this approach differs from a generalist approach.
3. Articulate the five key themes of justice-oriented practice (i.e., meaning, context, power, history and possibility).
4. Describe dominant and alternative theory and its connection to a justice-oriented approach to practice (i.e. strengths, empowerment, systems and critical, feminist and structural perspectives).
5. Describe key principles in the NASW Social Work Code of Ethics, and other social work codes of ethics and understand these as an expression of values and valuing.
6. Articulate the connection between contemporary social work practice and the history and the “historizing” of the profession.
7. Understand the key elements of an historical perspective and why this perspective is important to practice.
8. Explain concepts of economic and social justice and their relationship to social work practice.
9. Understand and apply the seven core processes of the Just Practice Framework (engagement, teaching-learning, action, accompaniment, evaluation, reflection, and celebration)

10. Critically reflect on personal experience, values and beliefs as they relate to the knowledge, values, and skills base of social work practice.
11. Discuss the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, age and other constructions of difference on social work practice with individuals, families, groups and communities.
12. Describe how structural arrangements of inequality and practices of oppression and discrimination shape the context of social work practice.
13. Identify several models of social work practice (generalist, ecosystems, empowerment, strengths perspective) and describe their key features and assumptions.
14. Define feminism and discuss how the feminist movement has influenced the social work profession.
15. Describe elements of a helping relationship and utilize basic helping skills in simulated interviews.
16. Describe the core processes of the change process and the key understandings and skills associated with each.
17. Explain purpose and use of the genogram, ecomap, social network map, and other social work assessment tools and critically assess their strengths and limitations.
18. Describe social worker roles of justice-oriented practice and the key concepts associated with each.

Note: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

Course Readings:

Chute, C. (1985). *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*. New York: Warner Books, Inc.

Finn, J. and Jacobson, M. (2001) *Just Practice: A Justice-Oriented Approach to Social Work Practice*. Eddie Bower Publishing, Inc. (Draft - in Faculty Pack)

Faculty Pack of Readings, Handouts and Exercises

Final Examination (20%): There will be no quizzes or mid-term examination. However, there will be a final examination administered during finals' week. The exam will take approximately

two hours to complete and will cover the concepts discussed in class and the course readings throughout the semester. The exam will consist of a combination of true and false, matching, and short answer essays.

Class Engagement (20%): 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 can also participate by bringing in contributions for our social justice portfolio, a collection of journal and newspaper articles, cartoons, drawings, or pictures that call our attention to issues concerning social justice such as discrimination, inequality, the politics of “difference,” and oppression. Students’ engagement with the course material will be assessed via weekly commentaries and class attendance. Commentaries should be no longer than two pages, type written, double-spaced and handed in on Tuesdays (I will try my best to get them back to you on Thursdays with comments, questions, and feedback.).

What’s Expected in a Commentary?: I use this assignment as a gauge of your learning and comprehension of course material. Commentaries also let me know you’ve done the readings and are therefore, prepared for class discussion. I want you to engage with the reading, not by providing me with a summary of its content, but rather by posing questions, constructing arguments and doing some critical reflection on what you’ve read. You can use some of the following questions to guide your work or come up with your own:

- (1) What’s your impression of what you’ve read and what point(s) is the author trying to get across?
- (2) What feelings, thoughts and practices of your own were challenged by the reading? What feelings, thoughts and practices were reinforced?
- (3) What were the areas of agreement and disagreement and why?
- (4) What lessons did you learn that relate to social work practice?

Course Assignments (80%): The assignments for this course were designed to support and enhance class lecture, readings, and discussion; develop basic understanding of the linkages between theory and practice; and build social work practice skills. All written assignments should be typed, double-spaced and handed in no later than the date specified on the syllabus, unless you have made special arrangements with me beforehand. Assignments handed in late without prior permission will be dropped one grade.

1. Lessons from History: Due 9/27

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 **one** of the two following selections on reserve at the Mansfield Library in hard copy at the reserve desk or on ERES (<http://eres.lib.umt.edu>) so you may access the articles via your computer: (password to access: socprac)

- 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.

2) Selections from *Journal of Community Practice*, 2, 1995, Special Edition on African American Community Practice Models: Historical and Contemporary Responses, pp. 1-48.

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 2001 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 10/25

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.

3. Bean Family Teaching-Learning Plan: 11/15

Using the Bean Family from Carolyn Chute's book, "The Beans of Egypt, Maine" as a case example, complete the following tasks:

- a) You are a social worker for a family service agency. Choose a member of the Bean family as a "client" who has been referred to your agency for services.
- b) Using data from the book, prepare **two** of the following: ecomap, genogram or a social support network map and grid that depicts your client's life situation and circumstances and provides a preliminary assessment of the situation.
- c) Discuss how you might use the strengths and empowerment approaches in the teaching-learning process.
- d) Discuss how you might use a justice-oriented approach in the teaching-learning process and what this approach requires you attend to in your assessment.
- d) Identify steps you would take in carrying out the assessment.

The write-up, excluding assessment tools, should be no longer than **two** type-written pages.

4. Second 15 minute Taped Interview: 12/6

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.

5. Personal Perspective on Social Work: 12/13

Based on the course material addressed during the semester, and your personal life experience, develop a personal perspective on social work practice. This essay (3 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 Work Value Base

Determination of Course Grade:

Course Assignments	60%
Course Engagement	20%
Final Examination	20%
Total:	100

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

* I show you in class how I tabulate grades and grading criteria.

