

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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**DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES**

**I. Course Description**

In this course you will become familiar with the macro context of social work practice. It examines the reciprocal relationship between human behavior and social environments. The course emphasizes the interlocking and complex nature of culture and personal identity with content on populations-at-risk, while examining the factors that contribute to and constitute being at risk. It also introduces you to the obligation that social services have to meet the needs of groups served and are culturally relevant. This includes equipping you with skills to recognize diversity within and between groups that may influence assessment, planning, intervention, and research. You will 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 will help you develop skills in 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 you 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. Discuss and describe the impact 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. Discuss and describe alternative strategies for initiating change in organizations and communities, including planning models, coalition building, community development, direct action, and legislative advocacy;
7. Discuss and describe 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 Reading Material

Kirst-Ashman, K., & Hull, G. (2015). *Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities* (6<sup>th</sup> ed). Samford Ct: Cengage Learning.

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 small group assignments, community analysis, organizational analysis and group presentation. Course requirements, due dates and their contribution to the final grade are summarized below.

Assignments	Percentage of Course Grade	Due Date
Organizational Analysis	25%	September 28, 2016
Community Analysis	20%	December 5, 2016
Group Presentation	15%	December 5, 2016
Discussion Board	25%	Sunday before midnight
Practice Laboratory	15%	

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

94 and above = A	80.0 to 83.999 = B-
90.0 to 93.999 = A-	77.0 to 79.999 = C+
87.0 to 89.999 = B+	74.0 to 76.999 = C
84.0 to 86.999 = B	70.0 to 73.999 = C-
67.0 to 69.999 = D+	60.0 to 63.999 = D-
64.0 to 66.999 = D	Below 60 = F

Each course requirement is described in detail below. However, you may still have questions about the assignments. If this is the case, please feel free to ask for clarification at any time during the course. You may ask for clarification during my office hours or you can ask questions at the beginning of each class session.

## VI. Course Schedule

Week	Content	Assignment
I August 22	Introduction to the course and each other. Review of syllabus: course purpose, format, norms, and assignments.	
II August 29	Overview of Chapters 1-3. Social Service Organizations as Systems	Read Chapter 4: Understanding Organizations
III September 5	Labor Day Social Workers as change agents within the structure of Social Service Organizations	Read Chapter 5: Decision Making for Organizational Change
IV September 12	The process to change the service delivery system of Social Service Organizations	Read Chapter 6: Implementing Macro Interventions: Agency Policy, Projects, and Programs
V September 19	Role of social workers in changing neighborhoods and communities	Read Chapter 7: Understanding Neighborhoods and Communities
VI September 26	Community Observation	<b>Organizational Analysis Paper Due Wednesday September 28th</b>
VII October 3	Importance of Macro Practice	Read Chapter 8: Macro Practice in Communities
VIII October 10	Importance of Program Evaluation	Read Chapter 9: Evaluating Macro Practice.
IX October 17	Discussion on "Race"	
X October 24	The concept of "Power" and Populations-at-Risk Video: The Democratic Promise: The Legacy of Saul Alinsky	Read Chapter 10: Advocacy and Social Action with Populations-at Risk.
XI October 31	Community Observation	
XII November 7	Professional Expectations	Read Chapter 11 Ethics and Ethical Dilemmas in Practice with Organizations and Communities
XIII November 14	Importance of Supervision	Read chapter 12: Using supervision
XIV November 21	Thanksgiving Social Work and the Media	Read chapter 13: Developing and Managing Agency
XV November 28	Burnout	Read Chapter 14: Stress and Time Management
XVI December 5	Group Presentations	<b>Community Analysis Paper Due</b>

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## Course Assignments

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### A. Organizational Analysis (25 points)

You will select a human service organization to analyze. The field placement assignment should be considered for this assignment. If you have not been assigned to a field placement agency select one in the community that interest you. Be sure to be specific in your comments and observations. Use examples to support your comments.

