The University of Kansas
School of Social Welfare

Diversity Selective
SW 878 Social Work Practice with African Americans

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 African Americans as a specific cultural group that has 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 culturally competent services to this population.

Building on the generalist practice, research, policy, and human behavior courses from the foundation year, this course teaches students how to integrate that basic content with clinical knowledge and skills relevant to practice with African Americans. The course is strongly linked with students’ clinical field practicum (SW 801). It provides guidelines for their application of content on African Americans to their field cases and enriches the course by identifying challenges that surface in those applications. Students are also expected to become aware of how their cultural backgrounds, values, traditions, and filters influence their worldviews and the quality of their practice with African Americans. This awareness, and the ability to monitor and address potentially negative effects on their practice, are a prerequisite for understanding the cultural values, traditions, strengths, and social justice concerns of African American clients and colleagues. As these knowledge and awareness areas are taught in this course, they provide a context for students’ understanding and application of culturally competent assessment, intervention, and evaluation skills in their practice with African Americans. Understandably, these skills are targeted toward significant personal, interpersonal, and environmental strengths and barriers in these clients’ life circumstances, with an emphasis on addressing social justice barriers and enhancing clients’ empowerment.

The rationale in individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.
II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES
By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Describe and reflect critically upon the implications of human diversity, for social work theory, research, policy, practice, and ethics/values (Reflects MSW Clinical objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6).

2. Evaluate themselves, their practice, and their agency setting with regard to cultural competence in work with diverse populations (Reflects MSW Clinical objectives 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

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

4. Identify indicators of culturally competent practice with African Americans in different fields of practice, and integrate those components into and articulate their social work approach to such practice (Reflects MSW Clinical objectives 1, 4, 7).

5. Discuss historical and contemporary influences on African American traditions and values and the role of these in working with African American families (Reflects MSW Clinical objective 1, 6).

6. Describe and analyze cultural factors as supports and barriers to clients’ life options and functioning (Reflects MSW Clinical objective 1).

7. Analyze African American within-group differences and how such differences affect clients’ help seeking patterns, presenting problems, the services provided, and their responses to those services (i.e., gender, location, social class, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, and age) (Reflects MSW Clinical objective 1).

8. Analyze the intersection of various influences on African Americans and on practice with such clients, including their cultural backgrounds, historical influences, oppression and dominant worldviews, social and organizational policies, theoretical perspectives, and the practitioners’ cultural backgrounds, filters, and cultural conflicts that may impact practice (Reflects MSW Clinical objective 5).

9. Identify and apply culturally competent interventions with African Americans appropriate for the beginning, middle, and ending phases of practice and for individuals, families, groups, and large systems (Reflects MSW Clinical objectives 2, 3).

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III. CURRICULUM THEMES
This course is taught in a manner that is consistent with the School of Social Welfare’s commitment to vulnerable populations, and it reflects the School’s four curriculum themes as well. Students are expected to:

1. Analyze the inherent cultural resources and other strengths of African American clients as individuals, and within the contexts of their cultural group, kinship networks, cultural organizations, and communities.
2. Use a **critical perspective and thought** to identify and deconstruct traditional Eurocentric theories, assumptions, concepts, and approaches in social work and other helping fields that pathologize, stereotype, marginalize and oppress African Americans.

3. Understand concepts of **multiculturalism, human diversity, biculturalism, and afrocentricity** and how they enhance our understanding/valuing of African Americans from different locations, social classes, genders, sexual orientations, age groups, and physical or mental disabilities.

4. Explore how **social, economic, and political justice issues** uniquely influence the life experiences and opportunities of African Americans, and social workers’ roles in addressing those issues at micro, mezzo, and macro systems levels.

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**IV. THE LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE**

Building upon the liberal arts perspective, students in this course will be able to: 1) think and write clearly and effectively about their practice activities, the effects of those activities, and specific ways in which their outcomes with African American clients can be improved; 2) understand ways in which knowledge is gained and applied through review and deconstruction of practice research findings and analysis of various practice theories relevant to clinical practice with African Americans; 3) use knowledge of the social, biological, and behavioral sciences in completing broad based bio-psycho-social assessments of such clients’ strengths and problem situations; 4) use knowledge of history in understanding the impact of a history of oppression on African Americans’ individual and collective functioning; and 5) understand differences in worker-client-service setting values and their effects on the clinical helping process through knowledge of African American clients’ culture, values, and traditions.

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**V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND VALUES**

This course is organized around the importance of practitioner self-awareness about personal filters and values that can inhibit culturally competent practice. The framework is based on an assumption that practitioners must be aware of their own culture, along with its strengths and potential conflicts with the culture of clients, in order to appreciate or value the culture of African American clients. The course will also operationalize the profession’s core values, including beginning where the client is and supporting client self-determination, and it will examine how such values are uniquely applied in practice with African American clients.

