

**SOCIAL WORK INFORMATICS:
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE**

Course number:	SW 393T	Faculty:	Jemel P. Aguilar, PhD, MSW
Unique number:	94515	Office number:	3.106F
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Office Hours:	By appointment		

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Human services are under increasing pressure to document and evaluate their services. In today's human service environment, agencies must compile data on the number of services provided, the outcomes of those services, and the demographics of clients receiving services. Human service managers frequently use information technology (i.e., word processing applications, email, text messaging, case management applications) to document services and to facilitate communication, report outcomes to funding agencies, and monitor trends in service delivery.

This course emphasizes the use of information technology in human service management to improve overall quality of services provided by agency staff and to leverage the implicit knowledge of workers so that agencies can foster ongoing innovations in service provision. To that end, students in this course will be exposed to traditional management practices, intra-agency communication strategies using various technologies, factors facilitating and impeding information flow in organizations, and the technological opportunities and limitations facing human services as these organizations integrate technology into their daily operations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course student will be able to:

1. understand the role of information and technology in both the management and delivery of human services; **(CAL/APB 7)**
2. understand how organizational, interpersonal, ethical, and cultural factors facilitate and impede the flow and exchange of knowledge (i.e., formal/informal structure, hierarchy, organizational roles, the democratic ideal, and similar factors) within organizations; **(CAL/APB 7)**
3. identify traditional methods of disseminating and exchanging knowledge in organizations and their strengths and weaknesses (i.e., policy manuals, memo systems, staff meetings, training, MIS, organizational development, and other methods); **(CAL/APB 6 & 9)**
4. apply automated methods of information collection, dissemination and analysis (i.e., database management, report generation, spread sheet analysis, electronic mail systems, and other methods); **(CAL/APB 6)**
5. assess organizations to determine the ways in which they make use of technology to facilitate communication between staff members and compile client information regarding services and outcomes achieved; **(CAL/APB 9)**
6. apply general-purpose computer software to such human service information problems as client information and tracking systems, information and referral problems, budget preparation and analysis, and related problems; and, **(CAL/APB 10b, c, & d)**
7. analyze the differential impact of technology on diverse client and user groups. **(CAL/APB 10c)**

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.

EP2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

CAL/APB6 Use empirical evidence to create strategies for system change

Objectives 3, 4

Assignments: Technological assessment, process memos, and Technological in-service

EP2.1.7 Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment

CAL/APB7 Synthesize and select human behavior and the social environment theories to develop effective macro interventions

Objectives 1, 2

Assignments: Technological assessment, process memos, and Technological in-service

EP2.1.9 Respond to contexts that shape practice.

CAL/APB9 Engage in continuous environmental scanning and forecasting and adapt macro practice based on the acquired knowledge

Objectives 3, 5

Assignments: Technological assessment, process memos

EP2.1.10b Assessment

CAL/APB10b Design and conduct community, organizational, and technological assessments

Objectives 6

Assignments: Technological assessment

EP2.1.10c Intervention

CAL/APB10c Critically apply systematic interventions that prevent problems, expand opportunities, and enhance quality of life

Objectives 6, 7

Assignments: Technological In-service

EP2.1.10d Evaluation

CAL/APB10b Develop and recommend program and/or policy changes based on evaluation

Objectives 6

Assignments: Technological assessment

TEACHING METHODS

This course is divided into two phases. During the first half of the semester, students complete an intensive class-based learning that introduces them to the concepts, processes, and practice of human service information technology. At the end of this phase students will be fluent in the terms used by information technology managers and will have a theoretical framework to assess information technology needs within an organization. In the second half of the semester students will assess the information technology needs for one agency selected by the instructor. The instructor will assign students into work teams. The assessment seeks to identify the current technology in the agency, the agency's technological efforts to strive toward improving the quality of services, and the mechanisms for exchanging knowledge among staff or programs within the agency/program. During this phase, student teams will meet with the instructor discuss the process and outcome of the assessment for the assigned program.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Bennet, S. (2006). *The accidental techie: Supporting, managing, and maximizing your nonprofit's technology*. Saint Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance
2. Additional readings are included in the reading packet available at Speedway.

ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments for this class include an in-class assessment based on the readings, presentation of tech in-service, professional memos/minutes written during the field portion of the class, an information technology assessment, and an agency presentation.

In class exam (20 points)

The exam tests student knowledge and comprehension of the basic concepts, processes, and terminology associated with information technology, knowledge management, and IT in the nonprofit sector.

