University of Kansas
School of Social Welfare

Diversity Practice Selective
SW 872 Cultural Diversity in Social Work Practice

Master Syllabus

Prerequisite: Advanced level MSW student
Credit Hours: 3

I. COURSE RATIONALE

The social work profession has a strong commitment to developing human service approaches that support human diversity and alleviate or eliminate social oppression and injustice. Many practice settings serve diverse clients, involving issues pertaining to gender, ethnicity, culture, race, sexual orientation, religious and spiritual beliefs, ability, social class, and age. In keeping with the mission and themes of the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, this course promotes an approach to social work practice that challenges dominant norms and world views that work to marginalize persons who present with these diverse attributes. This course is organized around understanding diversity and the application of that understanding to people of diverse cultures, with special consideration of those that have been marginalized and oppressed. Students who complete this course will be able to apply a framework of knowledge, values, and practice methodologies needed to provide service to diverse populations.

Since culture mediates all person-environment transactions and is central to understanding human diversity, it is critical for social workers to understand cultural dynamics and characteristics for diverse people. Unfortunately, contemporary American social work theories and practice remain dominated by Euro-American assumptions about life style, human development, forms of family structure, and community development. This is common not only in the United States, but also in international situations of refugee services, social development, and international social policy. Furthermore, many contemporary social issues, such as refugee flight, span national boundaries and cannot be addressed adequately by nation-centered approaches. For these reasons, social work needs to prepare students for culturally-sensitive and competent practice that encompasses local, national and international perspectives.

Accordingly this course is designed to provide graduate social work students with a framework of knowledge, values and practice methodology for culturally competent service. It offers an alternative to ethnocentric approaches by emphasizing themes of oppression and empowerment, culture-specific strengths and resources of clients and their communities, critical reflection on cultural limitations of social work theory and practice, and multicultural/transcultural perspectives that promote social justice. It also addresses the link between national and international issues of social justice and social change.
As a diversity practice selective in the clinical concentration, this course builds on the foundation curriculum by giving a more specialized understanding of cultural diversity in social work practice and its relevance to policy, research, and theory. It is most closely linked with the practice and practicum curricular areas, since it helps students to develop a framework for culturally competent practice that can be applied within other practice classes and practicum. In addition the course is relevant to issues of cross-cultural human behavior theory, comparative social policy, and cross-cultural evaluation and research.

The rationale in individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES
By the conclusion of this course graduate students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Describe and reflect critically upon the implications of human diversity for social work theory, research, policy, and practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

2. Evaluate themselves, their practice and their agency setting with regard to competency in work with diverse populations. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

3. Describe, analyze, and respond to specific needs and strengths of diverse groups. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)

4. Understand and reflect critically upon diverse cultural perspectives and their implications for culturally competent social work practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)

5. Understand, critique, and apply a cross-culturally applicable, empowerment-oriented practice model for culturally competent social work practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)

6. Evaluate themselves and agency settings with regard to cultural competence. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 5, 6, 7)

7. Identify, understand, and respond to culture-specific needs and strengths of diverse cultural groups. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)

8. Identify social problems and service approaches that link national and international concerns, such as refugee flight, international social development, and cross-national social work transfer. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 3, 5, 6)

9. Identify, discuss, and analyze how research and social work values and ethics inform and define culturally competent social work practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

The educational outcomes in individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.
III. CURRICULUM THEMES

Honoring the School’s commitment to educational approaches that connect theory, knowledge, values, and skills to social work practice, this course is designed to educate students for advanced level clinical practice with culturally diverse people through:

1. Examining the strengths and resources of individuals related to cultural beliefs and culturally based community support systems within the context of families, neighborhoods, organizations, and communities.

2. Use of a critical perspective to reflect on oneself, social work theory and practice, clients, and environmental contexts related to the pathologization, marginalization, and stigmatization of people based on cultural differences and to develop creative alternatives.

3. Understanding and valuing cultural diversity, especially related to race, ethnicity, and national origin, and the implications of cultural diversity for other issues of diversity, such as those pertaining to gender, age, social class, ability, and sexual orientation.

4. Examining how issues of social and economic justice relate to ways that cultural beliefs and practices contribute to injustice and oppression as well as promote empowerment and liberation.

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IV. THE LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE

Building upon the liberal arts perspective, students in this course are expected to: (1) think and write clearly and effectively about their practice activities and the specific ways in which client outcomes can be improved; (2) understand ways in which knowledge is gained and applied through review of research findings and analysis of various practice theories relevant to clinical social work practice; (3) use knowledge of the social, biological, and behavioral sciences in completing broad based bio-psycho-social assessments of clients’ situations; (4) use knowledge of history in understanding the impact of oppression and discrimination on diverse people’s individual and collective functioning; (5) understand the effects of variations between workers’ and clients’ values and cultural backgrounds on the clinical helping process.