Confidentiality is emphasized in this course. Students should disguise written and verbal information about clients, and should not share specific client information or information about fellow class members outside of the class. The class instructor and the students are bound by the NASW Code of Ethics and the Kansas State Licensure Guidelines in this regard.

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**VI. PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS**
In keeping the University Of Kansas School Of Social Welfare’s mission and diversity theme, this course promotes an approach to social work practice that challenges dominant norms and world views that help to marginalize African Americans and others in terms of their ethnicity, race, gender, religious and spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, social class, disabilities, and age. The course is organized around understanding human diversity and the application of that understanding to African Americans as people who have been marginalized and oppressed. Students who complete this course will be able to apply a framework of knowledge, values, and practice methods necessary for providing culturally competent services to African Americans and other diverse populations.

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VII. TOPICS
Required:
✓ Factors Affecting Practice with African Americans.
  - African American Values & Traditions-Practitioners’ Cultural Backgrounds
  - African American Values & Traditions-Influence of Oppression & Dominant World Views on Clients’ Strengths and Functioning.
  - African American Values & Traditions, Within Group Differences, Organizational Cultural Competence Indicators & The Effects on Practice.
  - Significant historical influences/factors (i.e., legacy of slavery, social construction of racism, Jim Crow, segregation, civil rights movement, etc.)

✓ Socioeconomic and political issues of African American Families: The Intersection of race, class and gender

✓ Culturally Competent Engagement & Assessment with African Americans: The Early Phase of Helping.
  - Engaging African Americans and Assessing Their Family Structure, Function, & Life Cycle Issues with Cultural Genograms Focused on Strengths and Problems
  - Engaging African Americans & Helping Them To Assess Their Natural Supports, Value Conflicts & Ethnic Identity, including the biracial identity development.
  - Assessment and Treatment Planning: Combining Culturally Sensitive and Traditional Methods with African Americans.

✓ Culturally Competent Intervention, Prevention, & Evaluation with African Americans: Middle and Ending Phases of Helping.
  - Critique of Traditional Practice Approaches with African Americans, Especially in Children & Youth Prevention Services- Indicators of Culturally Competence Practice and Evaluation.
- Culturally Competent Individual Work with African American Men and Women: The Middle Phase.
- Culturally Competent Interventions with African American Families: The Middle Phase.
- Culturally Competent Group and Community Interventions with African Americans: The Middle & Ending Phases.
- Group Presentations by Students: Practice Applications with African Americans: Micro, Mezzo, and Macro Interventions.
- Culturally Competent Practice with African American Elders: The Ending Phase.
- Culturally Competent Systems Change Interventions: The Service Setting and Other Large Systems Related to African Americans.

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. REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

Books:

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

Articles (required):


**Additional Books and 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**

**Assignment #1**

**Analysis of Factors that can Influence Practice with African American Clients**
The purpose of this assignment is to help students increase their awareness of factors related to their cultural backgrounds and filters, the clients’ culture and life circumstances, and the service
This assignment assesses students’ progress in terms of Education Outcomes 1, 2, & 4.

1. **Cultural Genogram Analysis:** Complete a cultural genogram on your family by responding to the cultural questions provided in class, and attach the completed genogram as an appendix to your paper. Then summarize what you learned from your genogram analysis about your cultural background, filters, values, traditions, and about family members’ perspectives regarding these factors. Include information from and your reactions to the key informant/historian interview(s) you conducted previously for this class.

2. **Differences and Similarities in Values & Traditions:** Identify and discuss African American values and traditions from the readings and class discussions that are different from those of your cultural group and family identified in #1 above. Analyze also values and traditions that are similar between your culture and that of potential African American clients to whom you are likely to provide services in your field setting.

3. **Potential Effects on Practice:** Explore how the differences and similarities in #2 above might affect your practice with African Americans who are experiencing particular types of problems (how those factors might be either neutral, potentially enhance, or possibly impede your effective practice with African Americans). Finally, discuss cultural values, traditions, policies, and practices of your agency setting that currently or could potentially affect the quality of services provided to African American clients (apply indicators of culturally competent organizations from class discussions in framing this part of your discussion).

4. **Conclusion:** Summarize what you have learned specifically about the combination of factors that may affect your practice with African American clients. Discuss the importance of “high priority factors” (i.e., increasing awareness of cultural filters,, understanding personal and/or agency conflicts, increasing cross-cultural experience with African Americans in a particular context, limitations in agency services, etc.), and analyze how these factors influence your practice with African American families.

Assignment #1 must be completed in a scholarly format (the APA or other reference formats can be used), with written references throughout the text and a bibliography at the end of the paper. The group oral presentations should include a written outline of the presentation, a bibliography, and handouts for the class. The written journal entries must be typed, including the final assignment (an analysis of the student’s journal entries). The analysis part of the final assignment should include written references throughout the text and a bibliography page at the end of the analysis. Any assignments without references will be returned as incomplete. All assignments are to be turned in as scheduled; please see the instructor prior to the due dates to discuss any questions or problems.
Assignment #2: Group Oral Presentations
Practice Applications with African Americans: Combined Micro, Mezzo, & Macro Interventions

The purpose of this assignment is to enhance students’ integration of knowledge and skills from multiple sources, in particular, information from the research literature, cultural coaches, cultural immersion activities, and practice experiences with African American clients, model practitioners and/or field supervisors, and peers. This assignment assesses students’ progress in terms of Educational Outcomes 3, & 5-7).

