Prerequisites: Taken concurrently with SW 710 and 711 or following completion of these courses.*

Credit Hours: 14

I. COURSE RATIONALE
The mission of the School of Social Welfare is to educate students whose skills, compassion and commitment enhance individual and community well being. This mission is accomplished through providing students with the knowledge necessary to practice effectively and ethically with the full range of social systems, emphasizing social justice, a strengths approach, diversity, and a critical perspective. The School is committed to preparing graduates who are effective and culturally competent practitioners with individuals, groups, families, organizations and communities, and who accept responsibility to continue their professional education.

The Practicum is an integral component of the curriculum in social work education. During the Foundation year of the M.S.W. program, the curriculum focuses on helping the student develop a generalist perspective of social work practice and preparing the student for advanced level education in either the Clinical Social Work Concentration or the Social Work Administration Concentration. The Practicum engages the student in supervised social work practice to develop a generalist perspective and provides students with opportunities to apply classroom learning in the field setting. This includes classes in Policy, Research, Human Behavior in the Social Environment, Direct Practice and Community and Organizational Practice. Students are expected to complete a minimum of 600 hours in the assigned Practicum setting, averaging 20 hours each week for 30 weeks or two consecutive semesters.* A minimum of 50% of practicum hours must be spent in direct client practice.

The Foundation level Practicum is closely related to all of the courses in the Foundation Level curriculum. The interaction between the acquisition of knowledge about policy, research, human behavior and practice, and the opportunity to translate this knowledge into action in the Practicum is at the crux of the development of a generalist perspective and of a solid identity as a social work practitioner. This interaction promotes the student's ability to develop a critical perspective on all aspects of their learning.

* If practicum is not taken concurrently with these courses, then a concurrent practicum exception form must be submitted to, and approved by the Associate Dean of Academic Programs prior to enrolling in these courses.
II. **EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

Students are expected to develop an individual learning contract, in conjunction with their field instructor and field liaison, that will specify the activities they will be involved in to accomplish the following learning objectives and how the attainment of the objectives will be measured. By the end of the two-semester MSW Foundation practicum students will be able to:

1. Apply critical thinking skills and a critical perspective in the application of appropriate empirically based theories and knowledge to practice interventions with systems of all sizes. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objectives 1, 7).

2. Understand the origins and effects of oppression and discrimination as well as multiple social work practice approaches that advance social and economic justice, with particular attention to populations-at-risk. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 4)

3. Engage in culturally competent practice with diverse populations in regard to age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, and sexual orientation. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 3)

4. Apply a strengths-based social work perspective that is consistent with the values and ethical standards of the profession and with an understanding of and respect for the positive value of diversity, social and economic justice and using a critical perspective. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 2)

5. Understand the history of social welfare and the social work profession and be able to apply this understanding to the analysis of new and emerging issues. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 5).

6. Demonstrate the ability to analyze the impact of social policies on client systems, workers, and agencies, particularly as they relate to inhibiting or advancing social and economic justice, and the skills for influencing policy. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 8)

7. Engage in practice from a strengths-based and generalist perspective with systems of all sizes, continuously refining and advancing the quality of their practice as well as that of the larger social work profession. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 6).

8. Evaluate research and apply it to practice, and use research skills to both evaluate one's own practice and those of others. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 9)

9. Communicate and practice with a wide range of clients populations, colleagues, and community members, utilizing computing technologies as professional communication tools when appropriate (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 10)

10. Engage in practice within organizations and service delivery systems and participate in necessary organizational and system change. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 12).

11. Demonstrate appropriate use of self in social work practice with systems of all sizes. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 13)
12. Demonstrate the ability to use supervision and consultation appropriately. (Reflects MSW Foundation Program Objective 11)

III. CURRICULUM THEMES
The Foundation Field Education is designed to provide students with practice experience that will allow them to develop a generalist perspective on social work practice and to integrate knowledge obtained in the classroom with the reality of practice in the field. The curriculum themes of the school are:

- **Strengths Perspective:** Students are expected to demonstrate their ability to complete assessments and develop intervention plans with client systems of varying sizes utilizing the strengths perspective;

- **Diversity:** Students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of how race, ethnicity, class, economic status, age, gender, sexual orientation and other characteristics affect the experience of clients, and to show respect, sensitivity and appreciation for these experiences;

- **Social and Economic Justice:** Students are expected to demonstrate their ability to analyze the impact of societal and institutional oppression on individuals and how this oppression is perpetuated through agency and social policies;

- **Critical Perspective:** Students are expected to demonstrate their ability to critically reflect on their own practice, understand the similarities and differences between various helping professions, and to understand clients systems of various sizes using different theoretical perspectives.