Tech in-service (20 points)

In this project, students will develop a “wiki board” on topic and for employees of an **existing nonprofit organization** of your choice. The topic must be directly relevant to the class (i.e., instructions for advanced users of a case management software package) and appropriate to the audience. Students will then provide a 20-minute in service that teaches us about the purpose of the wiki board, how it can be used within the context of practice, and the strengths and limitations of form of technology for the employees in the non-profit. **Religious organizations, for-profit organizations, and non-wiki based presentations are not acceptable audiences for this type of project.**

Process memos (30 points)

Students will be assigned to an agency to assess their information technology needs. During the assessment, each student is required to submit a two page memo. These memos are the student's demonstration that they are integrating the readings, perspective on the group process used to coordinate the project, record of student meetings including what was discussed (in terms of tasks), tasks that were completed, and tasks to be completed, and challenges in completing the project. ***All weekly write-ups are to be expected well-developed, carefully thought-out reflections of your perspective or ideas. Memos should be emailed to me by Midnight Monday. Late memos will not be accepted.***

Assessment and presentation (30 points)

Each group will conduct a technological assessment. The guidelines for this assessment will be drawn from Bennett, the readings, and the needs of the organization. Each assessment must include a detailed description of the methodology used to gather information about the agency's technology (i.e., interviews with staff or clients; document reviews), the methods to analyze the data, the conclusions, and recommendations for agency. **The page limit for this project will be determined by the needs of the project, not the professor. Remember this project will be submitted both to the professor and the agency. The report should look professional and reflect your team's knowledge, skills, and professional social work practice.**

The team will present the results of their technology assessment to a panel of representatives from the

agency. This presentation will be a formal showcasing of process the group engaged in to determine the technological needs of the organization as well as the results of the assessment. Typically, student groups' schedule the presentation with the panel of staff members and it lasts approximately 30 minutes with 10 minutes for questions and answers. Students' must submit copies of the presentation evaluation to the professor with a brief description of their perspectives of the strengths and weaknesses of the presentation.

Grading Matrix

A	Student <i>mastered</i> knowledge in this course, <i>thoroughly</i> comprehends the material, applies knowledge accurately to agency situation, deconstructs concepts for synthesis, and strongly supports their assessment of the agency needs. The assignment presents a logical conclusion and is well written, and follows APA-style.
B or S	Student developed <i>comprehensive</i> knowledge in this course, has <i>ample</i> comprehension of knowledge and total quality management, and applies knowledge to their assigned program.
C	Student developed <i>basic</i> knowledge in this course, and <i>fundamentally</i> comprehends to apply the concepts and theories to agency settings.
D	Student developed cursory knowledge of information technology.
F	Student did not develop knowledge about information technology.

CLASS POLICIES

Assignment Submissions

Late assignments will be penalized. Assignments will be assessed point penalties at the rate of ten (10) percent of the value of the assignment for each day late. If a student has a significant and unavoidable conflict with an assignment's due date, then they should contact the instructor well in advance to discuss an alternate submission date.

Student Feedback and Performance Questions

Student feedback is welcome. Students are encouraged to provide feedback during office hours, by phone, by e-mail, and otherwise by appointment. If students have questions on a specific assignment or general course topic, the professor is willing to work with them outside of class or office hours. ***If you are not familiar with writing professional memos, then I strongly advise you to seek assistance from the writing center. Memos that are not properly formatted or well developed will automatically receive point deductions from their memo grades.***

Special Accommodations for Students with a Disability

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor of each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. Five business days before an exam the student should remind the instructor of any testing accommodations that will be needed. See following web site for more information:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php> or contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including 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. "Scholastic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act. (From UT's General Information Catalog, Appendix C, Sec. 11-802).

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/acint_student.php)

SCHEDULE

Class #	Date	Class content/Activity	Readings and/or Assignment
1	06-03-10	Introduction and information technology CAN presentation	
2	06-08-10	Information technology in social services	Parker-Oliver; Nguyen; Zhang & Guterrez; Mohamed et al Bennett - Intro, 1, 2,
3	06-10-10	Knowledge and worker management	O'Looney; Carillo Watson; Bennett - 3, 6
4	06-15-10	Knowledge, technology, and the program <i>Test</i>	Megivern, McMillen, Proctor, Striley, Cabasa, & Munson; Bennett - 4
5	06-17-10	Knowledge, technology, and the clients	Tufte; Kreuger & Stretch; Kunkel; Benotsch et al.,
6	06-22-10	Knowledge, technology, and the agency	Miller Cribbs; Schopler, Abell, & Galinsky Gelman; Dunlop et al. Bennett 5
7	06-24-10	<i>Tech presentation</i>	
8	06-29-10	<i>Tech presentations</i>	
9	07-01-10		
10	07-06-10		Memos due
11	07-08-10		
12	07-13-10		Memos due
13	07-15-10		
14	07-20-2010		Memos due
15	07-22-10		
16	07-27-10	Class evaluation and wrap-up	Agency assessments and evaluations due

Readings in bold are included in the course packet.



**Community Action Network Proposal
for University of Texas School of Social Work
Information Technology in Social Work Management
Class of Summer 2010**

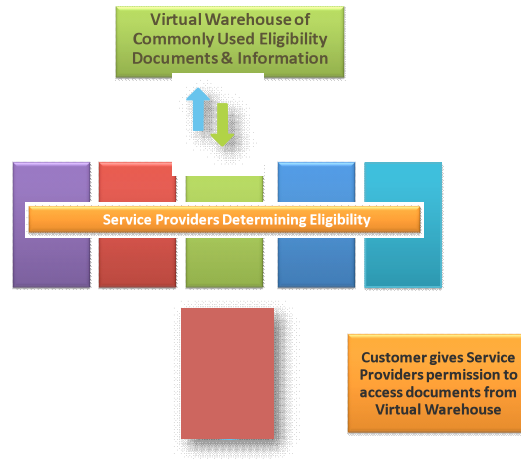
Background: In January of 2010, the Community Action Network (CAN) began implementation of its Streamlined Common Eligibility Initiative which is one of several initiatives in **CAN's *Stable Families, Healthy Community Plan***, 5-year plan approved by the CAN Board in 2009 to connect families to all available resources while maximizing public assistance enrollment.

