The University of Kansas  
School of Social Welfare  

Diversity Practice Selective  
SW 874 SOCIA L WORK PRACTICE WITH WOMEN  

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 worldviews 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 women 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 women in diverse social work practice settings. Traditional and feminist practice approaches to problems that frequently confront women will be critically examined. This course is organized around two key concepts of feminism that are also strongly associated with social work's historic tradition: (1) empowerment, and (2) the personal is the political.

Empowerment is one of the essential concepts in any work with women. Empowerment refers to the process whereby people are helped to identify, accept, and use their own power to effect change. As applied to this course, it is anticipated that the classroom itself will be an empowering environment in which all participants will explore their own power to effect change in their lives, with their clients, and in society. Further, as we explore various practice approaches, we will assess the extent to which they empower clients.

"The personal is the political" has been a cornerstone of the feminist movement. It refers to the interactive notion that women's personal experiences have deep socio-political roots and that women's political activities have deep personal impact. Social work's historic tradition of understanding the interconnections among people's personal troubles and the larger environments in which they live and its commitment to macro-level change to improve the quality of life for individuals provides another way of looking at the "personal is political." As
applied to this course, it is anticipated that all participants will explore the interconnections between the clinical (micro) aspects of women's (including their own) private troubles as well as private strengths and the socio-political (macro) aspects of women's public issues.

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 cultural competence 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. Articulate how their own attitudes and values about women influence their practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 1)

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

6. Articulate how gender, ethnicity, race, culture, and sexual orientation affect the relationship between social worker and client, the client's situation, and the appropriateness of helping modalities. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 5, 6)

7. Develop and articulate their own social work practice approach about working with women. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 6)

8. Demonstrate the ability to selectively utilize intervention frameworks that are especially appropriate for women. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)

9. Demonstrate the ability to effectively use himself or herself as a woman, or a man, to achieve client goals, with consideration to ethics and values that are congruent with the social work profession. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objective 6)

10. Critically examine 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 women’s lives.

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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 women and the demands of everyday practice, this course is designed to educate students for advanced level clinical practice with women through:

1. Examining the inherent strengths of women 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 women.
3. Understanding and valuing the diversity of issues that women 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 women's lives.

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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, 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.

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V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND VALUES

As noted in the course description, this course is organized around two concepts of feminism that are also strongly associated with social work's historic tradition: (1) empowerment, and (2) the personal is political. The ecological perspective is integral to operationalizing these concepts in practice, enhancing individual coping and ameliorating negative qualities in the environment.

This course will also examine the tensions and issues that arise in operationalizing core social work values such as self determination when working with women whose life choices may be limited due to socialization, as well as economic and social oppression.
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 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 worldviews 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 women 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.

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**VII. TOPICS**

**Required:**
1. The influence of ethnocentrism, and various forms of racism, discrimination and oppression on social work theory, research, policy and practice.
2. Various models of empowerment and liberation for understanding and working with diverse client populations
3. Developing a Gender Lens
4. What difference does gender make for workers, clients and organizations?
5. Thinking and rethinking our approaches to working with women: Some critical reflections
6. Practice approaches that empower women
7. Taking ethnicity and race into account: Gender is not enough
8. Taking sexual orientation into account: Gender is not enough

**Recommended:**
1. Women and mental health/illness
2. Women getting older
3. Women living in poverty
4. Women as Survivors of Violence
5. Women & Addiction

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

Additional Readings:


Tafoya, N. Native American women: Fostering resiliency through community, 297-312.


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

I. Journal (Reflects Educational Outcomes # 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10.)
Keep a journal in which you record new awareness about working with women, being a woman in relation to both men and women, or being a man in relation to women. These may include personal issues, professional issues, macro-level issues, or 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 learning in class, what you are doing in your practicum, and who you are as a person.

The Journal is to be handed in on (3 or 4 times during the semester). Entries should be done on an ongoing basis, but with a minimum of one each week. I encourage you to make entries as you have thoughts about the material presented in class and in the readings, rather than waiting. My feedback will include questions, which do not need to be “answered” directly, but which I hope will stimulate your 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 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. (See “Grading” for specific grading criteria). 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 I have your notebook.

Suggestion: You may want to start your journal with a reflection on our discussion during the first day of class -- and explore more fully the factors which have influenced who you are as a woman (or man) at this point in your life.
II. Case Study  (Reflects Educational Outcomes # 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.)
Each student may complete a case study on a women client with whom they have been working. This assignment is due on the last day of class.

The purpose of this assignment is to apply the principles of working with women that have been discussed in class and addressed in the readings to a specific girl/woman with whom you are presently working. The client may be an individual or part of a couple, a family, or a group.

1. As you work with clients in your practicum, select a girl/woman client or two that you think will be particularly interesting, or that you find challenging. The work you do with this client may be short or long term - you may have finished the work by the time you write the paper, or the work may still be in process. While you will want to keep accurate and detailed notes about this client system and your work with her throughout the semester, make sure the notes do not contain the names of the client(s) or identifying information and that the notes are not placed in the agency record.

2. Start your paper by giving a brief description of your agency and of the client system. This should include: (a) the name of the agency and the focus of service, (b) a description of the client system (i.e., age, education, ethnicity, family constellation), (c) how long have you been working with her (i.e., number, length, frequency and location of meetings), and (d) how do you "feel" about the client(s) and the work.

3. Provide a thorough assessment of the client and what has brought her to the agency through a "gender lens." In assessing the client and the context of her life, you are to articulate how her gender plays a role in the nature of the problem, in her abilities to cope, in the strengths that she has, in the supports available to her, etc. How do other characteristics of this client (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental and physical abilities) influence/are incorporated into your assessment?

4. Discuss the unique attributes that you bring as a social worker and as a woman (or a man) to your work with this client.

5. Discuss the work that you and the client did or are doing together using a gender lens. In this section you should consider in some depth the meaning of the relationship you have established with the client, the therapeutic approach or the framework for intervention that has informed your work, and the techniques that you have used.

6. Discuss some of your own conflicts that you have experienced in working with the client and how you have attempted to deal with them. This is the place, for example, to discuss your frustrations in working with women who are less aware than you are of their oppression, of working with girls who are being raised in a patriarchal environment, conflicts you have experienced with other professionals around your choice of practice approach, or conflicts with other systems.

7. Discuss specific ways in which your membership in this class has influenced your work with this client.

This paper should be referenced as appropriate. Suggested length is 12-15 pages.
III. Class Presentation
In some instances students in the class may have *specialized knowledge* about one of the topics being covered (i.e., women and substance abuse, women and violence). I am open to discussing a class presentation, in lieu of a case study, 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.

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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. **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.