

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

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**SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS**

SW 360K #60865 / SW 387R # 61080

**SEMESTER:** SPRING 2016

**MEETING TIME:** THURSDAYS 5:30-8:30PM

**MEETING PLACE:** SSW 2.130

**INSTRUCTOR:** BETH GERLACH, PHD, LCSW

**OFFICE NUMBER:** 3.212d (*through Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, then use Adjunct Office*)

**EMAIL:** BETH\_GERLACH@UTEXAS.EDU

**OFFICE HOURS:** WED 1:15-2:15 AND BY APPT

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**SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS**

**I. Standardized Course Description**

This course will focus on the provision of school-based social services to children and adolescents and their families and the roles social workers play in delivering such services. Content discussed will include the historical context of school-based social services and school social work; relevant national and state legislation and policies; a comparison of models used in the provision of school-based services; specific techniques used by school social workers in delivering culturally competent social services and in promoting social and economic justice. Emphasis will be on the effective delivery of intervention strategies to at-risk populations and on the development of quality prevention programs in a school setting.

**II. Standardized Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course the students will be able to:

- I. Explain the historical context of school-based social services and school social work from the perspectives of the history of public school education, social welfare, and the profession of social work;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the unique aspects of providing social services in the contexts of school and educational settings.
3. Identify and analyze relevant national and state legislation and policies that have an impact on the delivery of school-based social services to children and families;
4. Identify and analyze personal and professional social work ethical and value dilemmas that may occur while providing social services in school settings;

5. Compare and analyze different organizational and practice models used in the provision of school-based services;
6. Demonstrate familiarity with culturally relevant techniques and strategies for intervention with individuals, groups, families and communities within the school practice setting;
7. Discuss relevant research and program evaluation data relevant to the provision of school-based social services and be able to develop and implement methods for evaluating school-based social services;
8. Understand and apply information about the needs of diverse populations, including ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class, gender and physical emotional abilities, the impacts of such diversity on individuals and their families in school setting, and the roles that social workers can play in helping such settings meet diverse needs and promote social and economic justice to actual case situations involving children and their families in school settings.

### **III. Teaching Methods**

This course is designed to provide the student with a meaningful learning environment to acquire skills and knowledge about social work practice in schools. The instructor believes in an active learning approach, an approach asserting that the learning process is one in which reciprocity between the instructor and students is a necessity. Teaching methods include a combination of lecture, group discussion, small group critique, current event analysis, guest speakers and readings. Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to each class period. Class instruction is designed to encourage student participation and input.

### **IV. Required Readings**

#### **Textbooks:**

Openshaw, L. (2008). *Social Work Practice in Schools: Principals and Practice*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Tough, P. (2013). *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character*. New York: Mariner Books.

#### **Additional weekly required readings will be supplied to students via Canvas:**

Additional readings from other books, journal articles and news sources will be available on UT Canvas in the folder corresponding to the week assigned.

## V. Course Requirements

Your grade for this course will be based upon the following six assignments. Students are strongly encouraged to attend all class meetings. Participation is viewed as a necessity for learning through an exchange of information between students and also between instructor and students. Additionally, students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to review their individual progress in the class, ask questions regarding class content, and also discuss their goals and future directions in the social work profession.

*For all writing assignments submitted for this course:* Be sure to proofread your paper for grammar, spelling and correct use of APA (6th ed.) format. The content of student papers is important and thus a major part of the grade, however, paper grades will also be based on organization, grammar, spelling, punctuation and correct use of APA (6th ed.) style. Content, clarity, creativity and professionalism in writing will be considered when grading assignments. Undergraduate students are encouraged to use the Undergraduate Writing Center for assistance with their writing skills and graduate students can seek help from the graduate writing coordinator.

