

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

Course Number:	SW381T	Instructor:	Heather Larkin Holloway, PhD
Unique Number:	61460	Office Number:	3.122B
Semester:	Fall 2017	Contact Information:	HeatherLarkin@austin.utexas.edu
Meeting Time:	Wednesday, 2:30-	Office Hours:	TBD and by appointment
Place:	5:30pm Room 2.116		

DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES

I. 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. 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;
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;
3. Assess the influence of community norms, priorities, and competitive community factions on the social structure of communities and the delivery of human services;

4. Assess various evidence-based intervention approaches for working with organizations and communities;
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;
6. Evaluate alternative strategies for initiating change in organizations and communities, including planning models, coalition building, community development, direct action, and legislative advocacy;
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.

III. Teaching Methods

Course content is covered through reading, listening, thinking, and discussing social work practice in organizations and communities. Class sessions will be devoted to focused discussions that flow from assigned readings and supplemental materials presented in class. Students are expected to ask questions, share experiences, and actively participate in class discussions. In addition, the class will include small group experiential learning, videotapes to generate discussion, and guest speakers who work in agency and community-based settings.

IV. Required and Recommended Texts and Materials

The primary text for this course will be the Community Tool Box developed by the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas (weblink is: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en>). This work group is part of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Community Health and Development. The Community Tool Box is available for free online. While the focus of much of the content is on community health, the tools and skills covered in the book are easily translatable to other kinds of community issues.

All assigned readings and other course materials are available on the course Canvas page. Several readings are assigned from the *Social Workers' Desk Reference, 3rd Ed*, edited by Corcoran and Roberts. All students are expected to purchase this book upon matriculation into the School of Social Work as the text will be used in conjunction with many of your classes throughout the program. Additional readings and materials may be assigned as the semester progresses. If additional readings are assigned, I will notify the class the week before so that students will have adequate time to read it before class.

The assigned readings for this course represent the minimum required reading for this course. There is a vast body of literature available on organizations and communities. As a graduate student, it is important to learn to use the library and search databases for additional relevant sources, particularly as you complete your assignments. Please note that our social work librarian, Carolyn Cunningham, created a research guide for social workers: <http://guides.lib.utexas.edu/socialwork> . Please acquaint yourself with the library, including available trainings, and note Carolyn Cunningham's email -- carolynlouise@austin.utexas.edu.

V. Course Requirements

Course requirements consist of a small group assignment, a take-home exam, and class attendance and participation. Course requirements, due dates, and their contribution to the final grade are summarized below.

Assignment	% of Course Grade	Due Date
Attendance and participation	15%	
Neighborhood Coalition	20%	November 22
Take-home Exam	30%	
Part 1		November 1
Part 2		December 6
Community-based Project	35%	December 6
Project deliverables	20%	
Poster presentation	10%	
Group documents	5%	

Grades for this course will be assigned using the following +/- scale.

94 and above = A	80.0 to 83.999 = B-	67.0 to 69.999 = D+
90.0 to 93.999 = A-	77.0 to 79.999 = C+	64.0 to 66.999 = D
87.0 to 89.999 = B+	74.0 to 76.999 = C	60.0 to 63.999 = D-
84.0 to 86.999 = B	70.0 to 73.999 = C-	Below 60 = F

Each of the course requirements is described in detail below. However, sometimes students still have questions about the assignments. If this is the case, please feel free to ask for clarification at any time during the course. Students may ask for clarification on an individual basis or they can ask questions at the beginning of each class session. The instructor can also be emailed at HeatherLarkin@austin.utexas.edu.

Attendance and Participation. Students are expected to attend class, complete assigned readings prior to class, and be prepared to demonstrate familiarity with major concepts and ideas from the readings during class discussions and experiential learning activities. For some students, this will mean learning to speak up, to volunteer comments or to raise questions. For others, it means being sensitive and allowing others to contribute.

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 up to 2 points for each class missed. 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.

Neighborhood Coalition Response. Students will respond to a scenario of a hypothetical neighborhood coalition meeting. Students will be provided a vignette that outlines a challenging dilemma the student must evaluate and respond to. Students will be expected to answer the questions accompanying the vignette with thoughtful responses, and **the total answer to the**

questions should not exceed 3 double-spaced pages. The assignment and grading rubric will be distributed two weeks before the assignment will be due. **Responses are due on November 22, 2017** (please note there is no class this day due to the Thanksgiving holiday – please send as an email attachment).

Take-home Exam. The take-home exam will be distributed on the third day of class and is due in two installments. Part 1 is **due prior to class on Wednesday, November 1, 2017** and Part 2 is **due on the last class day, Wednesday, December 6, 2017.** I distribute the exam on the third class day so that students can think about the questions and case vignettes as we go through the course. Rather than wait until the due date to complete the exam, students are encouraged to incorporate course content into the exam as we go through the course. Exams will be submitted via email attachment or the class Canvas page.