This paper should be between 7-10 pages in length. It should be typed, doubled spaced with standard margins, and approximately 250 words per page. The paper must include 10 citations from at least five different sources (professional journals, interviews, textbooks) and should be submitted using Canvas in the assignment folder no later than 11:59 pm on Wednesday September 28th. Students must follow APA guidelines for citations and references. The expected **Subheadings** are listed a below at the beginning of each section as noted below. The assignment is worth a total of 25 points. The paper will be evaluated on the organization and clarity of writing (10 points) and the quality of the analysis (15 points).

The paper should follow the following outline:

1. **(Description of Organization)** Name and describe the work of the organization. Specify the auspices of the agency (public nonprofit, for profit).
2. **(Description of Organizational Structure)** Describe the organizational structure of the organization. How does this structure influence the distribution of power and control in the organization? Describe the lines of authority in the organization. Discuss the approaches of management used in your agency and how management approaches effect the functioning of employees and client
3. **(Organizational Theory)** Discuss your selected agency in relation to one or more of the organizational theories described in the text. How does the theory apply to your organization/agency? How could it be used to understand your agency and to improve its functioning?
4. **(Organization's External Environment)** Describe the organization's external environment. Discuss the shifting macro environment in which it operates. How does it achieve legitimization in its external environment? Where do its clients come from? What is the organization's relationship with other organizations in its environment?
5. **(Operative Goals of Organizations)** What are the official and operative goals of the organization? How were the goals determined? How does the organization deal with its multiple goals? Has goal displacement occurred in the organization? If so, describe what influenced it to occur? What is the result of the goal displacement on the organization? How has service delivery been effected by the goals and/or goal displacement?
6. **(Strengths and Weaknesses of Organizations)** Summarize the major strengths and weakness of your agency/organization. What recommendations would you make to increase effectiveness and decrease problems in your agency? Assess how realistic your recommendations are considering the external environment of the organization. What organizational resistance to change might get in the way, and how would you propose to deal with this resistance?
7. **(Positions Held by Members of vulnerable Populations)** What positions in the organization are held by women, people of color, gay and lesbian persons or persons with disabilities? Discuss special issues that they may face in the organization?

## Criteria for Evaluation of Paper

### A. Organization of paper and clarity of writing style.

1. Use of consistent style.
2. Use of headings and subheadings, as needed for transition
3. Check grammar, spelling, sentence, and paragraph construction.
4. Make certain that the paper flows logically.

### B. Quality of Analysis

1. Use of appropriate references, as needed
  2. Ability to write analytically, as well as descriptively.
  3. Incorporation of concepts and principles learned in readings, discussed in class and found in the library.
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## **B. Community Analysis (20 points)**

This paper should be between 7-10 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with standard margins, and approximately 250 words per page. The expected subheadings are listed in bold italics at the beginning of each section noted in the outline below. The assignment is **due on December 5th** and should be submitted in canvas to the assignment folder.

### **Part 1: Understanding your Community**

The purpose of this assignment is to develop your understanding of a community and its cultural diversity so you will be able to better plan and develop interventions to address issues and problems facing the community. The assignment focuses on a specified neighborhood within the city of Austin Texas.

To begin your understanding of your community, gather statistics and data to describe your community (for example: How many persons live in the city and/or in the town? What are their cultural/racial characteristics? What are their incomes, ages, political affiliations etc?) Census data are available in the documents section of the library. It might be helpful to identify long-term community residents and talk to them about the changing dynamics of the community. If your community has a Chamber of Commerce you might write them for up-to-date information.

Please draw from class readings, lectures, discussions, and from library sources that will help you analyze your community.

The paper should follow this outline.

- 1. (*Description of Community*)** Describe the community as it were 20-25 years (a generation) ago (industrial, residential, service, commercial etc.). Describe your community as it is now using the concepts discussed in your book including competition, centralization, concentration, invasion, gentrification, stratification and succession.
- 2. (*Implications of Change in Community*)** Analyze the implications of the changes in your community and give special concern to how these changes may have impacted diverse populations and populations-at-risk.
- 3. (*Nature of Interactions Between Different Racial and Economic Populations*)** Assess the current nature of interactions among different racial and economic population groups. How are these interactions impacting the community's relationships with other communities?
- 4. (*Community from a Systems and Ecological Perspective*)** Identify a problem that your community is currently experiencing and describe your community from both a system and ecological perspective.