### 1. **School Reflection Paper (20%) - Due February 4**

This assignment requires you to reflect upon your experience as a K-12 student. Please cover the below questions in your paper: **The paper should be 5 to 6 pages.**

- Briefly describe the school(s) that you attended in terms of neighborhood, size, academic rigor and general demographics of student population including socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, grade levels, etc.
- What was your family's influence on your educational experience? What was your family's attitude towards education? How did you know this?
- Describe your experience as a student in reference to teachers and other school staff, and peers. Note any involvement in after school activities like extracurricular activities, employment, family responsibilities or school supported interests.
- What were some of the best things about your school? What do you wish you could have changed?
- Were there any particular groups that you felt had an advantage or disadvantage in being successful at your school? Describe what made you feel this way?
- Present one or two examples of a positive experience that you had related to school and what it meant to you as a student (ex: an influential teacher, significant accomplishment).
- Present one or two examples of a challenging experience that you had related to school and how it shaped you as a student (ex: changing schools, violence).
- Describe what effect your K-12 schooling experience has had on your college experience thus far. Why did you decide to attend college or graduate school? How well prepared did you feel for college? How have your experiences shaped your perspective on schooling, academics and learning?
- How do you think that your school experience could inform the work you may do as an adult working in a school?

**2. Article / Current Event Assignment (5%) – rolling due date, assigned in class**

Issues related to education, at-risk populations and school-based social services appear frequently in the media. Students will bring in one current event article (published within last 3 months) from a local or national newspaper, journal or magazine addressing a topic, policy or population relevant to social work practice in schools. Students will need to post the article on Canvas at least 24 hours before their presentation *or* will need to bring a copy of the article to pass out to students. Students will present a brief summary of the article and then lead the class in a discussion on the content (5-10 minutes total).

**3. School Social Work Conference Reaction Paper (20%) – Due March 3**

Students will need to attend one session of the Texas School Social Work Conference, being held in Austin at the Doubletree Hotel Feb. 25-27, and write a brief (**3 to 4 pages**) reaction paper about the session. A conference session is typically 1.5 hours long (some are 3 hours long). There are more than 30 sessions to choose from on a wide range of topics related to schools and social services.

Students who volunteer with the conference organizers for a 4 hour shift may attend the conference for free, without paying the registration fee. Students may attend as many sessions as they like, but attendance at just one is sufficient to complete this assignment. The full conference schedule will be provided to students on the second day of class. Our class will not meet on Feb. 25 because of the conference that week.

*Please cover these topics/questions in your paper:*

- Clearly state the name of the presentation and the presenter(s) and the date of the presentation.
- Describe the issue or problem that was the focus of the presentation.
- How does this issue or problem affect children/youth? How is this particular issue or problem relevant in a school?
- What efforts/solutions have been developed to address this issue or problem? Is the presenter(s) emphasizing a particular solution? Describe the steps/tasks/procedures the presenter recommends.
- Describe what information from the presentation was most important or interesting for you.
- Describe any questions that the presentation raised for you.
- **Graduate students only:** read two peer review journal articles related to the topic of the presentation. Describe how the findings from the article support or challenge your learning from the presentation.

You may critique the presentation, noting its strengths and weaknesses, and you may also offer your own opinion on the issue or problem that was the focus. However, be sure to cover the above thoroughly. If something about the presentation makes it impossible to directly respond to one of those topics/questions, explain that in your paper.

#### 4. **Movie/Book Case Study Paper (20%) – Due March 24**

Through a movie or fictional book character, students will create a case study of a school-aged (preK – 12<sup>th</sup> grade) child. Students may select any movie or fictional book with a child or adolescent as a central character. The character may represent any population that could be at-risk in school (for example: homeless, teen parent, poverty, trauma, gender identity, abuse/neglect, grief and loss, foster youth, mental health, learning or developmental disability, substance use, bullying, **etc**).

The case study requires students to gather and analyze case study data, identify the presenting problem(s), and create goals and a treatment plan for a case from the movie or book. The paper should be **6-8 pages** (*undergraduate students*) or **8-10 pages** (*graduate students*) and should cover the following questions/topics:

- Identify the student “client” including available case history information
- Identify members of the client system
- What are the client’s strengths? What are the system strengths?
- What is the presenting problem(s)?
- As the school social worker, how would you intervene with the client and his/her system? What roles would you play?
- Prioritize the top 2-3 issues to create goals. Describe the steps of your interventional plan with goals and strategies.
- What are some barriers that exist, that could hinder the client’s success/progress?
- How does the client problem/issue relate to a larger social or macro issue?
- Include at least **three sources** to support your assessment, intervention plan and/or analysis.
- *Graduate students only:* Include a review of the research literature to determine the “best practice” approach for the presenting issue(s). What are some of the evidence-informed or evidenced-based methods recommended to serve the client? Describe how the research informed your approach for intervention. Include *at least two sources* to support your findings.