Community-based Project. Much of our professional work is done through task groups. Task groups are working groups that are designed to achieve some specific goal or objective. Examples of task groups include staff meetings to clarify agency policies, team meetings to coordinate treatment plans, interagency councils to work out service agreements, Board of Directors to provide community oversight, committees to plan fund-raising events, conference planning committees for professional associations, and community meetings to help residents voice concerns and solve problems.

Task groups are an essential tool for community practice and the ability to work effectively with task groups is a critical professional skill. Like other professional skills, working with task groups involves a deliberate process focused on achieving specific goals. It requires preparation before the meeting and follow-up after. It means being able to develop professional relationships with others that are grounded in trust and respect, even when we disagree with one another.

This project requires students to work in a task group consisting of 3-4 students (the instructor will assign these groups by the third class session). Each task group will be paired with a community partner to work on an issue of concern to the community partner. Students will conduct research to assess this critical social problem and identify innovative approaches that might help address the problem. This might include reviewing the existing literature to see how other communities have approached similar issues in an innovative manner, or developing a plan for how existing innovations in the community may be successfully replicated in other communities.

To achieve the goals of this project, task group members will need to develop a work plan to guide their activities and determine how to best organize the work of the group. This may mean breaking into smaller sub-groups to conduct specific tasks related to the project.

The task groups will be provided some meeting time during class. However, it is expected that additional time will be required outside of class for sub-group meetings and tasks related to the completion of project. The assignment is worth 35% of your final grade and will depend upon the products produced by the group. The group grade will be divided into 3 parts, 20% for the project outcome, 10% for the poster and presentation, and 5% for the task group documents (see below).

Project deliverables. Each group will produce a specific product for the community partner. The format and content of that product is outlined in the project description but may require

additional negotiation between the group and the community partner as the project unfolds. This means that the product may be somewhat different for each group. Some community partners may want a formal written report. Others may prefer some training materials, a PowerPoint presentation, survey instrument and methodology for a community survey, or a set of policy recommendations based on the group's research. What is common across the products is that they should be well organized, neatly presented, and in a form useful to your community partner. In other words, the final product should be professionally done and take into consideration the needs of the community partner.

Professional Presentations. In addition to the project deliverables, each group should be prepared to make two presentations of their project. One presentation will be a poster session during the last class session on **December 6**. The other presentation will be at the discretion of the community partner with the time and place of that presentation being negotiated with the community partner. That presentation should be developed in consultation with the community partner, regarding the audience, format, length, and content.

Task Group Documents: agendas, minutes, work plan. Task groups need to produce documents that represent a record of the group's activities. These include meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and a work plan. The work plan is a planning document that will help your group organize the project and identify important tasks that need to be accomplished. Meeting agendas should provide a roadmap for the meeting to give the members a sense of purpose and direction for the meeting. Minutes should indicate who is in attendance at each meeting, how tasks were determined and assigned, which groups or individuals took responsibility for specific tasks, and the expected timeline for completion of each task. When individuals or sub-groups complete assignments outside of the task force meeting, it is expected that these are reported to the entire group and documented as appropriate. A group page will be created in Canvas for each group and these documents should be posted on the group page so that all members of the groups will have access to these documents.

This is a **"group project"** and I hold the group responsible for its successful completion. That means that the group should address issues regarding quality standards for the project, timely task completion, workload, etc. If and when problems arise in the group, the group should work as a unit to try to develop appropriate solutions. Of course, as professor, I will be available to consult with the groups as needed. I will also intervene if the community partner has expressed concerns about the project.

NOTE: As the professor, I do reserve the right to award differentially weighted grades on the group project. This will normally occur when a member of the group fails to actively participate in the group, consistently misses deadline for assigned tasks, or produces work that is below the quality standards expected for the project. In other words, if a student's individual performance is consistently below par so that it jeopardizes the grades of the other members of the group, I will down grade that student. Group member feedback will be included within task group documents.

VI. University and School Notices and Policies

Conditional Admission. Students who were admitted into the MSSW program on a conditional basis are not able to take an incomplete for this course if the conditions for admission are still in

place.

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.

Classroom Civility. Students are expected 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. A course brings together 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. 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. 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, I do expect students to engage one another with respect and professionalism.

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 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

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/>).

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 duplication 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 sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of sharing those materials with other current or future students.

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://ddce.utexas.edu/disability>.

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.

Title IX Reporting. In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct based on gender. All faculty, instructors, and staff who supervise students are required to relay student reports of alleged sex discrimination, sexual harassment, including sexual violence or sexual misconduct, experienced by a student to the University Title IX office and an assistant or associate dean of the school. Further information including student resources related to Title IX may be found at <http://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

Campus Carry Policy. The University's policy on concealed fire arms may be found here: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>. You also may find this information by accessing the Quick Links menu on the School's website.

