

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Social Work Practice in Organizations and Communities

<b>Course/Unique Number:</b> SW 334/ 64021	<b>Semester:</b> Spring 2014
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b> M/W 4.00-5.30 SSW 2.140	<b>Office Hours:</b> M/W 12.30 – 3.30 and by appointment
<b>Instructor:</b> Diane McDaniel Rhodes, PhD	<a href="mailto:Diane.Rhodes@utexas.edu">Diane.Rhodes@utexas.edu</a>   SSW 3.116D 512.471.1831

**I. Course Description**

Social Work seeks to bring order, to connect private troubles to public causes, and help disenfranchised people create better lives for themselves. In this class you will learn about practicing social work in organizations and in communities. This course examines the community and organizational context within which social services are delivered: community engagement, as well as how funding, mandate, and organizational arrangements influence service delivery, and community and individual wellbeing.

The course emphasizes the interlocking and complex nature of structural systems, culture and personal identity with content on populations-at-risk, examining the factors that contribute to and constitute being at risk. It introduces the student to the obligation that social services meet the needs of communities served. This includes equipping students with skills to recognize diversity within and between groups that may influence assessment, planning, intervention, policy and research. Students learn how to define, design, and implement strategies for effective practice with persons from diverse backgrounds. The course also includes an overview of the development of the community in America and the interaction between communities and service organizations. Attention is given to community dynamics with global contexts and international practice.

**II. Course Objectives:** *(By the end of the course the student should be:)*

1. Familiar with the major concepts and dynamics of formal organizations and their influence on social work practice; **(PB11, 27)**
2. Familiar with the impact of the organizational mandate, funding sources, and other constituencies on problem definitions and goal formulation; **(PB27)**
3. Able to identify major concepts in organizational theories and to explain how such concepts relate to social work practiced at individual, family, organizational, and community levels, each as a focus of social work practice; **(PB11, 27)**
4. Familiar with the influence of community norms, priorities, and competitive community factions on the definition of problem/need and resource allocation for the delivery of social services; **(PB12, 27)**
5. Familiar with relevant cultures and how culture shapes individual lives and community processes.

6. **(PB 12, 27)**
7. Able to understanding mezzo and macro economic events and how these events impact individual and community welfare **(PB27, 28)**
8. Familiar with the involvement of lay citizen groups as staff supplement and as a potential strategy for change; **(PB11, 27, 28)**
9. Familiar with information about special service populations and the participation of such populations in professional settings and community organizations;**(PB12, 27)**
10. Familiar with basic planning approaches, their advantages, and disadvantages and be able to utilize an empirical approach and associated tools to gather and analyze data to describe populations and communities and design service programs **(PB12, 28)**.

### **III. Required Texts and Materials**

**The Handbook of Community Practice. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.** Marie Weil, Editor. Sage Publishers. 2013. The Instructor will assign additional reading and video to supplement the text. Supplemental articles, handouts and links are posted to the class WIKI.

### **IV. TEACHING METHODS**

This course incorporates a variety of teaching methods including lectures, readings, in class and online discussions, guest speakers, audiovisual materials, group activities, and student presentations to ensure a rich learning experience. The content of the course has the potential to be emotionally charged because of possible controversial issues; therefore, the students and professor will establish guidelines for a respectful and challenging learning environment collectively.

**Students are expected to contribute through significant active participation in collaborative class activities and discussions.**

### **V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

The following assignments and activities will be completed during the semester. Your grade will be based on a total of 100 points accrued by the end of the semester.

Detailed directions for each assignment are posted on the class wiki including the grading criteria.

#### **Attendance, Punctuality, and Contributions to Class (20 pts)**

You are expected to attend class regularly and participate in an interactive framework between students and professor. Failure to attend class regularly and failure to demonstrate comprehension of the readings through class discussion either in the classroom or online will have a significant impact on the final grade.

## **Blogging (20pts)**

This course involves a significant amount of required reading and classroom interaction. Each student will contribute to a class blog set up by the instructor and make weekly entries in the comments section of each blog. Those comments will be about 250 words and will reference the readings, classroom discussions, and responses to relevant issues posted by the instructor related to macro-level practice, public policy, government or international intervention.

Blog posts are expected to include photographs, video, and poetry, etc. as well as written reflections and responses to the readings, news, popular culture or personal experience.

## **Social Work Student Day at the Legislature (20pts) on March 4**

Students will convene at 9:00 am at the First United Methodist Church meeting hall for training, and proceed to the Capitol Steps for speak outs and time to visit legislative offices. Participants will coordinate their own legislative visits. More info on that is coming. For this class, though, you will work in teams of three to develop ideas about what you'd like to speak with legislators about, gathering back-up information on your issue to leave with legislative aides, etc. You will write a 750 word reflection paper (individually) about your visit. *Make plans now to be available for this.*

1. What did you observe? Describe in detail the setting, people (and their roles), and circumstances you observed.
2. Discuss any problems that you encountered with the process and strategies employed.
3. What did you accomplish, both individually and as part of the large group of students at the capitol?
4. Observation and listening can be very useful in the development of assessment skills and planning. Based on your observations, formulate two separate ways a social worker might have (or did) impact the setting, people, or circumstances.

## **Or: if you have my permission to miss the Student Day at the Legislature:**

Conduct an observational study of a social service system or structure in action (e.g., observe the waiting-room at a TANF office, or in a social service agency), court proceedings (e.g., observe a juvenile court case, or a protective order docket), or the criminal processing of offenders (e.g., do a "ride-along" with the city police). Write a 750 word paper that describes your observations and interactions between participants and systems. The paper must be typed and double-spaced.

