Master Syllabus

Instructor
Twente Hall

Classes:
Office Hours:

Prerequisites: Social Work, Social Welfare, and U.S. Society (SW220), Human Behavior and the Social Environment (SW530), Fundamentals of Social Work Research (SW540), Social Work Research Seminar (SW541), Fundamentals of Social Work Practice (SW510), Community and Organizational Dynamics and Human Behavior (SW 532), and Topics in Diversity (SW 555).

I. Course Description - Rationale

Social Work Practice Seminar I (SW 610) is the first of a two semester course designed as a companion course to the practicum field experience. Social Work Practice Seminar I introduces and familiarizes students with generalist social work practice. As such, students are introduced to theories of social work assessment and interventions with individuals, families and groups.

In this course, students will examine a range of assessment and intervention strategies and their use with vulnerable populations. This course provides an overview of those phenomena that influence service delivery including, but not limited to, social work values, ethics, racism, oppression, individual, family, community and societal characteristics. An ecological systems and strengths based perspective will be utilized to assist students in developing generalist practice skills necessary to partner with the consumer system in the change process.

Practice Seminar I builds on the skills obtained in pre-practice courses (The Fundamentals of Social Work Practice - SW 510 and Topics in Diversity - SW 555) to emphasize the student’s ongoing application of core professional knowledge, values and skills into purposeful actions serving vulnerable client systems. Students will consciously and purposefully examine their use of self in the ongoing effort to integrate a systematic, responsible and accountable approach to professional practice.
II. Educational Goals and Objectives

1. Demonstrate the ability to communicate in written and oral formats at the level expected for professional social workers interacting with diverse colleagues, community members and client populations. (BSW Program Objective 10)

2. Identify the strengths and challenges faced by individuals, families, groups, and communities. (BSW Program Objectives 2 & 6)

3. Critically analyze significant community, agency, social worker, and consumer characteristics that affect the change process. (BSW Program Objectives 7 & 12)

4. Critically analyze and apply the values and practice principles of social work. (BSW Program Objectives 2 & 3)

5. Describe and analyze the effects of bias, prejudice, discrimination and oppression on client systems and the impact on social work practice. (BSW Program Objectives 3, 4, & 10)

6. Describe approaches to ameliorating client problems in the context of social and economic justice. (BSW Program Objectives 3, 4, & 10)

7. Demonstrate a knowledge of and critique social work generalist practice interventions utilized with vulnerable populations including but not limited to: case management, family treatment models, crisis intervention, empowerment practice, problem-solving, strengths-based practice, group work, and community organizing models. (BSW Program Objectives 1, 2, 6, 7, & 12)

8. Critically examine differences and similarities between communities and neighborhoods based on demographics, social class, ethnicity, economic, and political processes. (BSW Program Objectives 7 & 8)

9. Demonstrate ways to mobilize and/or develop resources for client systems. (BSW Program Objectives 1 & 6)

10. Describe, critique, and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required for the purposeful use of self in the helping process with individual, group, family, and community client systems. (BSW Program Objectives 1, 2, 3, & 6,)

11. Demonstrate the ability to utilize supervision to increase social work practice skill. (BSW Program Objectives 11 & 13)

12. Identify value conflicts and ethical dilemmas and appropriate solutions to them as they arise and distinguish between ethical dilemmas and practice dilemmas. (BSW Program Objectives 2, 11, & 13)
III. **Interweaving Curriculum Themes**

1. **Practice Centeredness**
   The overarching themes that guide the total curriculum of the School of Social Welfare are integrated throughout the practice-oriented curriculum. This practice course provides a venue for students learn, apply and demonstrate a competency in social work practice settings.

2. **Strengths**
   The strengths perspective is a humanistic, empowerment approach to social work practice that operates on the assumption that all persons have untapped mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional resources. Students are encouraged to extend their understanding of assessment, conceptualization of barriers, selection of interventions, and client collaboration to assist in working with client systems.

3. **Social Justice**
   Social justice is a key component in this social work practice course. Social justice influences student's definition of barriers, client systems and client strengths. Students will learn to integrate the experiences of vulnerable people to create and evaluate interventions that expand opportunities for oppressed, stigmatized and marginalized populations. This course addresses ways that students can access and successfully negotiate needed environmental resources, and that promote a more just, humane and responsive environment.

4. **Diversity**
   Diversity includes the skills that show respect, sensitivity and appreciation for the contributions of diverse populations. In this course students will cultivate and appreciation for clients and colleagues who are differentiated by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, spirituality, class, sexual orientation, age, gender, and ability.

