

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Course Number:** SW 381T

**Instructor's Name:** Mitch Sudolsky, LCSW

**Unique Number:** 63250

**Office Number:** SSW 3.104A

**Semester:** Fall 2014

**Email:** [sudolsky@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:sudolsky@mail.utexas.edu)

**Meeting Time/Place:** T 5:30-8:30 PM  
SSW 2.122

**Office Hours:** T 4:00-5:00 and by  
appointment

**DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES**

**I. Standardized Course Description**

This course familiarizes students with the macro context of social work practice. It examines the reciprocal relationship between human behavior and social environments. It emphasizes the interlocking and complex nature of 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 groups served and are culturally relevant. This includes equipping students with skills to recognize diversity within and between groups that may influence assessment, planning, intervention, and research. Students learn how to define, design, and implement strategies for effective practice with persons from diverse backgrounds.

This course examines the impact of social structure and other societal factors on one's personal life chances in relation to equity, fairness, opportunity, and other issues of social and economic justice. Drawing on a systems-ecological perspective, this course helps students develop skills at using systems thinking approaches to understanding organizations and communities with special emphasis on their application to a variety of oppressed and disadvantaged populations and multiple levels of intervention. Special emphasis is given to the development of assessment skills and intervention methods that are relevant to empowerment, capacity building and social change within organizations and communities. Understanding the role of age, race, gender, social class, culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, and physical and mental ability is an integral part of this course.

**II. Standardized Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course the students will be able to:

1. Discuss communities and organizations as a context for professional practice to meet individual needs, build community capacity, and promote social and economic justice (PB11 and 27)

2. Demonstrate an understanding of the value dilemmas and ethical issues confronting social work professionals and their implications for social work practice with organizations and communities (PB 27)
3. Assess the influence of community norms, priorities and competitive community factions on the social structure of communities and the delivery of human services (PB 11)
4. Assess various evidence-based intervention approaches for working with organizations and communities (PB 11)
5. Analyze the impacts of organizational and community dynamics on populations-at-risk and relate those impacts to the participation of such populations in organizational and community governance, human service provision, and policy formulation (PB 12 and 27)
6. Evaluate alternative strategies for initiating change in organizations and communities, including planning models, coalition building, community development, direct action, and legislative advocacy (PB 11,12,27 and 28)
7. Understand the relevance of age, race, gender, social class, culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, and physical and mental ability in social work practice that is grounded in social and economic justice (PB 11)

The School of Social Work has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952. In order to maintain our accreditation status, we engage in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE's Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Several required courses in our curriculum are part of this ongoing assessment, including this course. Below is a list of the specific Educational Policies (EP) and Practice Behaviors (PB) that are assessed in this course. The complete EPAS can be optioned from your Student Handbook.

**EP2.1.3 Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments**

PB 11 Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom

Objectives 1,3,4,6,7

Assignment: Class exercises and activities, exam and project

PB12 Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation

Objectives 5 and 6

Assignment: Class exercises and activities, exam and project

PB13 Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues

Objectives (not specified)

Assignment: Class exercises and activities, exam and project

### **EP 2.1.9 Respond to contexts that shape practice**

PB27 Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services

Objectives 1,2,5,6

Assignment: Class exercises and activities, exam and project

PB 28 Provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services

Objective 6

Assignment: Class exercises and activities, exam and project

### **III. TEACHING METHODS**

The primary teaching methods will be lectures, discussion, and small group exercises involving case analyses and independent student research.

### **IV. REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS, AND MATERIALS**

Netting, F.E., Kettner, P.M., McMurtry, S.L., and Thomas, M.L. (2012), Social Work Macro Practice (5th Edition)

Putnam, R.D. and Feldstein, L.M. (2003) Better Together: Restoring the American Community

Selected required readings will also be placed on Blackboard. The instructor reserves the right to change or add readings, and students will be notified in class and via email should this occur.

### **V. Course Requirements**

#### **1. Attendance, Preparation, Contribution (15% of grade)**

**Students are expected to attend classes regularly and to participate in class discussion and exercises. Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class, and to be prepared to demonstrate their familiarity with major concepts and ideas from the readings during class discussions and experiential learning assignments.** The grade on class participation will be based on the quality and quantity

of student contributions to class discussion, and on the degree of critical thinking shown in class discussions.