IV. THE LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE
The Foundation level Practicum draws on relevant knowledge and skills that may enhance the ability of students to achieve the stated educational outcomes. Students are encouraged to use their knowledge from courses on history, literature, social sciences and fine arts along with the knowledge and skills gained from life experiences and their concurrent social work courses to support their learning.

V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND VALUES
Students will be expected to demonstrate a beginning understanding of the NASW Code of Ethics and to begin to analyze their work with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations through this value system.

VI. PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS
All students will be expected to work with vulnerable populations within the limits imposed by the field practicum agency, and demonstrate the ability to develop a culturally competent generalist perspective on social work practice.

VII. TOPICS
The Required Topics of the MSW Foundation field practicum are grouped into four broad areas:

A. **Professional Learning** includes the development of professional identity, incorporation of the NASW Code of Ethics into practice, the ability to reflect on and critically analyze one's
own practice, taking active responsibility for one's own learning and performing in a
professional manner.

1. The basic components of professional behavior.
2. Verbal and written communication skills.
3. Student responsibility for own learning.
4. The NASW Code of Ethics.
5. Reflective practice skills.
6. Use of supervision

B. Direct Practice includes the development of knowledge and skills to work effectively with
individuals, groups and families from a generalist perspective utilizing theoretical
knowledge to understand the client system, assessing both the strengths the client systems
bring to the situation as well as the barriers clients face in obtaining their goals.

1. Development of a generalist practice perspective with systems of all sizes through all
phases of the helping process.
2. Development of relationships with individuals, families and groups as well as members
of communities and organizations.
3. Collaborative relationships with other staff and agencies in facilitating client access and
use of needed resources.
5. Work with diverse populations in regard to age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family
structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, and sexual
orientation.
6. Social work practice from a generalist perspective that takes into consideration the effect
of oppression and discrimination that furthers the advancement of social and economic
justice.
7. Social work practice perspectives that are strengths based and consistent with the NASW
Code of Ethics.

C. Community and Organizational Practice includes developing the knowledge and skills to
understand the organization and the community both as the context for practice with
individuals, families and small groups, as well as to understand the community and
organization as client systems in and of themselves.

1. Agency policy formulation.
2. State and federal social policies that impact agency service delivery.
3. Work with interagency and community work groups.
4. Comprehensive assessment of an issue of importance to the agency and/or the
community.
5. Work with staff within the agency, members of the community, and other organizations.
D. **Research and Policy Practice** includes the development of knowledge and skills needed to (1) evaluate research studies and the effectiveness of practice and (2) analyze the impact of social policies on clients, systems, workers, and agencies and to influence policy.

1. Research related to best practices with the appropriate population and field of practice.
2. Evaluation of practice with client systems of various sizes
3. Development of social policy.

VIII. **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

*Required:*  
All students are expected to read the *Field Education Handbook.*

*Recommended:*  
Readings may be assigned on an individual basis by the field instructor or the field liaison according to the needs of the student and the mission of the agency.

IX. **RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENTS**

Specific learning assignments for each student that operationalize the learning objectives for the Foundation Level MSW Practicum will be developed within the Field Education setting through mutual agreement of the student, field instructor and field liaison. This agreement will be documented in the Field Learning Contract. The guidelines for developing the learning contract are detailed in the *Field Education Handbook.* The field instructor and liaison will evaluate students on their overall performance on the learning objectives for Foundation Level Practicum at the end of the 600 hours, utilizing the evaluation instrument in the *Field Education Handbook.* Intermittent evaluations will also take place throughout the course of the Practicum to evaluate student progress in meeting the learning objectives, as specified by the Field Education Office.

X. **GRADING**

The vast majority of students will receive a P grade first semester and an S grade second semester.