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### **Mini- Hypothetical Grant Proposal (20pts)**

For this assignment, you will compose a grant proposal for a hypothetical social service project or program. You can be creative in suggesting your project topic, though the idea should be your own and it should relate to an existing social service program that you have worked/volunteered in.

### **Comprehensive Examination (20 pts)**

A comprehensive take home exam will be distributed near the end of the semester and students will have approximately one week to complete the exam. Responses will be graded on thoroughness, including student's ability to integrate readings from the texts, collateral readings, community experiences and class discussions.

## **VI. COURSE POLICIES**

**1. Conduct and Civility:** Social work students adhere to the Student Standards for Professional Conduct of the NASW Code of Ethics and assume responsibility for their conduct. Scholastic honesty and integrity are to be consistent social work values. The instructor will comply with University guidelines regarding scholastic dishonesty, including plagiarism. Social work practitioners respect others; therefore, differences in values, opinions, and feelings of class members and guest speakers will be respected. Students will help create and support a learning environment that does not interfere with the learning of fellow students.

**2. Readings and Preparatory Assignments:** Students are expected to be active participants in the classroom community. Students are also expected to complete readings and preparatory assignments prior to class. Failure to demonstrate comprehension of the readings will be considered when assigning the final grade. Students are responsible for the material in the assigned readings whether or not the material is covered in class. Professor reserves the right to conduct quizzes should there be a pattern of students not demonstrating that they have completed the readings and are not prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion.

**3. Professional Communication and Interactions:** Refrain from private conversations during class or other disruptive behavior. Class participation is required. Speak up and contribute to class. Disrespectful behavior is against the University Honor Code and will not be tolerated.

**4. Class Attendance Policy:** Punctuality and timeliness are important for social work practitioners. Class attendance is required. It is your responsibility to sign the weekly attendance sheet. The instructor should be notified in advance of any planned absence and as soon as possible in the case of an unforeseen, serious emergency.

**5. Assignments and Grades:** Assignments should be turned in via email prior to 8.00pm on the date they are due, barring serious, unforeseen medical illness or family emergencies. Late assignments will be considered when assigning the final grade.

**6. Writing Style:** The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association Sixth Edition (APA) is the style manual to be used by all students.

**7. Use of WIKI:** The instructor uses a wiki page; a Web-based course management /collective workspace. An orientation will be given the first day of class. If you do not have a personal computer with personal Internet access, there are computers available for your use at the SW Learning Resource Center (LRC), the Flawn Academic Center, campus and public libraries.

**8. Course Modification:** To ensure achievement for course objectives, the professor reserves the right to make modifications to any part of this syllabus related to schedule and assignment due dates. Should any modifications be made, students will be notified in class and modifications will also be posted to the WIKI page. Students should check their email and WIKI frequently. Note that some of the links to documents and videos on the Internet may change. Documents, new links or alternate options will be provided.

## **VII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

### **The University of Texas Honor Code**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

### **Professional Conduct in Class**

The professor expects students to act like professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

### **Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty**

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

### **Documented Disability Statement**

Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

### **Religious Holidays**

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students**

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently: daily, but at minimum twice a week to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

### **Safety**

As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

### **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

### Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation: Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building. If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions. Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

### VIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading	Work Due
Monday January 13	Introductions Course Overview Review of Syllabus and Assignments		
Wednesday 1/15	Engaged Social Work and the Context of Community Practice	Weil Ch. 1 & 2	Sign in to WIKI & find the class blog
Monday 20	MLK Holiday		
Wednesday 22	Social Justice and Community Practice	Weil Ch. 3 & 4	
Monday 27	Theories of Community	Weil Ch. 5 & 6	
Wednesday 29			
Monday February 3	Community Development	Weil Ch. 7 & 9	
Wednesday 5			
Monday 10	Community Organizing	Weil Ch. 10 & 11	
Wednesday 12			
Monday 17	Community Planning	Weil Ch. 12 & 14	
Wednesday 19			
Monday 24	Policy and practice	Weil Ch. 18	
Wednesday 26			

Monday March 3	Social and Economic development in a changing world	Weil Ch. 23	Mini Grant Proposal Due
Wednesday 5			
Monday 10	Spring Break		
Wednesday 12			
Monday 17	Restorative Justice	Weil Ch. 27	
Wednesday 19			
Monday 24	Global issues in community practice	Weil Ch. 28	Observation Paper Due
Wednesday 26			
Monday 31	Global Poverty	Weil Ch. 29	
Wednesday 2			
Monday April 7	International practice	Weil Ch. 30	
Wednesday 9			
Monday 14	Community-based organizations	Weil Ch. 32	
Wednesday 16			
Monday 21	Fundraising & sustaining organizations	Weil Ch. 37	
Wednesday 23	Program evaluation	Weil Ch. 38	
Monday 28	Reflections		Final Exam available
Wednesday 30***			

### IX. Course Grading:

94.0 and Above	A
90.0 to 93.999	A-
87.0 to 89.999	B+
84.0 to 86.999	B
80.0 to 83.999	B-
77.0 to 79.999	C+
74.0 to 76.999	C
70.0 to 73.999	C-
67.0 to 69.999	D+
64.0 to 66.999	D
60.0 to 63.999	D-
Below 60.0	F