

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

COURSE/UNIQUE NUMBER: 61545/SW 387R
61395/ SW 360K

SEMESTER: SPRING 2017

MEETS: TUESDAY 5:30-8:30PM, SSW 2.122

INSTRUCTORS: VALERIE RINGLAND, J.D. &
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OFFICE HOURS: BY APPOINTMENT

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SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM

I. Standardized Course Description

This course is intended to demystify the legal system. It will familiarize students with confidentiality, disclosure of records, social work privilege, informed consent, forensic interviewing, subpoenas, witness preparation and testifying. There will be an emphasis on the following topics which have a significant impact on social work practice: 1) navigating legal systems & processes as a social worker; 2) the legal system & domestic violence and sexual assault; 3) child maltreatment & children's rights; 4) juvenile, criminal justice & corrections systems; 5) social justice & legal system; 6) culture, immigration & the legal system. The course will give students the opportunity to observe an actual courtroom docket or Austin City Council Meeting, read case law and statutes, write and review legal documents, and practice social work interaction with the legal system throughout the semester through two case study assignments and a testifying in a courtroom. It will cover social worker liability, and challenge students to critically consider underlying assumptions and philosophies of our legal system.

II. Standardized Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand basic confidentiality laws and legal procedures governing the disclosure of confidential information;
2. Understand what is meant by informed consent and how it affects social work practice;
3. Understand basic laws affecting youth clients and family law;
4. Understand basic laws affecting clients involved in the criminal justice and corrections systems;
5. Understand basic legal foundation for social justice advocacy, including laws and court decisions;
6. Be familiar with legal systems and processes such as CPS and immigration systems;
7. Have practiced with testifying in a legal proceeding as a social worker lay witness;
8. Understand the role of social workers as supporters, participants and advocates in various legal proceedings;
9. Be familiar with legalese and navigating legal systems through reading case law, statutes, legal forms and treaties.
10. Have practiced navigating legal systems through observing a courtroom or City Council meeting.
11. Have practiced legal writing through case study assignments and a formal letter assignment.
12. Have a new lens for looking at diversity and public policy issues and for applying them to social work practice;
13. Be able to explain underlying assumptions of the legal system and be familiar with alternatives and critiques;
14. Have wrestled with ethical issues and the value base of social work practice as it relates to navigating the legal system.

III. Teaching Methods

This class uses a variety of teaching methods such as lectures, guest speakers, experiential activities, videos and group discussions in a circle format. Students need to complete assigned readings before class. This class requires student input and participation. **This course will utilize Canvas. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that the email address in Canvas is correct so that all communication from the instructor is received.**

IV. Required Readings

Books

Harris Rome, S. (2013). Social Work and the Law: Judicial Policy and Forensic Practice. Boston: Pearson.
Ross, R. (1996). Returning to the teachings: Exploring aboriginal justice. Toronto, Canada: Penguin.

Additional materials

Additional materials will be assigned with at least one weeks' notice and will be available on Canvas or online.

V. Course Requirements

Final project	30
Case study #1	20
Case study #2	20
Formal letter (on CPS court observation or Austin City Council meeting observation)	10
Testimony practice	10
Class participation	<u>10</u>
	100

GRADING SCALE

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

A = Superior work: The assignment exceeds expectations. Student does more than is required and demonstrates a high level of in-depth critical thinking and analysis (i.e., writing coherent, ideas synthesized, discussion well developed).

B = Good Work: The assignment meets all the requirements and demonstrates evidence of in-depth critical thinking and analysis.

C = Average Work: The assignment meets the requirements or has minor gaps but lacks evidence of in-depth critical thinking and analysis. A C- (73 points) or lower is noted as a course failure and will require re-taking the course.

D/F = Poor Work: The assignment has important gaps, both in terms of not meeting the requirements and lacking in-depth critical thinking and analysis.

Note: Graduate students in this course are expected to demonstrate a depth of knowledge and quality of work exceeding that of undergraduate students and will be graded accordingly.

1. Final project. The purpose of this assignment is to offer students an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the course material at the end of the semester through creating a project on a relevant topic of personal interest. Students will give a time-limited presentation to the class in addition to turning in a creative project utilizing research, writing, visual art, video, interview or other approved format. Students whose final project is not a written paper will write a short paper (5 pages not including cover or references) that contextualizes the project within the course material. Students may discuss project ideas with the instructor at any time. All assignments are to be done individually.
2. Case study assignments. Students will be assigned two case studies during the semester. After the first class, students will receive initial information about their first case study, which will be used for both in-class and out-of-class assignments. Out-of-class assignments include: (1) writing a case report to a supervisor and an affidavit for court, and (2) writing a formal letter supporting a client's VAWA petition, or writing a formal letter requesting a student's IEP evaluation. Additional information will be provided.
3. Court observation or Austin City Council meeting observation. Students are required to observe CPS courtroom proceedings for at least one hour OR to attend at least one hour of an Austin City Council meeting. Students will then write a formal letter (2 pages) about their experience, including: where they were, what they observed, their reactions, reflections and any lingering questions. Additional information will be provided.
4. Testimony. Each student will play the role of a social worker acting as a fact witness in a court case. Students will memorize relevant information and testify in a mock courtroom setting in the law school, where they will be direct and cross-examined by attorneys in front of a judge, and video-recorded. Additional information will be provided.
5. Class participation. Class participation includes attendance, participation and professional conduct. Attendance will be taken every class period, and a student may miss two classes without penalty. For each additional class missed, one point will be deducted from the class participation portion of the final grade, unless extenuating circumstances are discussed with the instructor. Students who inappropriately use cell phones, computer, etc. during class will have one point deducted from their class participation grade each time the behavior occurs.

