

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

<b>Course number:</b>	<b>SW 393T20</b>	<b>Faculty:</b>	<b>Suzanne Potts, LMSW, MPH</b>
<b>Unique number:</b>	<b>63100</b>	<b>Office number:</b>	<b>3.106F</b>
<b>Meeting time:</b>	<b>TH 11:30AM-2PM</b>	<b>Office phone:</b>	<b>(619) 994-1871</b>
<b>Meeting place:</b>	<b>2.116</b>	<b>Email:</b>	<b>spotts@austin.utexas.edu</b>
<b>Office Hours:</b>	<b>TH 2PM-3PM</b>		

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Human services are under increasing pressure to document the services they provide in light of the diminished resources. As a result of these demands, agencies compile data consisting of the number of services provided, the outcomes, and the demographics of clients receiving those services. Human service practitioners and managers are frequently using technological products (i.e., word processing applications, email, text messaging, case management applications) to not only document services provided to clients, but also to facilitate communication, report outcomes to funding agencies, and monitor trends in service delivery. Because human service managers are not working in a technological environment, they must become familiar with the technologies that agencies are typically using to document services, the ways to use technology to improve the overall quality of services provided to clients, and the barriers and opportunities afforded by the increased integration of technology into human services.

This course emphasizes the use of information technology in human service delivery and management (1) to improve overall quality of services provided by agency staff as well as (2) to leverage the implicit knowledge of workers so that agency's 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**

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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: Logic Model development and Agency Technology assessment presentation

#### **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: Logic Model project and classroom discussions

#### **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, 6

Assignments: Agency budget project

#### **EP2.1.10b Assessment**

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

Objectives 6

Assignments: Agency Technology Program Assessment project and presentation

### **EP2.1.10c Intervention**

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

Objectives 6, 7

Assignments: Agency Technology Assessment project and presentation

### **EP2.1.10d Evaluation**

**CAL/APB10d** Develop and recommend program and/or policy changes based on evaluation

Objectives 6

Assignments: Agency Technology Assessment project and presentation

## **TEACHING METHODS**

This course is an intensive class-based learning that introduces them to the concepts, processes, and practice of human service information technology. At the end of this course 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. Students will develop a logic model for a hypothetical program or project, as well as create an annual budget using Excel. The instructor will assign students into work teams for the Agency Technology Program Assessment. These teams will be provided an agency vignette to conduct an assessment of the agency and/or the program. The assessment seeks to identify the current technology in the agency/program, the agency's technological efforts towards improving the quality of services, and the mechanisms for exchanging knowledge among staff or programs within the agency/program. Student teams will meet with the instructor to discuss the process and outcome of the assessment for the assigned program and then host a presentation on their findings.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1. All readings are included in the reading packet available at Speedway and/or available as PDF on Blackboard. Speedway is located at Dobie Mall, 2025 Guadalupe; (512) 478-3334.

## **ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING**

The assignments for this class include an in-class assessment based on the readings, presentation of projects, an information technology assessment, and an agency presentation. Each section includes the weighted percentage for that grade.

### **In class participation (20%)**

This course will include discussion on in class activities, readings, topics and small group work. Your participation in classroom discussion is expected and encouraged. This will be graded by in class activities, attendance to the class and observation by the instructor.

### **Logic Model Project (20%)**

In this project, students will develop a Logic Model on program, project or agency of your choice. It must include a Program Description, Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Short and Long Term Outcomes and overall Impact expected. A sample Logic Model will be developed in class and discussed from readings. Project specifics will be handed out in class.

### **Agency Budget Project (20%)**

Students will demonstrate appropriate skill level and knowledge of basic Excel spreadsheet and develop an annual agency or program budget for a nonprofit organization or agency that is the **same** program or agency as the Logic Model assignment. For this assignment students will plan out and prepare a 12-month operating budget. Project specifics will be handed out in class.