This course links a broad range of liberal arts and social science concerns with the field of social work. Historical, cultural, demographic, political, and sociological information and concepts are derived from disciplines of anthropology, sociology, psychology, culture studies, and international studies. Since this course examines culturally competent ways of responding to diversity, this course is relevant to the emerging field of multicultural humanistic education. The course assumes that students have a liberal arts educational background and have completed foundation level social work courses, as preparation for understanding and applying the course content.

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V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND VALUES

Given that the purpose of professional social work is to promote human well-being and social justice, all arenas of practice must take into account the cultural characteristics of clients and their communities. Culture mediates all person-environment transactions and there is wide cultural diversity among social work clientele. Therefore, students need to understand the nature of culture, its dynamics, and its impact on human variation in order to provide culturally competent service, demonstrate respect for diversity, and promote social justice. The cultural limitations and biases of conventional social work human behavior theory, research, policy, and practice need to be evaluated critically. The professional value of client self-determination requires that social workers understand and work effectively with the goals, values, life ways, and world views of culturally diverse people in their environmental contexts. Accordingly, this course provides students with an understanding of the implications of cultural diversity for social work and assists them to think critically about conventional Euro-American social work approaches. Cultural diversity is viewed as a valuable resource for individuals, societies, and the global community.

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VI. PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Since cultural diversity is relevant to all social work settings in some manner, it is important for practitioners to develop a general practice framework that is culturally competent and empowering. This course provides a general framework of knowledge, values, and practice methodology for culturally competent practice. This framework seeks to transcend ethnocentrism and other forms of bias, discrimination, oppression, and parochialism. This includes evaluating workers' and agencies' cultural competence, formulating multicultural teamwork, and conducting relevant assessment, planning, and implementation of practice strategies. Students are encouraged to determine how to refine and apply this framework within their own practice.

Any general practice framework must be adapted to the particular needs and strengths of specific individuals and cultural groups in any given practice situation. Therefore, this course provides an introduction to culture-specific characteristics, needs, strengths, resources, and helping strategies relevant to particular selected groups. These may be distinguished by ethnicity, cultural affiliation, or national origin, such as Asian-Americans, African-Americans, European-Americans, Hispanic Americans, and First Nations peoples; they may be distinguished by distinctive cultural qualities and history of discrimination, such as gay and lesbian people or the deaf culture; and they may be distinguished by shared dynamics of cross-cultural transition and challenge, such as immigrants, refugees, and transculturally composed families.

In the contemporary world situation, local and global social welfare issues are intertwined. For example, civil war and international wars generate numerous refugees who cross national boundaries and require international relief efforts. The consumption habits of the United States
disproportionately dominate world resources and contribute to deprivation in other countries. Many newly industrializing countries are rapidly forming Western style social welfare systems, while American social workers seek international inspiration for innovation in theory and practice. Therefore, mutual international and cross-cultural transfer of social work and social welfare knowledge is important. This course offers an introduction to these international issues and provides resources for students who may wish to pursue an internationalized form of social work.

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VII. **TOPICS**

**Required:**

- The influence of ethnocentrism and various forms of racism, discrimination, and oppression on social work theory, research, policy, and practice.
- Various models of empowerment and liberation for understanding and working with culturally diverse clients as an example of diverse client populations.
- Cross-culturally applicable, empowerment-oriented practice approaches.
- Procedures for evaluating oneself as a professional and social work practice settings with regard to cultural competence.
- Knowledge of a range of specific cultural groups and skills for culturally appropriate practice relevant to each group.
- Practice issues, social problems, and opportunities for practice that link local, national, and international concerns, such as refugee flight, immigration, international social development, or cross-national social work transfer.

**Recommended Topics:**

- Understanding of local community cultural groups, including their demographic characteristics, self-help and mutual support systems, and leadership.
- Cross-cultural and international comparison of culture-specific healing and helping systems, social work and social welfare traditions, and approaches to assessing personal and social well-being.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should provide a topical outline for the course and provide adequate information to determine where and when the required topics are being covere

VIII. **REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READINGS**

**Textbooks:**


Hill Press.


*Individual instructors must either use the text listed or obtain approval from the faculty mentor for an alternative text*

**Other Suggested Readings:**


For individual syllabus, remove the word “RECOMMENDED.” In addition individual syllabi need to specify which readings are required and which are recommended. The entire list of “additional resources” does not need to be included in individual syllabi.

**IX. RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENTS OR FOCUSED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

**A. Attendance and Participation**

This course relies heavily on students' participation and mutual support. Therefore, attendance and participation is typically graded for 10% of the total grade. Students sign a circulated attendance sheet before the end of each class.