V. Class Policies

1. *Class attendance.* Attendance will be taken each class. Students are **allowed two absences**. Students are expected to be on time for class and to stay until it ends. If class ends after 8:15pm, students who need to leave will not be penalized.
2. *Class participation.* Students are expected to **complete readings and assignments before class** and to be prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning activities.
3. *General assignment requirements.* All written assignments must be **typed, double spaced and have one inch margins**. References used in papers should be in **APA format**. Grading of written assignments will take into account the quality and content of the writing, formatting and grammar.
4. *Assignment due dates.* Students are expected to turn in assignments before the start of the class period they are due. Contact the instructor in emergency circumstances. **All written assignments will be submitted online through Canvas. Questions to the instructor will be guaranteed an answer by email up to 24 hours before due date.**
5. *Use of technology in class.* No cell phones or other devices are to be used during class except during a break. **Computers may only be used for taking notes or for relevant in class activities.** Inappropriate use of computers will result in reduction of class participation points. Professional conduct means making a respectful and meaningful effort to participate in discussions, lectures and activities.
6. *Student feedback.* Student feedback is encouraged during classroom discussions and with the instructor. Anonymous student feedback will be formally requested halfway through the semester.
7. *Course modification.* The instructor may modify the course as needed and will give students at least one week's notice before any changes to the syllabus go into effect.
8. *Classroom courtesy.* Students will have one ten-minute break during the middle of class. Students may bring drinks and snacks to class and are responsible for cleaning any messes, and are asked to leave desks in a usable formation.

V. University policies

1. *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.
2. *Professional Conduct and Civility 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. 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 also 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 will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.
3. *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 professor. The professor 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 may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.
4. *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.

5. *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/>).
6. *Use of course materials.* The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor 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 distributing those materials to other current or future students.
7. *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). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. 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/>.
8. *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, examination, work assignment, or 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.
9. *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. Faculty, instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinator and/or the Title IX Deputy for the SSW, Professor Tanya Voss. Students, faculty and staff may contact Professor Voss to report incidents or to obtain information. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <http://socialwork.utexas.edu/dl/files/academic-programs/other/qrg-sexualharassment.pdf>.
10. *Campus Carry Policy.* The University's policy on concealed fire arms is at: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>. You also may find this information by accessing the Quick Links menu on the School's website.
11. *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 regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is 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.

12. *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 for keeping the university informed about a change of 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>.
13. *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.
14. *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 between 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>.
15. *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:
 - a. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
 - b. If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
 - c. In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
 - d. 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.

VIII. Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignment(s)
1	9/5	Syllabus & introduction Overview of legal systems	(If you miss this class, READ Rome Ch. 1 & ppt on Canvas)	N/A
2	9/12	Forensic social work Social worker liability Understanding legal forms	READ Rome Chs. 3 & 5 READ HIPAA overview & files	REVIEW Case Study #1 information
3	9/19	Child maltreatment Navigating the CPS system Child welfare panel	READ Rome Ch. 6 READ A Parent’s Guide to CPS	BRING Case Study #1 questions BRING Questions for panelists
4	9/26	Understanding case law Rights of children & youth Understanding treaties	READ MD v Abbot pp. 1-21 (up to D), pp. 242-245 (V to A), & pp. 254-255 (VI) READ Rome Ch. 2 READ UN Rights of the Child	DUE Case Study Assignment #1
5	10/3	Family & sexual violence Crime victim services	READ Rome Chs. 9 & 10 READ Is it sex or assault? READ TDCJ Victim Services & Crime Victim Application Form WATCH Vlogs	
6	10/10	Criminal justice system Juvenile justice system Criminal justice panel	READ Rome Chs. 11 & 12 READ Introduction (pp. 1-19) of Alexander’s <i>The New Jim Crow</i> (e-book in UT library)	BRING questions for panelists

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignment(s)
7	10/17	Drug law Death penalty Corrections system Mid-semester evaluation	READ Rome Ch. 13 READ Air conditioning article READ A Solitary Failure (pp. 1-10, 16-23)	REVIEW Case study #2 information BRING questions to send a prisoner
8	10/24	Immigration law Guest speaker	READ Rome Ch. 19 READ What every social worker should know	BRING Case study #2 questions
9	10/31	NO CLASS - HAPPY HALLOWEEN	Start reading Ross	DUE Case Study Assignment #2
10	11/7	Comparative justice philosophy Guest speaker	READ Ross (whole book)	REVIEW Testimony case BRING questions for guest speaker
11	11/14	Race, gender, disability & sexuality in the legal system Guest speaker	READ Rome Chs. 10, 16 – 18 READ A Guide to Disability Rights Laws READ Roe v. Wade article	BRING Testimony questions BRING questions for a disability rights lawyer
12	11/21	Testimony (group 1), Formal letter (group 2)		DUE Testimony in the law school OR Formal letter
13	11/28	Testimony (group 2), Formal letter (group 1)		DUE Testimony in the law school OR Formal letter
14	12/5	Presentations Course evaluations		DUE Social work, legal system and justice assignment