5. **Critical Perspective**
   Consistent with a critical perspective, students in Social Work Practice Seminar I raise questions about, reflect upon, and systematically evaluate and apply the divergent theories and the knowledge claims upon which social work practice is based.

**Student Course Content**

This course is a seminar course. The following definition for seminar is from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

Main Entry: sem·i·nar
Pronunciation: 'se-m&-"när
Function: noun
Etymology: German, from Latin seminarium nursery
Date: 1889
1 : a group of advanced students studying under a professor with each doing original research
and all exchanging results through reports and discussions
2 a (1) : a course of study pursued by a seminar (2) : an advanced or graduate course often
   featuring informality and discussion b : a scheduled meeting of a seminar or a room for such
   meetings
3 : a meeting for giving and discussing information

Given that this course is seminar style, students are expected to contribute extensively to the
course through discussions of readings, completed written assignments, presentations, and
practicum experiences.

IV. **Liberal Arts Perspective**

Students are expected to access knowledge acquired throughout their educational experience to
guide their involvement in this course. Students will draw on scholarly works across academic
disciplines including sociology, philosophy, history, political science, and economics, when
completing assignments.

V. **Professional Purpose and Values**

Developing professional social work values and practice skills are essential goals for this class.
The professional skills needed to assist consumers who are particularly vulnerable will be
emphasized in this course. These skills include but are not limited to professional writing,
conflict management, and public presentation. Students will learn to operationalize professional
values and apply specific knowledge appropriate for ethical and quality practice.

VI. **Social Work Generalist Practice and Human Diversity**

Readings, lectures, class discussions and assignments include content on vulnerable and diverse
populations.

Vulnerable persons are those who are intentionally or unintentionally discriminated against
because of one or more attributes or statuses that are not valued by dominant society. Vulnerable
persons are at-risk for social isolation and economic disadvantage and its consequences because
of the pervasive effects of structural inequality and lack of access to power.

This course will include content on variations in individuals, families, groups, and communities
arising from the inclusion of diverse members. Students will be exposed to societal factors that
influence diverse client vulnerability. This course will examine the effects of institutional
racism including: over-representation of ethnic and racial minorities in services whose primary
functions are social control; the misfit between traditional interventions and diverse people; and
the interactions between social work and client that perpetuate domination. Social Work Practice
Seminar I will also examine the strengths of diverse population as the foundation for building
appropriate interventive strategies. Students are expected to "grow" their social work practice
competency with diverse and vulnerable people.
Linkages to Other Courses in the Social Work Curriculum

This course is closely related to the Practicum, Human Behavior in the Social Environment, Research and Policy Sequences. These foundation courses provide students with theoretical concepts required to understand, analyze, and evaluate ethical and quality social work practice assessments and interventions.

VII. Topics

Must be covered

Social Work Generalist Practice
Social Work Values and Ethics
Social Work Practice with Vulnerable Groups
Phases of the Professional Relationship (i.e., engagement and endings)
Strengths-based practice

VIII. Recommended Readings

Text Books


**Articles and Book Chapters**


IX. SUGGESTED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Information and Referral

Students will prepare a 5-10 minute oral description of the agency in which you are placed. Your presentations will address the following issues:

1. What is the mission of the agency?
2. Who does it serve?
3. How do clients access services?
4. What modalities of social work practice are used?

In addition to the oral presentation, students will develop a handout that includes the agency name, address, phone number, type of service offered, and criteria for accessing services. Copies of the handout should be distributed to all classmates. Agency pamphlets or other preprinted materials may also be distributed.

2. Issues in Social Work

This assignment is designed to develop facilitation skills as well as knowledge of current issues in the field of social work.

Students will form groups based on their interest on particular class generated topic. Each group will provide three copies of the most relevant articles on their topic (no more than three articles per topic). One copy will be given to the instructor and two copies will be put on reserve at Watson library at least two weeks prior to group facilitation/presentations. Each group will facilitate a 15-minute class discussion on their selected topic(s).

The discussion should be guided by the following questions:
What is the issue?
What about this issue is important to social workers?
What is the role of social work values or practice principles given this issue?
3. Applied Paper

The goal of this paper is to give you the opportunity to apply content from class to a client with whom you’ve had contact or, if you have no direct contact with clients, a fictional client. Throughout the paper, you should apply content in the below sections to the client you discuss in section b of this paper and thus should talk about the same client throughout the paper. This paper should be at least 12 pages. Stronger papers will likely be in the 16+ page range.

Each paper should address the following:

**a. Description of field (5%):**

This section should clearly describe your field placement agency including the issues addressed in the setting (social problem), the services and social work modality offered, and the level of service (micro-, mezzo, or macro-) the agency provides. You should describe your role(s) at the agency including, specific components of program that you are involved in as well as your duties and responsibilities.