Students will be asked to explain their views on required readings in class discussions. Accuracy, clarity, and self-reflectivity of responses will influence grading for participation. This may be done through spontaneous questions from the instructor or students.

Besides participating in class discussion, students may have other opportunities to contribute to the effective learning atmosphere in the classroom. These include preparing
the classroom environment, bringing music, sharing personal narratives, etc. The instructor may pass out sign-up sheets to coordinate these activities.

The topic of this course is inherently controversial. Students are expected to communicate between themselves and the instructor in a manner that encourages open dialogue, appreciates diversity, and tolerates disagreement.

This course combines educational methods of lecture, discussion and experiential exercises. The instructor will seek consent from all students for participation in experiential exercises. Students must make clear to each other and the instructor their comfort or discomfort with proposed exercises, so that modifications can be made and a consensus of agreement can be achieved. Failure to do so will adversely affect the class experience for everyone. This will be considered unprofessional behavior and will affect the grade for participation.

Any self-disclosure that could result from the papers or class discussion will be voluntary on the part of the student. At no time should the confidentiality of clients be violated.

The purpose of attendance and participation assignments and expectations is to assess your progress on all Educational Outcomes, since attendance and effective participation are necessary to obtain required information and practice how to apply it in a classroom setting.

B. Self-Reflection Commentaries
Self-Reflection commentaries are designed to focus the student's critical self-reflection in response to assigned readings. This assignment emphasizes student self-reflection rather than merely restating the content of the reading. The comments in response to each reading are to be brief, personal (within protection of privacy), and insightful. The student's comment must go beyond restating the author's ideas or merely stating the student's own opinion about it. The comment should identify some important information or issues raised by the reading as well as the implications for personal and professional growth. Choose for each week, 1 reading to comment about. Format for the commentary on each reading:

1. Title of Reading (Article or Book Chapter)

2. Insight
   State precisely one idea contained in the reading that is significant to you.

3. Self-Reflection
   Explain in detail how it is significant to you (e.g. relevance to personal or professional growth, issue of strong agreement or disagreement). Explain what it is about you that predisposes you to this reaction (e.g. areas of personal interest, special strengths, prejudices, cultural conditioning, value commitments, need for
growth. Finally, specify actions you plan to take that will encourage your personal and professional growth in cultural competence. All entries must be typewritten.

The purpose of the self-reflection commentaries is to assess your progress especially on Educational Outcomes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Maximum length for each commentary is 1-2 pages typed double spaced. Submit commentaries in 2 compilations, on the dates indicated in the schedule. (Note: instructor may wish to develop a different schedule for submitting commentaries.)

C. Conceptual Framework for Practice Paper and Project (20-25 pages)
The project is designed to help you connect cognitive and experiential learning to support the development of a personal framework for culturally competent social work practice. Therefore it requires you to integrate knowledge and insight from your own personal self-reflection, course discussion and readings, additional readings specific to your interests, and experiential exploration of a cultural tradition or perspective that relates to your practice.

Use the following outline and headings to organize your paper. Give specific citations from scholarly and other sources to support your ideas in all parts of the paper. You must include thorough use of the required course readings.

1. Introduction (1 page)
   Explain the approach you will be taking in this paper, including an introduction of your personal background and professional interests that shape your chosen approach.

2. Conceptual Framework for Culturally Competent Practice (5-6 pages)
   a. Commitment to Service
   b. Linkage between Personal and Professional Growth Issues
   c. Primary Orienting Personal and Professional Values
   d. Primary Orienting Concepts (Theoretical, Philosophical, Cultural)
   e. Primary Orienting Skills and Activities

   Summarize the primary values, concepts, and skills that guide your approach to culturally competent practice. Explain how these relate to your cultural background and how they link to your professional values and practice interests. What do you mean by culturally competent practice? How are your personal growth and professional development linked?

3. The Practice Situation (2 pages)
   Choose a social work practice situation (or volunteer, if necessary) that will be the focus for your application of your framework in this paper. For example, you might select a current practice example in working with an individual, family, or group in micro practice; you might discuss an agency administration issue, a
community organizing activity, a research project, or policy action situation. The situation should involve a cultural group or perspective unfamiliar to you, in order to encourage learning to address cultural diversity. If you cannot use a current practice situation, then speak with a volunteer acquaintance. In the latter case, you can design a way of being helpful that reflects professional practice standards, even though this is not formal social work. Give the background of the client system including the presenting problem, issue, strengths, or goals.