The goal of the *Streamlined Common Eligibility Initiative* is to connect families and individuals to all available resources by streamlining eligibility determination for services. Collaborative solutions would enable safety net providers to:

- Share commonly used documents in a secure way while maintaining customer privacy,
- Update customer eligibility portfolio every time a customer goes to a participating agency,
- Expedite process of eligibility determination because documents would be readily available,
- Make it easier for customers to apply for the assistance they need.

The work plan for this initiative involves two key components:

- 1) **Inventory of documents and eligibility criteria used by service providers to determine eligibility for services:** This was completed in June of 2010 by University of Texas School of Social Work students through Professor Cal Streeter's class. In February, students were trained by 2-1-1 staff to use the 2-1-1 database to conduct a preliminary search of safety net providers serving the Travis County in key safety net areas (e.g. basic needs, education, housing, childcare, transportation, etc.). Students then contacted providers to identify what documents and eligibility criteria were required to access services. Students then categorized and compiled a matrix of eligibility requirements and documents for key areas of the safety net.
- 2) **Plan for developing virtual access to documents used for eligibility determination across the range of services.** This proposed plan will be shared with the CAN Board of Directors on September 10, 2010. The plan involves using information from the inventory to identify documents that could be scanned and placed on a secure on-line site and provides several options for virtually sharing these documents. The plan may also address future consideration for using virtually stored information and documents to auto-populate applications for public assistance, determine eligibility for a range of safety net services, and develop tools for staff and consumers to self-determine potential eligibility. Below is a visual diagram of the concept:



Proposal: CAN is seeking assistance in identifying options for “virtually warehousing” documents used for eligibility determination. This proposal includes several key phases including:

1. **Inventory of IT Systems Used by Safety Net Providers:** Develop questionnaire and conduct inventory of the types of information technology systems being used to manage and share client information and documents among safety net providers. Using common questionnaire, contact providers identified in *Attachment One*. Key questions should include the following:
 - a. Does your organization share **client information** with other agencies? How is client information shared? What information technology systems does your organization use to share this information? How is this information stored? Where is it stored?
 - b. Does your organization share **documents** (photo IDs, social security cards, proof of residency, proof of income) with other agencies? How are documents shared? What information technology systems does your organization use to share these documents?
 - c. Does your organization use its information technology systems to **determine eligibility** for services (meaning can the system do the thinking for case managers based on criteria entered)?
2. **Identify Commonly Used IT Systems:** Using the results from the inventory of IT systems used by safety net providers, identify systems that are being used by 2 or more service providers to share client information and/or documents. Compile list.
3. **Evaluate Most Commonly Used IT Systems (3 to 5 systems):** Develop evaluation tool and evaluate the most commonly used information technology systems being used to manage/share client information and documents among safety net providers. Using common evaluation tool, contact providers identified in phase 2 to evaluate the following: cost (overall and per user), value-add for agencies, security, privacy, disaster recovery, etc. The goal of this evaluation is to identify IT systems that could be expanded and widely used by safety net providers across service areas.

PRESENTATION EVALUATION FORM

Agency stakeholder: Y N **Date:** _____

Program _____

CONTENT

	Y	N
The presentation covers the whole project		
Points in the presentation are clear		
The presentation is pitched to the audience well		
The presentation did not offer unclear jargon or unexplained acronyms		
The content of the presentation is suitable to our agency		
25 points		

ORGANIZATION

	Y	N
The presentation is well prepared and organized		
The assessment is appropriate considering the program		
The assessment is appropriate considering the agency		
The presentation is easy to follow		
The presentation addresses IT and KM needs and solutions		
25 points		

DELIVERY

	Y	N
The presentation is engaging		
The presentation is well delivered		
The presenters addressed the points on the overheads		
The presenters spoke clearly with good volume and enunciation, and no mumbling		
Efficient, avoided stumbling blocks and confusion		
25 points		

FORMAT

	Y	N
The slides are not too busy and the font is large enough to read		
The visuals supported the presentation		
The presentation did not have misspellings, poor grammar, or misuse of words		
The format of the presentation fits with the needs of the audience		
Presentation was within time frame allotted		
25 points		

Suggestions:

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Total:

Memo

To: [Click **here** and type name]

From: [Click **here** and type name]

CC: [Click **here** and type name]

Date:

Re: [Click **here** and type subject]

Project Title:

Meetings attended:

Relationship between readings and current project:

Tasks accomplished:

Tasks assigned

Resources consulted/needed

Current obstacles/opportunities for change

References (if needed)