### **Agency Technology Program Assessment and Presentation (40 %)**

Work teams will identify an area agency to assess their agency information technology needs. Towards the end of the assessment, each student group is required to submit a presentation (PowerPoint or other presentation tool) and corresponding Board memo assessing a particular project or program. These two items are the student's demonstration that they integrated the readings, analyzed the group process used to coordinate the project, reflected on the student meetings including what was discussed (in terms of tasks), tasks that were completed, and challenges in completing the project. *The presentation will be given in class and is targeted towards your peers. The Board memo is expected well-developed, carefully thought-out reflections of your perspective or ideas and is targeted to the board of the agency that you are assessing. The memo should be emailed to the instructor by midnight on the date listed below. Late memos will not be accepted and will count as an automatic zero.*

The guidelines for this assessment will be drawn from 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 memo should look professional and reflect your team's knowledge, skills, and professional social work practice. It is expected to be between 2-4 pages in length.**

The team will present the results of their technology assessment to the class. This presentation will be an informal 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 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 for class assignments:**

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

## CLASS POLICIES

### Assignment Submissions

***Except in the case of extreme emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, late assignments will not be accepted without penalty.*** Late 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.

### 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 in 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 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. "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](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)).

### Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

## Emergency Evacuations

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/> :

- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
- Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency) <<http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>>

## SCHEDULE

Class #	Date	Class content/Activity	Readings for Next Week	Assignments
1	Aug 30, 2012	SW Informatics 101	<b>Kling ; Parker-Oliver and Demiris</b> <b>NASW Policy statement</b>	Pre-survey (emailed before class)
2	Sept 6, 2012	Information Seeking/Agency Assessment Overview	<b>Kellogg Foundation, Chapter 1 and 2</b> <a href="http://nonprofitwebinars.com/past_webinars/10122011-a-guide-to-logic-models-grant-writing/">http://nonprofitwebinars.com/past_webinars/10122011-a-guide-to-logic-models-grant-writing/</a>	Agency Technology project (DUE Dec 6)
3	Sept 13, 2012	Logic Models	<b>Megivern, McMillen, Proctor, Striley, Cabasa, and Munson;</b> <a href="http://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/111610p6.shtml">http://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/111610p6.shtml</a>	Homework-Logic Model (DUE October 18)
4	Sept 20, 2012	Information Systems	<b>Singer (The Role and Regulations for Technology in Social Work Practice and E-Therapy)</b> AND <a href="http://socialworkpodcast.blogspot.com/">http://socialworkpodcast.blogspot.com/</a>	Review SW Podcast of your choice; Excel activity emailed
5	Sept 27, 2012	Dealing with Data-Using Excel	<b>Computer Lab (Optional Excel Practice Class)</b> <a href="http://www.nonprofitaccountingbasics.org/">http://www.nonprofitaccountingbasics.org/</a>	Links emailed in class
6	Oct 4, 2012	Budgets	Podcast review discussion <b>Kanter and Fine, Chapters 3 and 4</b>	Homework-Agency Budget (DUE Nov 8)
7	Oct 11, 2012	Social Work and Social Media	<b>Hillier, "Why Social Work Needs Mapping"</b>	
8	Oct 18, 2012	Mapping the System(s)	Guest Speaker-OneStar Foundation <b>Dunlop and Fawcett;</b> <b>Newcomer, Hatry, &amp; Wholey, Chapter 1</b>	In class GIS mapping activity
9	Oct 25, 2012	Program Evaluation		
10	Nov 1, 2012	Program Evaluation	Guest Speaker-LIVESTRONG Reading handed out in class	
11	Nov 8, 2012	Ethical Challenges in Technology and Social Work	Reading handed out in class	Links emailed in class
12	Nov 15, 2012	Project Presentations	No readings	
13	Nov 22, 2012	No Class	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	
14	Nov 29, 2012	Project Presentations	No readings	Post-survey (emailed after class)
15	Dec 6, 2012	Project Presentations/ Last Class	Agency technology assessments and evaluations DUE Survey results discussion	

**Readings in BOLD are included in the course packet.**