Students receive credit for the Field Education only after they have completed the total number of clock hours in SW 701. Grades are recommended by the field instructor and assigned by the field liaison. Grading is on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) basis at the end of the field practicum, with grading at the end of the first semester being Pass (P) or Unsatisfactory (U). An Incomplete (I) may be given when a student has made satisfactory progress, but has insufficient clock hours for completion of the Field Education due to illness or other factors beyond the student’s control for which an exception has been granted by both the field instructor and liaison.

The vast majority of students will receive a P grade first semester and an S grade second semester. However, if a student:

- Receives an Unsatisfactory grade at the end of first semester the MSW Program Director and the Director of Field Education will meet with the student to discuss the student’s future in the program.
• Receives a P grade at the end of first semester and an Unsatisfactory grade at the end of second semester, the student will not receive any credit for the Field Practicum in which she/he has been enrolled. If a student receives an unsatisfactory grade then the Director of Field Education, the MSW Program Director, the student and other appropriate individuals will discuss the student’s future in the program.

• Receives an Incomplete (I), a written plan for completion of the practicum must be developed by the student in conjunction with the field instructor and approved by the field instructor and field liaison.

An Unsatisfactory grade in Practicum may be assigned if a student engages in behavior described under “Grounds for Dismissal” in the Field Education Handbook. In these instances dismissal will be immediate. However, if the student’s behavior does not meet the criteria for immediate dismissal, the following procedures must occur before an Unsatisfactory grade will be assigned in Practicum:

1. The field instructor must inform the student of the specific aspects of his/her performance which are not meeting the expectations of satisfactory performance and immediately notify the field liaison of her/his concerns;

2. The student, field instructor and field liaison must meet to develop a behaviorally specific, time-limited contract to help the student meet expectations in the areas of concern (complete Practicum Concern Form). This contract must be behaviorally specific so that the student, field instructor and liaison can all measure if the student has met the expectations to receive a passing grade. The contract must specify the performance areas that are needing improvement; the functional responsibilities of the student for demonstrating progress; the functional responsibilities of the field instructor of supporting the student; the specific means by which progress will be evaluated; the dates where progress will be evaluated and the determination of the final grade. The field liaison will inform the Director of Field Education if a student is in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory evaluation.

3. The field liaison is expected to be actively involved in any situation where the student is in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory grade and will offer consultation during this period to the student and the field instructor. The field liaison may require specific documentation from the student and/or the field instructor. The field liaison is responsible for assigning the final grade.

Attendance Policy:
The MSW Foundation Practicum requires that students complete 600 hours over the course of two-semesters.

1. Sick/Family Leave: Students in the MSW Foundation Practicum are allowed 20 hours of sick/family leave each semester. Students must make up time for absences when it exceeds the allowable number of hours. It is expected that students will behave in a professionally responsible manner, will provide advance notice of an anticipated absence, and make appropriate arrangements for their absence. If the practicum is completed as a block, the student is allowed a total of 40 hours of sick/family leave.

2. University Holidays: If a student is scheduled to be in Practicum on a day that the University has cancelled classes students are not required to attend practicum, and these hours count towards the student's total clock hours. However, as with sick/family leave,
it is expected that students will behave in a professionally responsible manner and make appropriate arrangements for their absence.

XI. **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**
Students are asked on the practicum planning materials to specify if they have any special learning needs that need accommodation. The Field Education Office works closely with the student and the Services for Students with Disabilities Office to provide reasonable accommodation so the student will have a fair opportunity to perform in practicum.

XII. **RECORDING AND SHARING RECORDINGS OF LECTURES**
Course materials prepared by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of any type without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. On request, the instructor will usually grant permission for students to audio tape information, on the condition that these audio tapes are only used by the individual making the recording. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in practicum.

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. All written materials submitted to the field liaison must follow HIPAA Regulations.

XIV. **INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY**
Field Instructors have agreed to provide a minimum of 1 hour of supervision each week. The exact timing of this meeting and general availability of the field instructor are determined on an individual basis.

XV. **INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**
Students are expected to attend practicum during inclement weather if the agency is open. If the student is unable to attend then the student is expected to behave in a professionally responsible manner and make appropriate arrangements with their field instructor. These hours will NOT count towards the student’s total clock hours.
If the agency closes due to inclement weather when a student is scheduled to be in attendance, students are not required to attend practicum, and these hours count towards the student’s total clock hours.