

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

Course Number:	SW 381T	Instructor:	John Feather, PhD
Unique Number:	59610	Email:	jfeather@utexas.edu
Semester:	Fall 2020	Office:	SSW 3.104A
Meeting Time/Place:	Thursdays	Office Phone:	202-725-6731
	5:30pm – 8:00 pm	Office Hours:	By appointment
	Online		

DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course familiarizes students with the macro context of social work practice. It examines the reciprocal relationship between human behavior and social environments. It emphasizes the interlocking and complex nature of culture and personal identity with content on populations-at-risk, examining the factors that contribute to and constitute being at risk. It introduces the student to the obligation that social services meet the needs of groups served and are culturally relevant. This includes equipping students with skills to recognize diversity within and between groups that may influence assessment, planning, intervention, and research. Students learn how to define, design, and implement strategies for effective practice with persons from diverse backgrounds.

This course examines the impact of social structure and other societal factor on one’s personal life chances in relation to equity, fairness, opportunity, and other issues of social and economic justice. Drawing on a systems-ecological perspective, this course helps students develop skills at using systems thinking approaches to understanding organizations and communities with special emphasis on their application to a variety of oppressed and disadvantaged populations and multiple levels of intervention. Special emphasis is given to the development of assessment skills and intervention methods that are relevant to empowerment, capacity building and social change within organizations and communities. Understanding the role of age, race, gender, social class, culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, and physical and mental ability is an integral part of this course.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, 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.

EPAS Competencies

The Steve Hicks 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, the UT SHSSW engages in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE's Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

Using a common evaluation instrument, this course measures the implementation of knowledge, skills, values, and/or cognitive and affective processes to assess the following competencies:

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Outcome 6.2: Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Outcome 7.1: Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies

Outcome 7.3: Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies

Outcome 7.4: Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Outcome 8.1: Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies

Outcome 8.3: Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes

Outcome 8.4: Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies

Outcome 8.5: Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Outcome 9.1: Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes

Outcome 9.3: Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes

Outcome 9.4: Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels

III. TEACHING METHODS

This course is designed to include a variety of teaching and learning methods to achieve the course objectives. 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, and guest speakers who work in agency and community-based settings. These methods intentionally draw on diverse pedagogical approaches to be inclusive of a variety of learning styles.

IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

The primary text for this course will be the [Community Tool Box](#) (referred to as CTB in the course schedule) 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.

Note that all required readings will be provided to you free of charge through Canvas. There is no required textbook that needs to be purchased for this course.

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 you find interesting and would like to investigate.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course requirements consist of a small group assignment, a number of exercises, and class attendance and participation. Course requirements, due dates, and their contribution to the final grade are summarized below. Much more detailed information will be provided in Canvas for each assignment.

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.

Assignments

	<i>% of Final Grade</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Attendance and participation	10%	
Exercises (5 exercises; each at 7% of final grade)	35%	
• Exercise 1: Describing You and Your Community		Sept. 3
• Exercise 2: Understanding Yourself and Your Team		Sept. 17
• Exercise 3: Selecting a Community Focus		Oct. 1
• Exercise 4: Understanding Your Organization		Oct. 15
• Exercise 5: Evaluation: What Does 'Success' Mean?		Nov. 19
Community Group Project	55%	Dec. 3
• Group Work Plan	10%	
• Group Class Presentation	10%	
• Individual Grade	10%	
• Final Group Deliverable	25%	

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.

Exercises. The exercises are short, written discussion of no more than 3 single spaced pages on specific topics relevant to the material in the course. Each of these will be described in detail in Canvas.

Group 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 project requires students to work in a task group consisting of 3-5 students. Each task group will work on a specific neighborhood or area within the Austin area. Students will conduct research to assess and characterize the neighborhood, determine the social needs in the area,

identify important agencies meeting this need, create a presentation to the local residents (presented to the class) and develop a final written document with your final analysis and recommendations. This might include reviewing the existing literature to see how other communities have approached similar issues in an innovative manner or developing a plan for how existing innovations in the community may be successfully replicated in other communities.

To achieve the goals of this 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 sub-group meetings and tasks related to the completion of 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: 10% for the group workplan; 10% for the presentation; and 25% for the final written summary. These are all discussed in detail in the material provided in Canvas.

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.

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. GRADES

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

Canvas: The instructor uses Canvas as the primary means of managing course materials. All course materials will be posted on the course’s site. The site may also be used to communicate

and collaborate online, to post grades, to give online quizzes or surveys. Students are responsible for checking this site regularly for class announcements and for new postings. Support in using Canvas can be obtained from the ITS Help Desk by calling 475-9400 between 8AM-6PM on Monday through Friday.

Late Assignment Policies: Except in the case of extreme emergencies, and then only with prior permission from the professor, late assignments will not be accepted without penalty. Students will lose 3 points for each day that an assignment is late. If the due date is a problem, then the student must contact the professor and negotiate another due date at least **48 hours PRIOR** to the date specified in the course syllabus.

Incompletes: Students are expected to complete all course work by the last day of class and to complete all assignments by the dates due. Only in emergency situations will an incomplete grade be given for a course and only when, prior to the emergency, the student has been in attendance and has done satisfactory work. If an incomplete grade should be assigned, there will be a written agreement with the instructor about when and how the work will be completed.