**b. Description of client (10%):**

You are to choose a client with whom you have worked and/or are currently working. Where this is not possible because of the nature of your setting, you can make up a client but there are only a few students who realistically should need to do this. You should write a brief description of the client which includes information the client’s age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religious background or current affiliation, and other relevant demographic information. Where appropriate, you should also include information about the client’s current family or family background. You are to describe the client’s presenting problem (the reason he/she is receiving services from your agency) and identify at least three strengths the client has. **Please do everything you can to protect your client’s confidentiality and disguise any identifying information that can be used to identify the client.**

**c. Practice model currently being used in work with client (20%):**

You are to identify the specific practice model you are using in your work with the client. You are to use two (2) articles that support your use of this approach with this particular client and identify at least three (3) strengths of this approach based on information derived from these articles. You are also to discuss three (3) problems or criticisms with this particular practice approach in your work with this client.

This is THE section that students struggle the most with. Examples of practice models include but are not limited to:

- Harm reduction
- Task centered
- Solution focused
- Strengths-based
- Crisis intervention
• Generalist
• Problem solving
• Medical model
• Empowerment model
• Life model
• Multisystemic
• Psychodynamic
• Cognitive behavioral

d. **Ethical conflict (17.5%)**:

Discuss an ethical conflict you had with this client and indicate why this conflict is an ethical one. If you have not had any ethical conflicts with the client you have chosen, describe a potential conflict that you may or could have experienced in your work with him/her. How was this issue resolved (or how could it be if it is a potential issue)? Cite info from two (2) articles to support or reject the way in which you resolved this issue.

Remember that ethical dilemmas occur when you must choose between two or more alternatives, each of which is supported by moral considerations, and it is not clear which one to choose. In this section, you should 1) describe the ethical conflict/dilemma, 2) identify why it is an ethical conflict/dilemma (what the competing values or principles are), and 3) how it could be or was resolved. You should use the literature to support how this issue was resolved.

e. **Difference between you and client (17.5%)**:

Identify a difference that exists between you and your client that affects your work together. This issue can be based on demographic characteristics such as race, age, socioeconomic class, educational level, gender, or sexual orientation or may be based on differences in life experiences such as one having experienced abuse while the other did not. Cite information from two (2) articles that discuss how to work with clients where such a difference exists and discuss how information from these articles should be applied to your work with this client.

f. **Application to agency functioning (10%)**:

Identify three (3) ways in each of the following three areas in which your agency could:

a. Improve practice with clients with the problem experienced by the client you described in Section b of this paper.

b. Support practitioners in resolving the ethical conflict you described in Section d of this paper.

c. Improve practitioners’ abilities to work with clients who have the difference described in Section e of this paper.

You should be very specific in this section. For example, if you in say that training should be conducted for agency staff, you need to specify what that training should consist of.
4. Decision case analysis

The goal of this assignment is to foster critical thought around ethical decision-making in practice using a case method/team approach. It will simulate team discussions that typically take place in a direct practice agency.

For this assignment, you will pick one decision case and work either on your own or with one other person. If you work alone, you will present the ethical issues in the case and present at least two different positions (this is demonstrate that there is typically more than only one idea/solution to a dilemma). If you work together, you may divide up the presentation any way you’d like, noting that each one of you will take a different position on the issue. Even if you both agree that one route is the “correct” decision, I would like one of you to play devil’s advocate and take a different position on the matter.

Use the questions from the second chapter of the Decision Case book to help guide your process. You should draw on theories of human behavior as well as the NASW Code of Ethics and social work values to support your position. You can also utilize the ethics checklist in your Sheafor book on pages 169-172 to help you consider the case. You may draw on your own professional experiences to argue your point; however, this should be limited to a supportive role to your main argument only. You are encouraged to reflect on personal experiences that lead you to feel strongly about these cases, as self-reflection is essential when facing ethical dilemmas (It is important therefore that EVERYONE adheres to confidentiality in this class and be respectful when others choose to disclose personal information). There are NO right or wrong answers; it is more about the process of critical thinking than the content as well as how to use the group as a way to problem solve difficult situations. The presentation should be 15-20 minutes, with additional time for class discussion. There is no write up required for this assignment.