4. Exploring the Client System's Cultural Background
   a. Assessment of the Client's Cultural Background (2-3 pages)
      Ask the client to describe his/her cultural background (i.e. ethnic affiliation, traditions, cultural support systems, etc.), how it developed since childhood, and how it is relevant to the present situation, and future possibilities for growth. Consider the cultural aspects of the client's needs, strengths, resources, and goals. Consider relevant aspects of the client's environment.

   b. Exploration of the Client's Cultural Background (3-4 pages)
      Once you know what the client's cultural background is, you need to explore it to obtain direct personal experiential understanding about it. For example, you could attend a cultural community event that is relevant. You could contact community leaders in the relevant cultural group and ask for information and personal stories about how this cultural group offers help or resources that could be of direct or indirect benefit to the client. (Do not identify the client without formal permission.) Collect documentation that illustrates key values, aspects of world view, symbols, ideas, or rituals, as relevant (e.g. objects, documents, pictures, photographs). Combine this information together with information you can find in the scholarly literature. Give a description about these key ideas, symbols, and practices that are relevant to the client's situation. Clarify the relevant psychological, social, physical or spiritual resources available to the client in the context of his/her cultural perspective and community.

   c. Designing Culturally Competent Practice Activities (4-5 pages)
      (1) Connection of Your Framework to the Client's Perspective
         Explain how you will make a connection between your own personal cultural background, your framework for culturally competent practice, and the client’s particular cultural perspective and situation. What are the ethical and practical considerations?

      (2) Plan for Practice
         Specify a plan for how you could do (or actually are doing) culturally competent practice to address the client's needs, strengths, and goals. How well could you apply your own framework for practice and the information about the clients' cultural perspective? How will this affect
the nature of your helping relationship? What specific helping activities will you use?

5. Implications for Personal and Professional Growth (4-5 pages)
Discuss how you changed or grew through the process of developing this framework for culturally competent practice. How did you react to specific course readings? Identify some salient themes or issues for your personal and professional growth raised by this project. Consider how your own strengths, limitations, values, biases, and cultural orientation predisposed you to respond in particular ways (for example, in regard to the client or contacts with spiritual resources of the client). Specify implications for your continued personal and professional development. Conclude by identifying at least two specific activities that you commit to do after this course is completed that will promote your continued development of culturally competent practice. Give specific plans and time frame or accomplishing these activities.

The purpose of the conceptual framework for practice assignment is to assess students’ progress especially on all Educational Outcomes.

D. Literature Review Research Paper.
The student will select a relevant topic of special personal and professional interest. The student will search the literature on this topic in order to write a paper 20-25 pages typed double-spaced (not including references). In addition to required readings, the student must use at least 12 scholarly articles (1 book equivalent to 3 articles) not included in required readings. Include social work sources. Additional possible references include interviews, workshops, field observation, films, and public media. The following outline should be used for the paper:

I. Introduction—Statement of the Topic and Rationale. (1 page)
II. Discussion of the Topic and Implications for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice (13-16 pages)
III. Application to a Case (real or simulated, 6-7 pages)—demonstrate culturally competent assessment, helping process, and outcomes, consistent with previous portion of your paper. You may focus on any system level (i.e. individual, family, group, organizational, community, state, national, global). The case discussion must show application of ideas from the course and paper.
IV. References.

Suggested Grading Criteria for Written Assignments

Content (80% of assignment grade)
• Each required content area is thoroughly discussed.
• Content shows how class materials and readings are drawn upon to develop responses to the questions.
• Demonstrates reflective, analytical, concrete and creative thinking.

Style (20% of grade)
• Discussion is coherent and well-organized.
• Writing is typed, double spaced, and edited for clarity, spelling and grammar.
• APA style citation is correctly used.

Timeliness
• Late papers without a notice will be reduced 20% of the total score for each day late. Late papers, with explicit permission of the instructor, will be reduced 5% of the total score for each day late. If a paper will be late for an emergency, the student must notify the instructor in advance, or as soon as possible, to make an arrangement.

Suggestion for Return of Written Assignments at End of Semester

In order to have the last writing assignments returned by mail, the student must supply a correct size, self-adhesive, self-addressed, stamped envelope. The student must be listed as both sender and receiver.

X. GRADING
A. What Grades Mean (plus and minuses are assigned at instructors’ discretion)

A = Exceptional work: outstanding: this grade will be assigned to work that shows extensive use of the literature as well as wide use of concrete examples from practice.

B = Fully meets graduate standards: this grade will be assigned to work in which all aspects of assignments are completed satisfactorily, showing a combination of accurate use of theory and principles, and precise descriptions of practice.

C = Overall performance is unsatisfactory, below graduate standards, although all aspects of assignments were completed.

F = Failure: overall quality of work is unsatisfactory, or some aspect of assignments not done.

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.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

In order to pass the course, students cannot miss more than three classes during the semester. Any additional policies regarding class attendance will be determined by individual instructors.
Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should specify the following:

A. The weighting of each assignment in the course and the dates by which they are done.
B. For every assignment, explain the standards used for grading.
C. 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.
D. 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.
E. 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.

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

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.

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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.

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XIV. **INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY**

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

XV. **INLEMENT 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.