Failure to regularly attend class and contribute constructively to class discussions will be considered in determining the final grade. Students will be allowed **one (1) unexcused absence**. In cases where a student misses more than one class, the instructor reserves the right to lower the student's final grade by one point for each class missed. Students should not leave class during the break. In extenuating circumstances of absence, the student is to inform the instructor; documentation may be required. Students are responsible for any material (class notes, handouts, etc.) missed due to absence.

## 2. **Book review paper (15% of grade)**

Students will write a 6-8 page book review of one of the following books:

Fadiman, Anne (1997), *The spirit catches you and you fall down: a Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two culture;*

Tough, Paul (2008), *Whatever it takes: Geoffrey Canada's quest to change Harlem and America*

Kidder, Tracy (2004), *Mountains beyond mountains: the quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a man who would cure the world*

Rideau, Wilbert (2010), *In the place of justice: a story of punishment and deliverance*

Verghese, Abraham (1994), *My own country: a doctor's story of a town and its people in the age of AIDS*

The review should consist of the following elements: a summary of the issues discussed in the book; a discussion of the role of organizations and service delivery; the relevance of community in assessing the social problems described and in the development of approaches to these problems. The review must include references to concepts discussed in class and in course readings in the discussion of organizational and community issues addressed in the book, and should also provide evidence of critical thinking by the student. Research citations must be included to substantiate all assertions of fact.

## 3. **Community Research Paper (35% of grade)**

The purpose of this assignment is to research community approaches to a problem relevant to social work practice, and to learn about an organization in Austin that provides services to a population-at-risk group as defined in this course. Students will be asked to select from the following problem areas: Veterans services; criminal justice/juvenile justice; Adult behavioral health (mental health/substance abuse services, etc.); Child and adolescent mental health (education; at risk youth; foster care, etc.);

Homelessness; Women's issues (e.g., poverty, wage equality, domestic violence, human trafficking); Aging; Immigration/refugee services. Each student will report their first and second choices to the instructor via email by the second class. The instructor will then assign students to a problem area based on these choices, for the purpose of structuring panel discussions of these issues (see item #4 below). Students should identify an organization or agency and research its mission, goals, programs, and accomplishments in depth with respect to the population-at-risk which is its focus. This research must include some contact with the organization/agency, e.g., via visit, interview with staff, or attendance at a community or organizational meeting.

Subsequent to this, students are asked to write a 8-10 page paper about the organization/agency, the community that it serves and the problem(s) that it seeks to address. Papers must answer the following questions:

- a) What are the dimensions of the problem as it exists at the local, regional, or state level?
- b) What approaches are used by the organization? What is the evidence cited by the agency as the basis for its interventions with the focus population?
- c) What are the characteristics of the community served by the organization? What are the characteristics of the client population served?
- d) What is the evidence cited by the organization as proof of its effectiveness? What is the program evaluation strategy utilized?
- e) What are your views of this agency's strengths and weaknesses? A discussion of the extent the agency uses culturally competent practices should be included.
- f) What is your assessment of the degree to which the problem/issue that is the focus of your paper is addressed adequately in Austin? Where are the gaps in service delivery, and what are your recommendations to address these?

4. **Panel Discussion (5% of grade)** Students will participate on a panel discussion with other students who have conducted research in the same problem area.

5. **Short papers (5%)**: Students will prepare two short papers based on issues discussed in class. One will be an ethical analysis of several cases; the other will be an in-depth case analysis.

6. **Examinations (25% of grade)**: Two 1 ½ hour examinations consisting of short answers and essays will cover all lecture content and course readings.

### **Overall Criteria for Evaluating Student Assignments**

**The skills possessed by effective professional social workers include the ability to write well and to speak in an articulate and persuasive manner. Your written work should be well conceptualized and researched, clearly organized, and supported by examples and details. Papers must be typewritten, proofread for spelling and grammatical errors, double-spaced**

**and in 12 font, and must follow the APA style format.** The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) is the style manual to be used for all assignments. A summary handout of this manual is available in Student Services. The complete manual is available in the Learning Resource Center. Incorrect use of APA style may result in a deduction of points on assignments. Appropriate referencing (authors, titles, page numbers, etc.) of assignments is required. This includes giving due credit to others when indirect quotes (paraphrasing) and direct (verbatim) quotes are used. Short direct quotes (less than 40 words) must be placed in quotation marks. Long direct quotes (40 or more words) should be indented. Paraphrasing requires more than changing a word or two in a sentence. Failure to give due credit to others will result in a **“0” for the assignment and/or an “F” for the course.** **Plagiarism is a form of scholastic dishonesty and will be addressed as such. If you do not know how to cite appropriately, please learn before you submit any assignments.**

