The University of Kansas
School of Social Welfare

MASTER SYLLABUS

Sw 984 Social Work Practice: Identifying and Improving “Best Practices”

I. Seminar Focus and Purpose

The main focus of this seminar is on developing skills for conducting multi-dimensional, value critical inquiry about “best practices” relevant to social work practice, and applying the results of that inquiry toward extending and improving current “best practices”. These skills are essential for a variety of roles undertaken by doctoral students and doctoral graduates, including research, scholarship, innovative program development, teaching, and grant writing. Each week, students build on their knowledge and skills in best practices inquiry in the topic area of their choice. Included is the role of social workers in using knowledge about current best practices to help shape program policy at the program development level.

II. Seminar Educational Outcomes

As a result of completing this seminar, students will be able to:

1. Describe and summarize alternative, multi-dimensional approaches to best practices inquiry, including the perspectives of research, consumer experience, and professional wisdom.

2. Develop criteria for the analysis of best practices that reflect the generic principles, values, and skills necessary for achieving positive client outcomes in a range of different fields of practice and relevant to a range of culturally diverse populations.

3. Analyze a target population’s needs/problems and the preferred outcomes to meet the needs.

4. Conduct a formal, methodical, multi-dimensional inquiry into current state-of-the-art best practices for the chosen target population/problem.

5. Conduct a thorough methodological and value-based critique of current best practices for the chosen target population/problem that recommends how current best practices can/should be improved.

6. Write publishable quality manuscript, targeting a specific professional journal.

III. Required Topics

In accordance with the educational objectives, the following topics are required to be covered. The manner and extent of coverage is at the discretion of the instructor.

- Best Practices—definitional issues, including social work practice as art vs. science, and the various types and sources of knowledge.
- Evidence-based Practice
- Empirically-based Practice
• Consumer voice
• Professional practice wisdom
• Value-critical analysis
• Quality criteria for Qualitative and Quantitative research
• Conducting library searches for relevant sources