#### 5. **Op-Ed Exercise (10%) – Due April 14**

An op-ed, or opinion editorial, is a concise narrative essay that presents the writer's opinion or thoughts about an issue. Op-eds can raise awareness about a particular topic or aim to persuade others. Many examples of op-eds can be found in local and national newspapers, professional blogs and advocacy sites.

For this assignment, students will select a topic they feel strongly about and prepare a 500-700 word short persuasive essay in an op-ed format. Topics can include anything related to social work, schools and education. Guidelines for writing an op-ed will be provided in class. Students will present their op-ed to class on the due date.

## 6. **Multi-Disciplinary Training Presentation (25%) – Due April 21 or April 28**

One important role for school social workers is to provide education and training to multidisciplinary school staff. For this assignment, students will select a topic and develop a 20 minute training designed to increase school staff understanding about an issue related to student, family or campus need. Topics can vary and focus on individual student need, school climate, classroom interventions, understanding of a population needs, etc. The trainings are not intended to teach school staff how to act as mental health providers, but to target how knowledge of the topic could enhance their roles within the school and contribute to child well-being/academic success. Topics will be approved by the instructor by Spring Break. Ideas include (but are not limited to): *Importance of SEL, CPS 101 / when and how to report abuse or neglect, methods for improving school climate, supporting educational success of foster youth, homeless children and families, valuing cultural differences at school, childhood trauma and behavior, increasing student engagement, supporting students with grief and loss, school staff self-care, understanding interpersonal violence in families, effective methods of school discipline, supporting recent immigrant students and families, how schools can support students with particular mental health or behavioral disorders, etc.*

The presentation information should be aimed at an audience of teachers, administrators, counselors and/or school support staff. **In addition to covering the key content of the topic area, the presentation should also address the following points:**

- Overview of the topic; including definitions of terms, incidence rates (when relevant), effects on student behavior, etc.
- Are there any legal /policy implications, long term positive or negative effects, associations with well-being, outcomes, etc.
- How does the issue affect academic success and/or learning? Why is it important for school staff to be aware of this issue?
- How will the information in the training help them to better meet the needs of students and/or the school community, and enhance learning?
- What are the specific take-aways from the training? What are you hoping teachers will “do?” What do you want to discourage them from doing?
- A resource page for school staff if they would like more information.

The presentation should be approximately 20 minutes. Students may use varied methods for their presentations, such as lecture with visual like ppt, handouts, or small group activities. Including some type of experiential activity for the audience is encouraged. If video is used, it should not be more than 5 minutes of the presentation. *A bibliography, including all of the sources used to develop the presentation, needs to be turned in on the day of the presentation.* Presentations will be graded based on content (thoroughness, accuracy, and relevance for audience) and presentation (clarity, organization, creativity). **Students may choose a partner to complete the assignment or work individually.**

**7. Extra Credit Opportunity (2 pts on final grade) – Due by May 6**

Students looking to extend their learning and earn extra credit may complete an extra credit assignment. The extra credit assignment involves attending a community event, training or hearing, or volunteering at a school and writing a short reaction paper. Options include attending a legislative hearing related to social work and education or a specific training for working with a population of students. If students are interested in volunteering, they can ask instructor for help arranging, if needed. Students interested in pursuing the extra credit should have the activity approved by the instructor prior to participation. Further details about the reaction paper will be provided for those interested.

**VI. Grading**

1. School Reflection Paper	20%
2. Current Events Assignment	5 %
3. SSW Conference Reaction Paper	20 %
4. Movie/Book Case Study	20 %
5. Op-ed Exercise	10%
6. Multi-disciplinary Training Presentation	<u>25%</u>
TOTAL	100%

**Grading Scale**

94.0 - 100 = A	74.0 – 76.999 = C
90.0 – 93.999 = A-	70.0 – 73.999 = C-
87.0 – 89.999 = B+	67.0 – 69.999 = D+
84.0 – 86.999 = B	64.0 – 66.999 = D
80.0 – 83.999 = B-	60.0 – 63.999 = D-
77.0-79.999 = C+	Below 60.0 = F

**VII. Class Policies**

- Class Attendance.** Class attendance is expected every class period for the entire class period. Attendance will be noted each class. Any class material missed due to class absence is the students’ sole responsibility.
- Class participation.** Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class, and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. As we learn about working in multi-dimensional teams, it is important for future social workers to be both self-aware and conscious of group dynamics. Therefore, appropriate contribution means for some, to learn to speak up, add comments or voice questions. For others, it means being sensitive and allowing others to contribute.

