

The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Social Work

Dynamics of Organizations & Communities

**Course Number:** 381T

**Unique Number:** 62840

**Semester:** Fall 2012

**Meeting:** Monday, 5:30pm – 8:30pm

**Location:** 2.112

**Office Hours:** Monday, 4:15pm - 5:15pm  
or by appointment

**Instructor's Name:** Morgan J Curtis, LMSW

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### 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 factor 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.

### 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.**

**PB11** Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom

Objectives 1, 3, 4, 6, 7

Assignment: community assessment project

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

Objectives 5 and 6

Assignment: community assessment project, assigned readings, classroom discussion

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

Objectives (not specified)

Assignment: community assessment project, case studies

**EP2.1.9 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: community assessment project; personal reflection

**PB28** Provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services

Objective 6

Assignment: community assessment project

**Contacting me:**

I will attempt to respond to emails in a timely manner (within 24 hours). If you need something more urgently, please call or text me at the cell phone number provided above. *Contacting me via email or text will probably be the easiest and most reliable means of reaching me.* I encourage students to approach me with any questions, concerns, or feedback about the class and to do so in a timely manner. I am available to students during my office hours and also by appointment.

**Required Readings:**

Netting, F.E., Kettner, P.M., McMurtry, S.L., & Thomas, M.L. (2012). *Social Work Macro Practice* (5th edition). Pearson Education: Boston.

Assigned readings that aren't from the primary text will be available in the Course Documents section of the class Blackboard page. These readings include excerpts from other texts, articles from professional journals, and other materials related to macro social work practice. If additional readings are assigned, the class will be given ample notice of said readings.

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Personal Reflection:** Both macro and micro social work practice involve professional use of self and benefit from personal reflection around our connection to relevant issues, theories, and approaches. As such, students will write a personal reflection on their role in and identification with “community” both generally and specifically. Specific prompts and guidelines for this assignment will be handed out in class.
2. **Assessment Case Study:** Students will be presented with a case scenario about an individual or organization where a need for assessment is evident. Students will need to identify types of macro level assessment that would be particularly helpful in the case, in addition to exploring their own initial assumptions about the case.
3. **Comprehensive Case Study:** A final case study will be offered that shows a process of community organizing, assessment, and response to a social problem. Students will need to identify and analyze each of the processes based on class lectures and reading.
4. **Class Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation in class are critical to both individual and group learning. As professionals, we are expected to present and active in a variety of venues. Therefore, part of each student’s grade will be contingent upon their attendance and also active participation in class.
5. **Community Assessment Project** – Each group is to work collaboratively on all project elements and deliverables for the duration of the semester. At the beginning of the semester groups are to engage in work-planning to help build skills in team development and project planning. The community assessment project involves groups of 4 to 5 students examining either a community or social problem. The groups will:
  - a. Complete a proposal and contract for the group’s work together
  - b. Conduct an assessment of a local community or social problem; the assessment includes attendance at least one community or organizational meeting
  - c. Present their findings to the class
  - d. Complete a final report that includes information about their assessment and proposed interventions to address issues identified in their assessments
  - e. Complete a logic model and theory of change for the proposed interventions
  - f. Produce a fact sheet summarizing important information from assessment

Additional information about each program component will be available in the Community Assessment Project Guide that will be distributed the first week of class.

**Note:** The instructor reserves the right to award differentially weighted grades on the group project. This will occur if a group member fails to actively participate in the group, misses deadlines consistently or otherwise significantly hinders the progress or quality of work of the group.

