The University of Kansas  
School of Social welfare  

Diversity Practice Selective  

SW 873: SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH GAY, LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL CLIENTS  

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 of the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare to educate students, conduct scholarly inquiry and perform community service, this course promotes an approach to social work practice that challenges dominant norms and worldview 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 gay men, lesbian women and bisexual persons as a specific population of people who 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 competent service to diverse populations. Building on the generalist perspective and HBSE courses mastered in the foundation year, this course is designed to expand knowledge and practice skills in working with gay, lesbian and bisexual clients in diverse social work practice settings.  

Social Work as a profession is characterized by its explicit commitment to working with the most vulnerable and disenfranchised populations in our country. While gains are being made in improving quality of life for other special populations, work with people belonging to a sexual minority group has historically lagged behind other professional commitments. With the advent of political and cultural movements within the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities over the last two decades, increasing attention is being directed to how helping professionals and other concerned community members can effectively assist gays, lesbians and bisexuals with their needs and aspirations. As an “invisible” minority group, bisexuals, lesbians and gay men face special challenges in developing healthy identities, maintaining supportive family and community relationships, and in obtaining the personal and environmental resources they need to insure an adequate quality of life.  

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the basic knowledge, values, and skills needed to work effectively with people who are gay, lesbian, and bisexual. The course will re-
reflect a person-environment perspective, focusing on strategies that empower lesbians, gay men and bisexuals to develop personal and environmental resources from a strengths approach. Throughout the course, attention will be given to issues of diversity within the lesbian and gay population. Discussion will include such issues as age, race, gender, ethnicity, disability, and economic class.

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

II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester students will be able 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. Define and assess the continuum of human sexual expression and sexual identity. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 1)

5. Critically analyze theory, research, and social work models of practice, concerning sexual identity development (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 4)

6. Demonstrate both the ability to differentially apply knowledge and values about sexual orientation when assessing clients, and the ability to critically analyze how sexual orientation is reflected in standard diagnostic systems (e.g., DSM-IV). Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 1)

7. Define the cultural biases of homophobia and heterosexism and critically reflect on how these culture biases affect our understanding of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 3, 5)

8. Describe the effects of homophobia and heterosexism on individuals, families, organizations, and communities. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 5)

9. Analyze practice implications of homophobia and heterosexism, and apply this understanding to social work practice with gay, lesbian and bisexual clients. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 5)

10. Identify and describe common challenges faced by lesbians, gays and bisexual people in the initiation and maintenance of intimate relationships, and strategies to strengthen these relationships. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 4)
11. Identify and describe the special needs of those who are faced with multiple biases, not only sexual orientation, but also race, age, gender, class, and physical/mental disabilities. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 3)

12. Identify and describe a variety of individual and collective strategies to improve formal and informal services for gay, lesbian and bisexual clients through addressing homophobia and heterosexism in policy and practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 6)

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 directly and explicitly enhance the connection of theory and concepts to the needs of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons and the demands of everyday practice, this course is designed to educate students for advanced level clinical practice with sexual minorities through:

1. Examining the inherent strengths of gay men, lesbian women and bisexual persons as individuals, and within the context of families, neighborhoods, organizations and communities.

2. The deconstruction of traditional theories, methods and approaches used by social work, using a critical perspective, that have continued to pathologize, marginalize and oppress lesbians, gay men and bisexual persons.

3. Understanding and valuing the diversity of issues that bisexual persons, lesbians and gay men face, based on culture, ethnicity, face, geography, social class, sexual orientation, and physical mental abilities.

4. Examining how issues of social and economic justice are affected by gender, and how these injustices have been perpetuated by the economic, political and social structures that dominate the lives of gay men, lesbians and bisexual people.

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

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, the effects of those activities, and specific ways in which client system outcomes can be improved; (2) understand ways in which knowledge is gained and applied through review of practice 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' problem situations; (4) use knowledge of history in understanding the impact of a history of oppression on different ethnic groups' current functioning and the influence of family history on individual functioning; (5) understand the effects of variations in worker/client values on the clinical helping process through knowledge of clients whose cultures are different from their own.
Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND VALUES

Social Work as a profession is characterized by its explicit commitment to working with the most vulnerable and disenfranchised populations in our country. While gains are being made in improving quality of life for other special populations, work with people belonging to a sexual minority group has historically lagged behind other professional commitments. With the advent of political and cultural movements within the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities over the last two decades, increasing attention is being directed to how helping professionals and other concerned community members can effectively assist gays, lesbians and bisexuals with their needs and aspirations. As an “invisible” minority group, bisexuals, lesbians and gay men face special challenges in developing healthy identities, maintaining supportive family and community relationships, and in obtaining the personal and environmental resources they need to insure an adequate quality of life.

This course will reflect an ecological perspective, focusing on strategies that empower lesbians, gay men and bisexuals to develop personal and environmental resources from a strengths approach. Throughout the course, attention will be given to issues of diversity within the lesbian, bisexual and gay population, including discussion of issues related to age, race, gender, ethnicity, disability, and economic class. Tensions and issues that arise in operationalizing core social work values will also be discussed, and how the operationalization of these values is influenced by the sexual orientation of client and worker.

The nature of this course also requires that students have a sense of safety about the information they discuss both in class and in their written work. Students are expected to follow the following simple, yet essential guidelines:

- Always disguise the name and other personal identifying information when you speak and write about a person.
- If you are going to write in great detail about a client, ask permission from the client.
- Share nothing about specific clients or other students outside of the classroom.

Any information you share with the instructor will be confidential, within the parameters defined by the NASW Code of Ethics and Kansas State guidelines.