### **Part II: Community Assessment and Intervention Plan:**

- 1. (*Description of the Problem*)** Describe the problem that you have identified that your community is currently experiencing. Discuss the probable etiology of the problem; your opinion, but backed with literature.

2. **(People Most Affected by the Problem)** Who is most affected by the problem? Provide demographic information regarding the population e.g. race, gender, age, socio economic status.

3. **(Elements that make Community Vulnerable)** Discuss the elements and characteristics of the community that make it vulnerable to this problem. Discuss the strengths of the community that give the community resilience and the potential for overcoming the problem.

4. **(Major Institutions in Community)** Identify major institutions – schools, factories, churches, attraction sites. How are these institutions contributing to or inhibiting the community’s ability to address the problem?

5. **(Plan of Action)** Select one possible action and develop a plan for action. Discuss community factors that would support this action plan. Discuss community factors that would discourage this action plan.

6. **(Evaluation Plan)** Discuss a plan for evaluating the change effort.

### **Criteria for Grading Papers**

- The paper utilizes adequate sources of information and identifies the perspective and limitations of data
- The paper contains all of the requisite elements of the assignment presenting the information gathered clearly and with appropriate emphasis, delineating findings and your observations
- The paper provides an accurate, comprehensive picture of the community, its historical and contemporary context and its current strengths and challenges
- The paper addresses a problem facing the community and recommends thoughtful, well-supported strategies to address it.
- The paper is well written, demonstrating basic master of sentence structure, with no grammatical spelling or typing errors.
- The paper incorporates concepts from course readings in its description and analyses and cites sources appropriately.
- The paper addresses a problem facing the community and recommends thoughtful, well-supported strategies to address it.
- The paper uses headings and sub-headings consistent with the paper outline.

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### **C. Group Presentation (15 Points)**

As a professional in Social Work, you will be called on to present your findings and case studies etc. This group project will provide practice working in groups as well as an opportunity to speak in front of your peers before you have to speak before your clients.

Each group will present their project to the class on **December 5th**. Props are encouraged but should serve only as a guide to simplify the presentation for the benefit of the audience. The goal of the presentation is for your group to gain support for its plan of action. Your group will define the situation. For example, you may be trying to recruit new members to your organization. You might be asking the audience to support some cause or action that you are planning (letter writing campaign, support for a candidate, participate in a boycott, etc.) You might be presenting a request for funding to an allocation board or asking for donation from a group of concerned citizens. You might be presenting a set of recommendations for changing a policy to the Board of Directors, City Council, and Commissioner’s Court. Or perhaps you are giving testimony before a legislative committee

regarding your issue of concern. Each group will have 20 minutes to give their presentation so it will have to be focused and well organized.

**Note:** As the instructor, I do reserve the right to award differently 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 deadlines 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.

#### **D. Practice Laboratory (15 Points)**

The practice laboratory is an educational tool used to give you practical experience and allow you to understand and implement specific social work concepts and interventions as it relates to organizations, communities and neighborhoods. The laboratory will provide you with insight into the complexities and nuances associated with transforming social service organizations and communities challenged with issues that impact the quality of life for residents. Each week you and your group members will engage in exercises related to the topic of discussion for that week. Each week you will earn one point for your participation. In order to earn that point you must be in class for both sessions (Tuesday & Thursday).

The water crisis in Flint Michigan will be used as a case study to contextualize the role and responsibility of social workers in the context of organizations, communities and neighborhoods.

#### **E. Discussion Board (25 Points)**

Each week three questions related to the assigned readings and/or class discussions will be posted. You are expected to respond to at least two of the questions by midnight on the Sunday before class on Monday.

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### **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, expressed 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.