Course Outline and Assignments:

Week of:	Class Discussion and Lecture Topics	Assignments and Readings Prepared for the Week
Sept 4 th and Sept 6 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Introductions X Course Overview X Why a Justice-Oriented Approach to Practice? X Meaning, History, Power, Context and Possibilities - Key Practice Concepts X Introduce Social Justice Portfolio X Developing Participation Guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X FP 1 - Social Work and Social Reform X Chapter 1 - Just Practice X Start reading the Beans

Sept 11 th and Sept 13 th	X X	No Class or Guest Speakers - I'm out of town this week. ; To be announced	X X X X X X	FP 2 - Two Outstanding... FP 3 - Labeling a Social... FP 4 - Blacklisting Social... FP 12 - The Generalist... Chapter 2 - Just Practice Continue reading the Beans
Sept 18 th and Sept 20 th	X X X X	Comparing and Contrasting Approaches: Generalist and Just Practice Historical Perspective on Social Work Practice Erasures, Omissions and Shifts Claiming an Historical Perspective for Social Work	X X X X X	FP 2 - Two Outstanding... FP 3 - Labeling a Social... FP 4 - Blacklisting Social... FP 12 - The Generalist... Chapter 2 - Just Practice Continue reading the Beans
Sept 25 th and Sept 27 th	X X X	The Intersection of Social Work and Social Justice Social Work and Human Rights Characteristics of a Progressive Social Worker	X X X X X	FP 5 - A Critical Under... FP 6 - Human Rights... Chapter 1 - Review Continue reading the Beans Lessons from History Assignment Due - Sept 27th
Oct 2 nd and Oct 4 th	X X X X X	Social Work Values, Ethics and Vision What are Values? The NASW Code of Ethics Other Ethical Codes Class and Values - The Social Class Questionnaire	X X X X X	FP 7 - Code of Ethics... FP 9 - Reflections on Knowing... Chapter 3 - Just Practice Beans, beans, the magical fruit..the more you read....
Oct 9 th and Oct 11 th	X X X X X	What is Theory? Power and Theory in Practice Social Work Theory Practice/Theory Connection Comparing Approaches to Practice	X X X X X X X X X	FP 10 - Defining Theory... FP 11 - Critiquing Theory... FP 14 - Understanding Empowerment... FP 24 – Comparing the Problem... FP 26 - A Comparison... FP 27 - Case Example... Chapter 4 – Just Practice Onward with the Beans...

Oct 16 th and Oct 18 th	X The Politics of Difference in Social Work Practice X Worker Positionality X Feminist Theory and Social Construction Theory X Shaping Difference and Otherism	X FP 8 - Spirit Breaking... X FP 13 - Culturally Inform... X FP 16 – Feminist Social Work... X FP 40 – People with... X FP 43 - White Privilege... X FP 44 - Heterosexual... X More Beans...
Oct 23 rd and Oct 25 th	X What is a Strengths Perspective? X Comparing Strengths to Pathological Perspective	X FP 22 - Valuing Families... X FP 23 -Key Elements... X FP 25 - Comparison of... X FP 35 - Assessing Clients... X How about some more Beans? X First 15-Minute Taped Interview Due Oct 25th
Oct 30 th and Nov 1 st	X Just Get Started X What is Engagement X Skills of Engagement X The Basics of Listening and Communication X Engaging Groups X The Organization, Community, and Interpersonal Context of Practice	X FP 17 - Perceptions of Power.. X X FP 46- 54 (handouts on core processes and skills of social work practice) X Chapter 5 – Just Practice X Oh, no....more Beans!!!
Nov 6 th and Nov 8 th	X Just Understanding: Teaching-Learning X Teaching -Learning Skills and Tools X Social Supports and Natural Helping Networks X Opening the Can of Beans – Discussion on the Bean Family	X FP 28 - FP 31 (on Social Network Map) X FP 33 - FP 34 (on Ecomap) X FP 42 – Making a Difference... X Chapter 6 – Just Practice
Nov 13 th and Nov 15 th	X Reflections on <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> X Assessing the Assessment Tools	X FP 32 – Assets-based... X FP 36 - Assessing the... X Bean Family Assessment Due – Nov 15th
Nov 20 th	X Catch- up week X Review on Nov 20 th X No Class On Nov 22 nd – Thanksgiving Holiday	

Nov 27 th and Nov 29 th	X X X X X	Action and Accompaniment Rethinking Social Work Roles Skills of Action and Accompaniment The Possibilities of Social Enactment Logic and Skills of Accompaniment	X X X X X	FP 15 - Resistant Clients... FP 20 - Reflections on... FP 21 - Politically... FP 38 - Ordinary People... Chapter 7 – Just Practice
Dec 4 th and Dec 6 th	X X X X X	Evaluation, Reflecting On and Celebrating the Effort Defining Terms What do We Need to Evaluate Research/Practice Connection Critical Reflection and Celebration	X X X	FP 41 - Listening to the ... Chapter 8 – Just Practice Second 15 minute Taped Interview Due – Dec 6th
Dec 11 th and Dec 13 th	X X	Possibilities and More Possibilities Organizational and Political Context of Practice	X X X X X	FP 18 – Reflections on ... FP 19 – Core Concepts... FP 37 - Community Orgs... FP 39 - Young People as... Personal Perspective Due Dec 13th
Dec 18 th	X X	Final Examination Time 10:10-12:10		0000000000000000