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

VI. PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS

In keeping with the mission of the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare to educate students, conduct scholarly inquiry and perform community service, this course promotes an approach to social work practice that challenges dominant norms and worldview that work to marginalize persons who present with issues pertaining to gender, ethnicity, culture, race, sexual orientation, religious and spiritual beliefs, ability, social class, and age. This course is organized around understanding diversity and the application of that understanding to gay, lesbian and bi-
sexual persons as specific populations of people who have been marginalized and oppressed. Consistent with the mission of the School of Social Welfare, students who complete this course will be able to apply a framework of knowledge, values and practice methodologies needed to provide competent service to diverse populations.

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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 GLBT Clients as a model for working with diverse client populations
- Heterosexism and Homophobia: The Context of Practice
- Culture and Community for gay, lesbian and bisexual people over the life cycle
- Growing up "gay": Identity development for lesbian, gay and bisexual people with special attention to youth.
- What difference does sexual orientation make for workers, clients and organizations
- Thinking and rethinking our approaches to working with gay, lesbian and bisexual clients
- Practice approaches that empower bisexual, gay and lesbian clients
- Taking gender into account: sexual orientation is not enough
- Taking ethnicity and race into account: gender and sexual orientation are not enough
- Sexual orientation and the life cycle: Middle Adulthood, Older Adulthood, Couples and Families

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 covered.

VIII. RECOMMENDED READINGS

Texts:


Individual instructors must either select one of the texts listed or obtain approval from the faculty mentor for an alternative text

Books:


**Articles:**


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

A. Journal (Educational Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 6, 7)

Keep a journal in which you record new awareness about working with gay, lesbian and bisexual clients or about working with straight clients as a gay, lesbian or bisexual social worker. These may include personal issues, professional issues, macro-level issues, micro-level issues. The journal should provide you with an opportunity to critically reflect upon and integrate what you are reading for class, what you are doing in your practicum, and who you are. The Journal is to be handed in three or four times during the semester. Entries should be done on an ongoing basis, but with a minimum of one each week. We encourage you to make entries as you have thoughts about the material presented in class and in the readings, rather than waiting. Our feedback will include questions, which do not need to be “answered” directly, but which we hope will stimulate you thinking.

Final Summary: You are to write a final summary (5-7 typewritten pages) in which you reflect on your learning over the semester. The summary should be handed in with your final journal entries.

The entries should be thoughtful and substantive. They will be evaluated based on (1) your thoughtfulness; (2) the extent to which you integrate the various elements of your learning (including class readings, discussion, your personal history and experiences, and your professional history and experiences); (3) the extent to which you have critically reflected on your learning; and (4) the growth that occurs throughout the semester.

The journal may be handwritten (legibly) or typed. It is intended to be a work-in-progress and not a finished product. Thus, you will not be held to the same standards of writing as you would under other circumstances. All entries should be turned in each time the journal is due. Please use a loose leaf notebook or binder (as small as possible) for your journal so that you can continue writing during the time that we have your notebook.

B. Agency Analysis and Critique: (Educational Outcomes 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

Each student will complete a critical analysis outlining the heterosexist assumptions they have observed in their practicum agency. In addition students will reflect on how these assumptions affect the client’s experience within the agency.

The purpose of this assignment is for the student to apply the knowledge and strategies of working with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients discussed in class and addressed in the readings to their practicum setting through critical analysis and personal reflection. In addition, the assignment calls for the student to be able to apply the findings of their agency analysis to what a gay, lesbian, or bisexual client of that agency may experience. The client will be hypothetical (creat-
ed and described by the student) and may be an individual or part of a couple, a family, or a group.

1. From the first day of class begin examining your agency procedures, policies, paperwork, attitudes, beliefs, mission statements, and literature for heterosexist assumptions. It is suggested that you keep notes on what you find, and begin your analysis. This will lead to additional questions that you may want to explore.

2. Start your paper by giving a brief description of your agency and of the clients you serve. This should include: (a) the name of the agency and the focus of service, (b) a description of the clients system (i.e., the average age, education, ethnicity, presenting problems, typical service provided etc.).

3. Incorporate from the literature (an extensive bibliography is included in your syllabus) a brief review of the common barriers or challenges faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual clients according to your particular field of practice. For example, your practicum may be in a child welfare agency, so, you would review the literature and incorporate what you find related barriers faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual families or youth in the system.

4. Your next step is to use the information from the literature review, combined with your own observations, and provide a thorough assessment, critique, analysis of your own agency focusing on the heterosexist assumptions and barriers that are evident. You are encouraged to use information obtained in other course work to complete this analysis. It may be helpful to include actual documentation from your agency as part of your analysis (paperwork, pamphlets, policy statements etc.).

5. Once the analysis is complete and you have thoroughly outlined the heterosexist assumptions and resulting barriers within your agency, you are to reflect on how a gay, lesbian or bisexual client might experience your agency. To do this you are to create a client and do a hypothetical walk through of what they would likely experience and how these experiences may affect them in relation to the helping process.

6. Next, reflect on how a lesbian, gay or bisexual social worker (you or a hypothetical colleague) might experience the heterosexist assumptions and resulting barriers within your agency and how it might affect their/your work as a professional.

7. Finally, you should provide ideas, strategies, and suggestions on how your particular agency should address the heterosexist assumptions and barriers encountered by gay, lesbian and bisexual clients and staff.

This paper should be referenced when appropriate. Suggested length is 12-15 pages, typewritten and double-spaced.

C. Class Presentation
In some instances students in the class may have specialized knowledge about one of the topics being covered. I am open to discussing a class presentation if you have specialized knowledge and practice experience in an appropriate area. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are interested in exploring this possibility. All members of the class will evaluate class presentations.
X. GRADING
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.

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**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.

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

**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