Classroom Confidentiality. Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations as well.

Discussions with individuals outside of the educational context are not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

Use of Email 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.

Behavioral 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 <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.

VII. Course Policies and Notices

Canvas: The instructor uses Canvas as the primary means of managing course materials. All course materials will be posted on the course’s site. The site may also be used to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to give online quizzes or surveys. Students are responsible for checking this site regularly for class announcements and for new postings. Support in using Canvas can be obtained from the ITS Help Desk by calling 475-9400 between 8AM-6PM on Monday through Friday.

Late Assignment Policies: Except in the case of extreme emergencies, and then only with prior permission from the professor, late assignments will not be accepted without penalty. Students will lose 3 points for each day that an assignment is late. If the due date is a problem, then the student must contact the professor and negotiate another due date at least **48 hours PRIOR** to the date specified in the course syllabus.

Incompletes: Students are expected to complete all course work by the last day of class and to complete all assignments by the dates due. Only in emergency situations will an incomplete grade be given for a course and only when, prior to the emergency, the student has been in attendance and has done satisfactory work. If an incomplete grade should be assigned, there will be a written agreement with the instructor about when and how the work will be completed.

Computer and Other Electronic Device Use Policy: Students are expected to use laptops and handheld computers in class for class related purposes only. To engage in other types of computer use and/or electronics use (e.g., accepting or making phone calls, texting, surfing the net, etc.) is unprofessional and disruptive to the course. Thus, students who violate this policy may be asked to leave the classroom.

Course and Instructor Evaluations: At the end of the semester, the standard Course Instructor Survey (CIS) provided by the University of Texas at Austin will be used to evaluate the course. The CIS offers provides a systematic, campus--- wide method of evaluating courses and instructors. I hope that every student will complete the CIS.

VII. Course Schedule

The course schedule below identifies reading assignments for each class session. All readings are available online in the course Canvas page. As we go through the semester, I may add reading to this list. When I do so I will notify you either in class or via email. All reading assignments should be completed prior to the class for which they are assigned.

Date	Description	Text/Readings
Class 1 Aug. 30	Introduction and Course Overview Overview of Community Tool Box Review Syllabus & Neighborhood Coalition Assignment	
Class 2 Sept. 6	What is a Community? Class agreements, planning, questions Presentation & discussion groups	Community Tool Box (CTB): Chapters 1 and 2 Canvas: Streeter, Community Overview
Class 3 Sept. 13	Understanding and Describing the Community Review of assignments, questions, planning Task group assignments	CTB: Chapter 3 (sections 1, 2, 4, 5, 16, 19, & 21) Canvas: The Geography of Opportunity
Class 4 Sept. 20	Assessing Community Needs Project planning/ work day	CTB: Chapter 3 (sections 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, & 22)

Class 5 Sept. 27	Assessing Community Resources	CTB: Chapters 3 (sections 8, 18, & 20) and 21 (section 8) Canvas: Asset Mapping: A Handbook
Class 6 Oct. 4	Strategies for Community Change	CTB: Chapter 5 Canvas: Rothman, Multi Modes of Intervention at the Macro Level; Community Science, Emerging Action Principles for Designing and Planning Community Change
Class 7 Oct. 11	Promoting Interest and Participation in Initiatives Project work day	CTB: Chapters 6 and 7
Class 8 Oct. 18	Developing a Strategic Plan and Organizational Structure	CTB: Chapters 8 and 9 Canvas: Bryson, The Future of Public and Nonprofit Strategic Planning in the United States
Class 9 Oct. 25	Becoming a Community Leader Project work day	CTB: Chapters 13 and 14 Canvas: Derek Siver, How to start a movement; Drew Dudley, Everyday Leadership
Class 10 Nov. 1	Analyzing Community Problems and Designing Community Interventions TAKE-HOME EXAM, PART 1 DUE BEFORE CLASS	CTB: Chapters 17, 18, 19, and 27 Canvas: Larkin and Records (2006) Desk Reference: Chapter 115
Class 11 Nov. 8	Removing Barriers, Creating Opportunities and Improving Services Project work day	CTB: Chapters 23, 24 (sections 1, 3, & 4), 25 (sections 1 & 10), and 26 (sections 2, 3, 4, & 12)
Class 12 Nov. 15	Organizing for Effective Advocacy Project work day	CTB: Chapters 30, 33, and 35
Nov.22	NO CLASS THE DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING Neighborhood Coalition Response Due	
Class 13 Nov. 29	Evaluating Community Programs and Initiatives Project work day	CTB: Chapters 36, 37, and 38 Desk Reference: Chapter 121
Class 14 Dec. 6	Final Class Poster Session Project Due TAKE-HOME EXAM, PART 2 DUE BEFORE CLASS	