## SCHEDULE OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	Points	Due Date
<b>Community Assessment Project</b>		
Project Proposal & Group Contract	10	September 24
Group Presentation	20	November 26 or December 03
Written Report	20	December 10
Logic Model & Theory of Change	5	December 10
Fact Sheet	5	December 10
<b>Individual Assignments</b>		
Personal Reflection	10	October 8
Assessment Case Study	10	October 29
Comprehensive Case Study	15	November 19
Class Attendance & Participation	5	Ongoing
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	

Grades for this course will be assigned using the following scale:

100 - 94 = A	76 - 74 = C
93 - 90 = A-	73 - 70 = C-
89 - 87 = B+	69 - 67 = D+
86 - 84 = B	66 - 64 = D
83 - 80 = B-	63 - 60 = D-
79 - 77 = C+	59 and below = F

### VI. Class Policies

**Class Attendance and Participation.** Active, engaged and informed participation in classroom discussion and exercises is a critical component of student learning. Showing up prepared to participate in class demonstrates respect for the material and emerging professionalism. This means that students should not only attend class on time but should be prepared to actively participate in class discussions. At the same time, there may be an occasion when a student will not be able to attend class because of illness or other unforeseen problems. In such cases, it is required that the student notify the instructor **before** class that they will not be in class. In the case of more than one absence, I reserve the right to deduct points from a student's final course grade.

**Publication style manual.** The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) is the style manual adopted by the School of Social Work. All papers prepared for this class should conform to the APA style. A

summary handout of this manual is available in Student Services. The complete manual is available in the Learning Resource Center. You can also find on-line assistance with electronic reference guidelines at: [APAStyle.org](http://APAStyle.org).

**Scholastic Dishonesty.** The University of Texas at Austin is proud of its students' commitment to academic integrity and their pledge to abide by its policy on scholastic dishonesty. The tradition of academic integrity is maintained by the cooperation of students and faculty members. Official University policies regarding academic integrity may be accessed from the [Student Judicial Services](#) web site. This site provides detailed information about the university's policies regarding academic integrity and standards of conduct. Students are encouraged to review this page and to become familiar with these policies.

If a student has any questions concerning the application of the rules prohibiting scholastic dishonesty in regard to a particular assignment, it is the responsibility of that student to seek clarification from the instructor of the course. Violations of the University's policy on scholastic dishonesty will result in a grade of F for the course and may result in reporting to the Dean of the School of Social Work and the Dean of the Graduate School.

**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.

**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 also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities.** The University of Texas at Austin provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodation for any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive). For information about academic accommodations, students should contact the Office of the Dean of Students, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Information is also available online at: also available online at: also available online at:

**Professional Conduct in Class.** I expect students to act like professionals in class. This means 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, I do require that you engage one another with respect and professionalism.

## Course Schedule and Readings

Class	Date	Topic	Text Readings	Assignment Due
1	9.10	Introduction to Class Assignment of Groups		
2	9.17	Introduction to Macro Practice History of Macro Practice	Chapter 1 & 2	
3	9.24	Understanding Community & Organizational Problems	Chapter 3	Project Proposal
4	10.01	Understanding Populations & Communities	Chapter 4 & 5	
5	10.08	Assessing Communities	Chapter 6	Personal Reflection
6	10.15	Understanding Organizations Guest Speaker TBD	Chapter 7	
7	10.22	Assessing Organizations	Chapter 8	
8	10.29	Building Support for Change <i>*Group meeting time*</i>	Chapter 9	Case Study 1
9	11.05	Selecting Appropriate Strategies Guest Speaker TBD	Chapter 10	
10	11.12	Selecting Appropriate Strategies Guest speaker: Victoria Camp	Only blackboard readings	
11	11.19	Planning, Implementing, Monitoring & Evaluating the Intervention Guest speaker, Surabhi Kukké	Chapter 11	Case Study 2
12	11.26	Group Presentations		
13	12.03	Group Presentations		
	12.10	No Class		Final Assessment Paper, Logic Models & Fact Sheet with SASE

## References

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- Bramson & Buss (2002). Methods for whole system change in public organizations and communities: An overview of the issues. *Public Organization Review: A Global Journal*, 2, 211-221.
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- Hardcastle, D.A., Powers, P.A. & Wencour, S. (2011). *Community practice: Theories and skills for social workers*. (3<sup>rd</sup> e.d.). New York: Oxford University Press.
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- Mulroy, E.A. (2004). Theoretical perspectives on the social environment to guide management and community practice. *Administration in Social Work, 28(1)*, 77-96.
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