Course and Instructor Evaluations: At the end of the semester, the standard Course Instructor Survey (CIS) provided by the University of Texas at Austin will be used to evaluate the course. The CIS offers provides a systematic, campus--- wide method of evaluating courses and instructors. I hope that every student will complete the CIS.

VII. UNIVERSITY AND SCHOOL 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.

Classroom civility. A course brings together 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. Social Work 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 should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, I do expect students to engage one another with 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 instructor. The instructor 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 can contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

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/>).

Sharing Of Course Materials Is Prohibited No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course

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://ddce.utexas.edu/disability>.

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, 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. All faculty, instructors, and staff who supervise students are required to relay student reports of alleged sex discrimination, sexual harassment, including sexual violence or sexual misconduct, experienced by a student to the University Title IX office and an assistant or associate dean of the school. Further information including student resources related to Title IX may be found at <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

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 FERPA regulations as well. Discussions with individuals outside of the educational context are 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.

Class Recordings. Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

Use of email 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 <https://it.utexas.edu/>.

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.

Behavioral 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.

Covid Caveats. To help keep everyone at UT and in our community safe, it is critical that students report COVID-19 symptoms and testing, regardless of test results, to [University Health Services](#), and faculty and staff report to the [HealthPoint Occupational Health Program](#) (OHP) as soon as possible. Please see this [link](#) to understand what needs to be reported. In addition, to help understand what to do if a fellow student in the class (or the instructor or TA) tests positive for COVID, see this [University Health Services link](#).

VIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

The course schedule below outlines the major topics to be covered in this course and identifies reading assignments for each class session. In covering each topic, the class will examine specific issues related to diverse populations as outlines in objective #8 in the course objectives. All readings are available online in the course Canvas page. As we go through the semester, I may add reading to this list. When I do so I will notify you either in class or via email. All reading assignments should be completed prior to the class for which they are assigned.

Project Work Time. Because you all have busy schedules, I have scheduled some specific times during class time throughout the semester for you work together as a team. These time slots will vary between 60 and 90 minutes. Please note that these are *not* the only times you will need to meet with your teams in order to create your team projects, but it will give you times to check in to advance your projects.

Date	Topic	Text / Readings
Class 1	Introduction and course overview	See course module in Canvas
Aug. 27	Overview of Community Tool Box Review Project Descriptions What is ‘Community’ to You?	Loeb: We Don’t Have to Be Saints

Class 2 Sept. 3	What is a Community? Finalize project groups	CTB: Chapter 1 and 2 Streeter: Community Overview Exercise 1 Due
Class 3 Sept. 10	Understanding and Describing the Community	CTB: Chapters 3, Sections 1, 2, 4, 5, 16, 19, & 21 The Geography of Opportunity
Class 4 Sept. 17	Assessing Community Needs Project work time	CTB: Chapters 3, Sections 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 22 Restore Rundberg Hotspot Analysis Exercise 2 Due
Class 5 Sept. 24	Assessing Community Resources	CTB: Chapters 3, Sections 8, 18 & 20 and Chapter 21, Section 8 Asset Mapping: A Handbook Restore Rundberg Asset Inventory
Class 6 Oct. 1	Strategies for Community Change	CTB: Chapter 5 Rothman: Multi Modes of Intervention at the Macro Level Exercise 3 Due
Class 7 Oct. 8	Promoting Interest and Participation in Initiatives Project work time	CTB: Chapters 6 and 7
Class 8 Oct. 15	Developing a Strategic Plan and Organizational Structure	CTB: Chapters 8 and 9 Exercise 4 Due
Class 9 Oct. 22	Becoming a Community Leader Project work time	CTB: Chapters 13 & 14
Class 10 Oct. 29	Analyzing Community Problems and Designing Community Interventions	CTB: Chapters 17, 18 and 19
Class 11 Nov. 5	Removing Barriers, Creating Opportunities and Improving Services Project work time	CTB: Chapters 23, Chapter 24 Sections 1, 3 & 4, Chapter 25, Sections 1 & 10, Chapter 26, Sections 2, 3, 4 & 12
Class 12 Nov. 12	Organizing for Effective Advocacy Group Class Presentations Project work time	CTB: Chapters 30, 33 & 35
Class 13 Nov. 19	Evaluating Community Programs and Initiatives Group Class Presentations Project work time	CTB: Chapters 36, 37 & 38 Exercise 5 Due

Nov. 26 Thanksgiving Holiday - no class

Class 14 Final Class
Dec. 3 Evaluation Discussion
Final Group Projects Due

IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are literally thousands of books on how organizations can better impact the communities in which they serve. We are some relevant publications. None are required, but you should choose a handful that are on topics of interest to you and get them from the library. It will greatly enrich your understanding and appreciation of the field from different perspectives.

- Alinsky, S. D. (1972). *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals*. New York: Vintage Books.
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- Barakso, M. & Schaffner, B. F. (2007). Exit, Voice, and Interest Group Governance. *American Politics Research*, 36, 1-25.
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- Bornstein, D. (2004). *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*. NY: Oxford University Press.
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- Farruggia, G. (2007). How is the Nonprofit Sector Changing? *Futures Research Quarterly*, 23, 5-16.
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