**Papers must include the following elements:**

- **Clear answers to all required questions**
- **Adherence to assignment parameters around length of paper (Note: papers less than the minimum length will receive no higher than a grade of 80; papers exceeding the maximum length will only be graded on a review of the maximum number of pages stipulated by the assignment)**
- **Evidence of independent, critical thinking**
- **Research from peer-reviewed professional journals and from recent books**
- **Integration of material from lectures and course readings**
- **Use of grammar, spelling, and punctuation appropriate to graduate level written work.**

**GRADUATE GRADING SCALE**

100 - 94 = A  
93.99 - 90 = A-  
89.99 - 87 = B+  
86.99 - 84 = B  
83.99 - 80 = B-  
79.99 - 77 = C+  
76.99 - 74 = C  
73.99 - 70 = C- (Class failed/no credit: 73.99 and below)  
69.99 - 67 = D+  
66.99 - 64 = D  
63.99 - 60 = D-  
Below 60 = F

**A = *Significantly exceeds assignment/performance expectations*** (evidence of critical thinking, quality and quantity of research, and analysis that resulted in work additional to that set forth in the assignment directions);

**B** = Assignment/overall performance in course meets all the requirements with evidence of critical thinking, evidence of research effort, and analysis (i.e. coherence and integration of ideas);

**C** = Average. Assignment/performance meets all the requirements but lacks evidence of in depth thinking and analysis and lacks evidence of research from professional journals or recent or influential books

**D** = There are important gaps in the assignment both in terms of requirements and critical thinking and analysis.

## VI. CLASS POLICIES

1. It is important for social work practitioners to be punctual in both attendance and in meeting deadlines. Therefore, class attendance is expected, as is handing in assignments on time. Students are expected to turn in assignments on the due date **at the beginning of class**. Assignments turned in after class starts will be considered late. Students will lose 3 points for each day that an assignment is late. **The paper due at the end of the semester will not be accepted after the last day of class.** Any adjustments in due dates must be discussed with the instructor **at least 24 hours PRIOR** to the regularly scheduled due date.
2. Students who fail to attend class on a regular basis (missing more than one class without a valid excuse, e.g., medical documentation) will be penalized one point per unexcused absence when points are totaled.
3. This course is part of a professional training program. The behavior that is expected of social workers in professional practice is also expected of students in this course. Students are expected to arrive at class punctually, to remain in class for its duration, and to maintain focus upon course content during class. Eating in class is permitted only during breaks. Cell phones, smart phones and laptops must be turned off. Social work practitioners respect others. Therefore, differences in values, opinions, and feelings of class members and guest speakers will be respected.
4. During this course, the professor will ask students to provide feedback on their learning in informal as well as formal ways, including anonymous surveys about how the professor's teaching strategies are helping or hindering student learning. It is very important for the professor to know the students' reactions to what is taking place in class, so students are encouraged to respond to these surveys, ensuring that together the professor and students can create an environment effective for teaching and learning.
5. If students are concerned about their grades, the instructor is more than willing to work with students to help them improve their course grades prior to the end of the semester. Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during office hours if you have any concerns or questions about the course material or about your performance in the course. **Final grades assigned in the course are not negotiable.**

6. Course modifications: Should any modifications or changes need to be made to the course (e.g., calendar, assignments), students will be notified in class and/or by e-mail. Students should check their e-mail frequently, and students who are absent from class should check on announcements made in class during their absence.

**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 as 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.

**CLASSROOM CIVILITY.** A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social work deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues.

**UNANTICIPATED DISTRESS.** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the instructor. The instructor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students can contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at [512-471-3515](tel:5124713515) or online at [www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/](http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/).

**USE OF CLASS MATERIALS.** The materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, exams, quizzes, and homework assignments are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized copying of the class materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary actions being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of class materials without the specific, express approval of the instructor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of sharing those materials with other current or future students.

**POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION.** Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students



choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image. Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including **any** information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in **any** way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

**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://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/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 fourteen 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 are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

- Fire Prevention Services office.

