

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

|                       |   |                           |                      |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Course Number:</b> | SW381T                                  | <b>Instructor's name:</b> | Cal Streeter         |
| <b>Unique Number:</b> | 60550                                   | <b>Office Number:</b>     | 3.130G               |
| <b>Semester:</b>      | Fall 2015                               | <b>Office Phone:</b>      | 512.471.0543         |
| <b>Meeting</b>        | Tuesday, 2:30-5:30 pm,                  | <b>Email:</b>             | cstreeter@utexas.edu |
| <b>Time/Place:</b>    | Room 2.112                              |                           |                      |
| <b>Office Hours:</b>  | T-TH, 1:00-2:15 pm or by<br>appointment |                           |                      |

**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. 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 in the class Canvas page, which is organized into modules for each class session. Additional readings and materials may be assigned as we go through the semester. These readings will also be available on-line in the course modules. 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. An extensive bibliography is provided at the end of the syllabus. You might peruse the bibliography to see if there are titles that you find interesting and would like to investigate.

### 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   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <b>Attendance and participation</b> | <b>10%</b>        |            |
| <b>Take-home Exam</b>               | <b>35%</b>        |            |
| Part 1                              |                   | October 27 |
| Part 2                              |                   | December 1 |
| <b>Community-based Project</b>      | <b>55%</b>        | December 1 |
| Project deliverables                | 25%               |            |
| Poster presentation                 | 15%               |            |
| Group documents                     | 5%                |            |
| Individual grade                    | 10%               |            |

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

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

**Attendance and Participation.** Students are expected to attend class, to 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 one point 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.

**Take-home Exam.** The take-home exam will be distributed on the first day of class and is due in two installments. Part 1 is **due prior to class on Tuesday, October 27, 2015** and Part 2 is **due on the last class day, Tuesday, December 1, 2015.** I distribute the exam on the first 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 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 semester we have the unique opportunity to work with a community partner called GO!Austin/VAMOS!Austin (GAVA), a coalition of 9 organization working to improve public health outcomes in two zip codes in south Austin. The projects requires students to work in a task group consisting of 4-5 students.

To achieve the goals of the 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 meetings and other work related to the successful completion of the project. The assignment is worth 55% of your final grade. Of this 45% will depend upon the products produced by the group and 10% will be based on individual participation. The group grade will be divided into 3 parts, 25% for the project outcome, 15% 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 specific format and content of that deliverables will be negotiated with the community partner. This means that the product may be somewhat different for each group. What is common across the deliverables is that they should be well organized, neatly presented, and in a form useful to the 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 will make a presentation of their project during the last class session on **December 1**. 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.

Individual Evaluation. The individual portion of the grade (10%) will be determined from three sources of information. First, I will meet with the task groups on special workdays throughout the semester to observe work activity, member participation, etc. Second, each member of the group will prepare a brief written statement outlining their contributions to the project (it may be helpful for each member of the group to maintain a log to document their effort throughout the semester). Third, at the end of the semester each member of the group will complete an evaluation of themselves and of each of the other members of the group.

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.

## VI. Class 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.

**Professional Conduct 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. 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, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

**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 copying 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 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://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

**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,

**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 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.

**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 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 visit <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 Schedule

| <b>Date</b>         | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Text / Readings</b>  |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Class 1<br>Sept. 1  | Introduction and course overview<br>Overview of Community Tool Box<br>Review Project Description<br><b>Form project groups</b> | See course module in Canvas<br>Loeb: We Don't Have To Be Saints<br>Meslin: The Antidote for Apathy (TED talk)                   |
| Class 2<br>Sept. 8  | What is a Community?<br><b>Meet with project liaison</b>   | CTB: Chapter 1 and 2<br>Streeter: Community Overview  |
| Class 3<br>Sept. 15 | Understanding and Describing the Community   | CTB: Chapters 3, Sections 1, 2, 4, 5, 16, 19, & 21<br>The Geography of Opportunity  |
| Class 4<br>Sept. 22 | Assessing Community Needs<br><b>Project work day</b>   | CTB: Chapters 3, Sections 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 22<br>Restore Rundberg Hotspot Analysis                             |
| Class 5<br>Sept. 29 | Assessing Community Resources  | CTB: Chapters 3, Sections 8, 18 & 20 and Chapter 21, Section 8<br>Asset Mapping: A Handbook<br>Restore Rundberg Asset Inventory |
| Class 6<br>Oct. 6   | Strategies for Community Change  | CTB: Chapter 5<br>Rothman: Multi Modes of Intervention at the Macro Level   |
| Class 7<br>Oct. 13  | Promoting Interest and Participation in Initiatives<br><b>Project work day</b>   | CTB: Chapters 6 and 7   |
| Class 8<br>Oct. 20  | Developing a Strategic Plan and Organizational Structure   | CTB: Chapters 8 and 9   |
| Class 9<br>Oct. 27  | Becoming a Community Leader<br><b>Project work day</b><br><b>TAKE-HOME PART 1 DUE BEFORE CLASS</b>                             | CTB: Chapters 13 & 14<br>Derek Siver: How to start a movement.<br>Drew Dudley: Everyday Leadership                              |

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|---------------------|--|---|
| Class 10<br>Nov. 3  | Analyzing Community Problems and Designing<br>Community Interventions                                    | CTB: Chapters 17, 18 and 19   |
| Class 11<br>Nov. 10 | Removing Barriers, Creating Opportunities and<br>Improving Services<br><b>Project work day</b>           | CTB: Chapters 23, Chapter 24<br>Sections 1, 3 & 4, Chapter 25,<br>Sections 1 & 10, Chapter 26,<br>Sections 2, 3, 4 & 12 |
| Class 12<br>Nov. 17 | Organizing for Effective Advocacy<br><b>Project work day</b>   | CTB: Chapters 30, 33 & 35   |
| Class 13<br>Nov. 24 | Evaluating Community Programs and Initiatives<br><b>Project work day</b>                                 | CTB: Chapters 36, 37 & 38   |
| Class 14<br>Dec. 1  | Final Class<br>Poster session<br><b>Final project is due</b><br><b>TAKE-HOME PART 2 DUE BEFORE CLASS</b> |   |