5. Agency safety policy

This assignment is designed to make you aware of the risks that social workers face in the course of their work. You are to submit answers to the below questions in writing. The answers do not have to be in the form of a written paper. It is okay to simply list the question and then write the answers below each question.

a. What is the unit’s/agency’s policy for dealing with safety concerns by students and staff? (2 pts.)
b. Has the unit/agency had prior incidents of violence against staff and if so, how have they responded to these incidents? (2 pts.)
c. What are your options as a student if you are instructed to go into an environment in which you do not feel safe? (2 pts.)
d. What safety concerns do you have about interacting with clients in your practicum setting? (2 pts.)
e. What do you plan to do to address these concerns? (2 pts.)
6. Client position paper

The goal of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to have an experience similar to what your clients may experience. In order to do this, you are to engage in an activity that one or some of your clients engage in such as going to SRS, obtaining a Medicaid application and completing it, attending an open AA, NA, Al-Anon, or other 12-step meeting, attending a support group for family members confronting a particular issue such as a NAMI or PFLAG meeting, riding the bus to get groceries for your family, or seeking services in an emergency assistance agency. If you are not sure about a particular activity, please consult with me about it.

After you participate in this activity, you are to write a 7 - 10 page paper that addresses the following:

a. Describe your experience: why you decided on this activity and what it consisted of. (4 pts.)

b. Identify feelings you felt before engaging in the activity and the sources of these feelings. (4 pts.)

c. Identify feelings you felt while you were participating in the activity and identify the sources of these feelings. (4 pts.)

d. Identify aspects of the process that were helpful to you as the client. (4 pts.)

e. Identify aspects of the process that were an obstacle to you as the client. (4 pts.)

f. Identify whether and in what way it changed the way you see the client or the client’s experiences as person who must engage in the activity you chose to participate in. (5 pts.)

g. Identify ways in which this experience has impacted the way you work with clients who engage in the activity you chose to engage in. (5 pts.)

X. GRADING

BSW GRADING SCALE

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A. Incomplete grades. A temporary grade of Incomplete may be assigned to a student who, for a reason beyond the student’s control, has been unable to complete the required work in a course on time. It is the student’s responsibility to request an Incomplete from the instructor. A request signed by the student and the faculty member must be on file when grades are submitted. A student may not enroll in a course sequential to one in which he or she has an I or F letter grade. An incomplete not removed by the end of the next semester will be changed to an F.
The Master syllabi should specify:
B. Attendance policies for BSW courses. For example: Class attendance is very important. More than two absences could result in the loss of all your attendance points. More than four absences will result in failure in this class. If you have missed two classes, please arrange an appointment with me to discuss the reasons for the absence and to arrange for make-up work that will count toward your class participation points. Points are deducted for missing class and coming to class late (3 pts. for each absence/lateness).

Individual instructors’ syllabi should specify the following:
C. The weighting of each assignment in the course and the dates by which they are done.
D. For every assignment, explain the standards used for grading.
E. If class participation is part of the grade, indicate what this means. For example, if 10 points are awarded for class participation, one point will be deducted for every class missed.
F. Indicate the policy on late assignments, e.g., they are not accepted and treated as an “F” grade or the grade is reduced by ___ for each day, week, etc.
G. Indicate how final grades will be determined.

XI. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
Students who have special educational needs of any kind, including those related to learning disabilities, other disabilities, English as a second language should discuss necessary accommodations with the instructor within the first two sessions of the course. The university and School of Social Welfare are committed to provide supportive programs and accommodations to assist students who have special learning needs to successfully meet course expectations. In particular, students who feel that they have a disability that may require accommodation should advise the instructor of such disability and desired accommodation as soon as one obtains written documentation of the disability. The instructor will work with the student and the office of Services for Students with Disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations.

Please notify the instructor if your religious observances conflict with class or due dates for class assignments so we can make appropriate arrangements.

XII. RECORDING AND SHARING RECORDINGS OF LECTURES
Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. On request, the instructor will usually grant permission for students to audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless
explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

XIII. HIPAA REGULATIONS

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires that any personal information that may identify a person must be removed to protect confidentiality. Confidentiality applies to both classroom discussions and to written work. Please follow these simple, yet essential guidelines:

- Always disguise the name and other personal identifying information when you speak and write about a person, following the guidelines established by HIPAA.
- If writing in great detail about a client, ask permission from the client.
- Share nothing about specific clients, agencies or other students outside of the classroom.

Any information shared with the class/instructor will be confidential, within the limits defined by the Code of Ethics and state guidelines.

**Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.**

XIV. INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

Provide students with information on how to see and/or reach you.

XV. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather students should call

- Lawrence: the University (785) 864-SNOW, or if hearing impaired and have TTY/TDD equipment, (800) 766-3777
- Edwards Campus: (913) 897-8499
- KCKCC Campus: (913) 334-1100

to determine if classes have been cancelled. Class will be held if classes have not been cancelled, and students should contact the instructor if weather or driving conditions make it impossible for them to get to class.