## VII. COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Description/Due Dates	Text / Readings
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Course Overview

Week 1  
(9/2)

Populations-at-risk and social work practice  
Culturally competent micro and macro practice  
Ethical analysis in micro and macro practice

Weldantam, SS., "Racial  
Disparities Found in  
Pinpointing Mental Illness,"  
*Washington Post*, June 28,  
2005

Netting, Ch. 11, 22

Friedman, T., "Taking it to the  
streets," *New York Times*, June  
29, 2003

Kirst Ashman and Hull,  
Ethical dilemmas

Sidel, W. The social  
responsibilities of health  
professionals, *JAMA*,  
11/22/96

**First and second choices for  
research paper problem area  
due**

Week 2      Understanding community and organizational  
(9/9)            problems

[www.cppp.org](http://www.cppp.org) Center for  
Public Policy Priorities. Links  
for Data, Campaigns

[www.caction.org](http://www.caction.org) Community  
Action Network. See link to  
Issue Area Groups.

Netting, Ch. 3

Patti and Resnick, Changing  
the agency from within

Joynt, M. et.al, The impact of  
neighborhood socioeconomic  
status and race on the  
prescribing of opioids in  
emergency departments  
throughout the United States,  
*Journal of General Internal  
Medicine*, June 2013

### **Ethical analysis due**

Week 3      Understanding organizations  
(9/16)

SWOT Assessment

Peter F. Drucker Self  
Assessment Tool for  
Nonprofit Organizations

Tools for Organizational  
Assessment

Farrugia, How is the nonprofit  
sector changing?

Netting, Ch. 7,8

Griffith, et. al., Racism in  
organizations, *Journal of  
community  
psychology*, 35(3), 2007

Week 4 (9/23)	Applied analysis of community and organizational problems: <u>no class meeting today</u>	Community/organizational analysis short paper
Week 5 (9/30)	Understanding populations	<p>Netting, C.4</p> <p>Johnson, The disability gulag, NY Times Magazine, 11/23/03</p> <p>Kahle, M., "A series of daily victories when living on crutches," <i>Austin American-Statesman</i>, Aug. 13, 2011</p> <p>Ryan, S. and Cole, K., From advocate to activist? Mapping the experiences of mothers of children on the autism spectrum, <i>Journal of applied research in intellectual disabilities</i>, 2009</p>
Week 6 (10/7)	<p>Understanding communities</p> <p><b><u>First examination</u></b></p>	<p>Netting, Ch.5</p> <p>Kirwan Institute, "The Geography of Opportunity in Austin and How It Is Changing"</p> <p>Putnam, Introduction, Ch.1, 2</p>

Week 7      Assessing communities  
(10/14)

A Community Position Paper:  
On the City of Austin's Study  
of the Quality of Life for  
African Americans, 2008,  
Executive Summary p.2-15

DiClemente, et. al., Efficacy of  
an HIV prevention  
intervention for African  
American adolescent girls,  
JAMA 2004;292(2): 171-179

Netting, Ch. 6

Kretzmann and McKnight,  
Introduction to "Building  
Communities from the Inside  
Out: A Path Toward Finding  
and Mobilizing a  
Community's Assets"

Putnam, Ch. 4

Week 8      Macro practice in communities: program  
(10/21)      development

"The Rebirth of Caste," from  
Alexander, Michelle, The New  
Jim Crow, p. 20-57

Netting, Ch. 9

Viguerie, "A conservative case  
for prison reform," *New York  
Times* June 9, 2013

Marcus, D.(2005)  
Communities helping kids

**Book review due**

Week 9 (10/28)	Macro practice in communities: Selecting appropriate strategies and tactics	<p>Netting, Ch. 10</p> <p>Rothman, Multi Modes of Intervention at the Macro Level</p> <p>Putnam, Ch. 7,9,11</p>
Week 10 (11/4)	Program implementation and evaluation	<p>Netting, Ch. 11</p> <p>Putnam, p. 269-294</p> <p>Philliber, S., et.al. (2002), Preventing pregnancy and improving health care access among teenagers: an evaluation of the Children's Aid Society-Carrera Program</p>
Week 11 (11/11)	Advocacy and social action	<p><a href="http://www.thetaskforce.org">www.thetaskforce.org</a></p> <p>National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, links: Our work → Policy Institute → The issues</p> <p>Loeb, We don't have to be saints</p> <p>Taylor, "The price of rebellion," <i>New York Times</i>, June 1, 2013</p> <p>Lears, R. and Blotnick, R., "Occupy Bakery," <i>New York Times</i>, July 15, 2013</p>
Week 12 (11/18)	<p>Advocacy and social action</p> <p><b><u>Second examination</u></b></p>	

Week 14 Panel discussions  
(11/25)

Week 15 Panel discussions  
(12/2)

**Community research paper  
due**