1. Planning and Implementing the Group Project: Students are expected to plan and implement their projects in their selected small groups. There will be a few opportunities to use class exercises as sources for conceptualizing and planning the projects, but planning will also require some individual and group work outside of class. Guidelines for topic areas for this assignment will be provided in class to stimulate students’ ideas, but students may select their own topics after conferring with the instructor (i.e., topics related to practice with African Americans).

Each group is required to include the following components in their project:

a) a brief review of relevant practice articles in the literature on the selected topic relevant to practice with African Americans;

b) group members’ involvement in a combination of cultural immersion, cultural coach, model practitioner and/or field supervisor contacts or activities, and other key informant participant observations; and

c) application of knowledge and skills learned from components a) and b) above to a case selected from a group member’s case load (the case can consist of an African American individual client, group, family, or community network).

2. Conducting the Presentation: Each two hour group presentation should include these content areas:

a) a statement of the topic area and practice issues related to African American clients;

b) a summary of the combination of cultural participant observations undertaken by group members and the lessons learned, including significant within group differences among the African Americans in those observations and clients in the members’ current assigned cases;

c) a brief summary of the literature review and an analysis of similarities and differences between the lessons learned about practice from the literature and from group members’ participant observations;

d) background information on the clients in the selected case, and a brief summary of the work to date in terms of what worked or did not work, including cultural values, traditions, and filters of the client(s) and practitioner that enhanced or hindered the work.

e) An alternative culturally competent approach to the work in this case that builds on current successes and further enhances the outcomes: regarding the assessment, the interventions, and evaluation of the work over time. In this discussion, draw upon the group’s literature review and participant observations above to address:
- culturally sensitive assessment and evaluation methods for this case,
- micro, mezzo, and macro interventions that include a focus on social justice issues as needed, and
- indicators of practitioners’ cultural competence (from class discussions) as criteria for analyzing the quality of current and future work in the case

f) Summarize the impact this group assignment will have on the members’ future practice with African American clients, i.e., what will the members do differently in their future practice as a result of completing this assignment?

Finally, each presentation should include the following written materials for class members and the instructor as noted previously in the syllabus:

a) A brief outline of the presentation,

b) handouts that help to illustrate main points in the presentation,

c) a list of readings, one page or less, relevant to the presentation topic.

Assignment #3
Students’ Journals (Part I)

Students should make a minimum of one journal entry per week (for sessions #1-15). The journals should include unstructured and structured entries. Unstructured entries by students can include their reactions to or questions about assigned readings, class discussions, African American clients or peers or clients/peers from other cultural groups, other relevant family, cultural, or social experiences; and general insights or experiences. The instructor will assign a few structured journal entries as part of class exercises. The completed journal for the semester is due on the final class session along with the final assignment.

Analysis of Journal Entries-Timeline & Case Study: The Student’s Journey (Part II)
The purpose of this final assignment is to encourage students to articulate their approach to working effectively with African American clients. This mini assignment should also reveal patterns in and influences on the students’ quality of learning from participating in this course. Consequently, students will be able to develop a culturally competent plan of action. The assignment assesses students’ progress in terms of Educational Outcomes 1, 4-5, & 8).

1. **Construct a Timeline of Journal Entries:** Use all of your structured journal entries (those assigned as class exercises); unstructured journal entries; and other significant events, experiences, and insights that you believe are relevant in order to construct a time line of this semester. If you have items to place on the timeline that occurred close together, try to figure out their actual sequence and enter that sequence on your timeline. It may be necessary to use a large folded piece of paper to construct this timeline. It may be helpful to refer to the page numbers where the highest priority entries on your timeline appear in your journal. Your journal should be attached to this assignment.

2. **Analysis of the Timeline:** Analyze your timeline using criteria or main points that are significant to you, e.g., you may want to analyze significant experiences and events that led to examples of milestone learning this semester; helped to identify unique patterns in your learning; or revealed factors such as cultural filters or agency barriers that impeded your learning.
3. **Application to a Case Study**: Use a case from field that most clearly illustrates some of your learning successes and challenges in practice with African American clients this semester. Analyze how the work in this case progressed over time (what worked and did not work) based on the what you learned from your analysis of your learning timeline in #2 above and other insights. Also, consider how your personal values have changed, remained the same, or expanded. Evaluate the consistency between your personal values and social work values and ethics in terms of applying practice knowledge and skills with African American families. Summarize any final thoughts about your learning this semester regarding practice with African Americans.

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

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**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.