3. **General assignment requirements.** All assignments must be typed in double spaced and have one inch margins. References/sources used in papers must be in APA format and be credible (No Wikipedia, etc.). If questions about the credibility of a reference arise, consult with the instructor. Specific instructions will be provided for each assignment. If students are unclear about how to best complete an assignment, please consult with the instructor prior to the due date.
4. **Assignment due dates.** Except under unusual circumstances, assignments must be completed on the due date and turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. Late assignments will result in a deduction of **five points** for each day that the assignment is late.

## **VIII. University Policies**

**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 and Civility in the Classroom.** 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. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

**Unanticipated Distress.** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at [www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/](http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/).

**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 Course Materials.** The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor 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 sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to 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). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. 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, examination, work assignment, or project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Title IX Reporting.** In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct based on gender. Students who report incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or sexual misconduct to faculty, instructors, and/or staff who supervise students, will be provided a list of University resources. If the incident is impacting the academic environment, a report will be provided to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may be found at <http://socialwork.utexas.edu/dl/files/academic-programs/other/qrg-sexualharassment.pdf>.

**Classroom Confidentiality.** Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

**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 for keeping the university informed about a change of 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 between 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 in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering 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.

#### IV. Course Schedule

<b>Date Thursday</b>	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
1/21	<b>Introduction to the Course</b> -School Social Work History Overview -School Social Worker Roles, Responsibilities and Models of Practice	Syllabus Readings on Canvas	
1/28	<b>Major Issues in American Schools</b> -Achievement gap, race and poverty -Social justice -Federal and state policy	Tough Intro – 1.7 (p.27) Readings on Canvas	
2/4	<b>Major Issues in American Schools</b> - Culture, identity, gender - School-based mental health services	Openshaw Chpt 3 Tough 1.8-1.15 (p.48) Readings on Canvas	
2/11	<b>Perspectives in Social Work Services</b> - Resiliency -SSW Ethics, standards -Ecosystem and schools	Openshaw Chpt 1 & 2 Tough 2.1 – 2.12 Readings on Canvas	<b>School Reflection Paper</b>
2/18	<b>Design of Social Work Services</b> - Assessment and case planning - Engagement with families, teachers, and community - Individuals, groups and families - Rtl (Response to intervention)	Openshaw Chpt 9 & 15 Tough 2.13-2.17 Readings on Canvas	
2/25	<b>School Social Work Conference</b> -No class meeting		<b>Attend session</b>
3/3	<b>SW Practice in Early Childhood</b> -Attachment and parenting -Disabilities and ECI -ESL -Kinder readiness	Openshaw Chpt 4 Tough 3.1-3.6 Readings on Canvas	<b>SSW Conference Reaction Paper</b>
3/10	<b>SW Practice in Elementary and Middle School</b> -mental health -crisis intervention -bullying and peers -alternative and charter schools	Openshaw Chpt 5 & 6 Tough 3.7-3.11 Readings on Canvas	
3/17	<b>Spring Break</b>		

<b>Date Thursday</b>	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
3/24	<b>SW Practice in High School</b> -Drop outs -Sexuality, pregnancy and parenting -Aging out of foster care -College and work readiness	Openshaw Chpt 7 & 8 Tough 4.1 -4.7 Readings on Canvas	<b>Movie/Book Case Study</b>
3/31	<b>Trauma in children, families and communities</b> -Trauma and behavior -exposure to violence - school-based interventions	Openshaw Chpt 10 Readings on Canvas	
4/7	<b>Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and School Climate</b>	Tough 5.1 – 5.5 Readings on Canvas	<b>Op-Ed / Blog</b>
4/14	<b>Macro Issues in Schools</b> -Discipline and restorative practices -substance use, grief and loss, immigration and parental absence	Openshaw Chpt 11, 12, 13 & 14 Readings on Canvas	
4/21	<b>Multi-Disciplinary Training Presentations</b>		
4/28	<b>Multi-Disciplinary Training Presentations</b>		
5/5	<b>School Social Work Practice and Class Wrap-up</b> -Evaluating effectiveness of services -Current reform models and trends in education	Readings on Canvas	<b>Extra Credit due by May 6</b>