

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

**Course Number:** SW 310

**Unique Number:** 61330

**Semester:** Fall 2021

**E-Mail:** dsparks@austin.utexas.edu

**Instructor's Name:** Dede Sparks, LMSW

**Pronouns:** she/her/hers

**Office Number:** SSW 3.124B

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays from 12:30 – 1:30  
and virtual by appointment

**Synchronous Meeting Time:** 11-12:30pm Wednesdays

**Location:** SHSSW 1.212 (This class will meet in The Utopia for the first four weeks of class in order to safely provide social distancing.)

**Asynchronous Activities:** 75 Minutes Per Week

**INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL WELFARE**

**I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is an introductory social work course in which you will learn about the profession of social work and its history: its areas of practice, values, and ethics. The history of social welfare policies in the United States is explored, as the timeline of social welfare policy decisions that shape social work practice. You will learn about the human rights issues that impact and are impacted by social work. As an introduction to the social work profession, the course will critically discuss being a social worker and the current laws, policies and ethics documents that guide practice. You will also be introduced to generalist social work practice at micro, mezzo and macro levels.

Differences in and between communities – as categorized by racialization, ethnic origin, class, gender, gender identity and expression, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical and mental abilities, caste, immigration/refugee status, national origin of communities and tribal sovereign status – will be explored in the context of social work. You will have the opportunity to assess your identities, strengths, and challenges and identify potential ethical conflicts in working directly with people. The course will explore beginning skills in engaging diversity, differences and equity in social work practice.

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

**II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Locate contexts and settings in which social workers practice, including the roles and functions that social workers perform.

2. Identify ways that an individual's assumptions, identities, values and beliefs impact social work practice.
3. Provide a basic outline of Ecological Systems Theory, Strengths-based Perspective, and Critical Race Theory in relationship to specific social problems.
4. Identify the social work ethics, laws and policies that guide practice, including the NASW Code of Ethics.
5. Explain the history of social work within the United States social service system including:
  - a. The relationship to racialization, ethnic origin, class, gender, gender identity and expression, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical and mental abilities, caste, immigration/refugee status, national origin of communities and tribal sovereign status.
  - b. The social, economic and political ideologies that have shaped the evolution of social welfare history, policies and services in the U.S.
6. Explain beginning knowledge of issues and concerns in the social work profession around racialization, ethnic origin, class, gender, gender identity and expression, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical and mental abilities, caste, immigration/refugee status, national origin of communities and tribal sovereign status.
7. Give examples of social work leadership.
8. Illustrate the importance of the impact of individual stories to the growth of social work, especially stories from people in oppressed groups.
9. Describe possible career paths in social work.

### **III. TEACHING METHODS**

The class is web-based and taught using a flipped model of teaching or a form of blended learning where students learn content partially asynchronous through analyzing readings and articles, watching videos and completing exercises. Students will meet synchronously in person for the other portion of the class. These methods intentionally draw on diverse pedagogical approaches to be inclusive of a variety of learning styles. Students will be expected to complete approximately half of the course content online and approximately half the course material in synchronous class. Students will need to have access to a computer with reliable internet connection to complete this course.

This course will highlight diverse perspectives of thought and encourages students to engage in new ways of thinking that may be represented by speakers, the professor, and classmates from diverse backgrounds. Students will be expected to critically process and reflect on what they are learning through readings, lectures, videos and discussions about social work practice in the community. The goal is to both increase your knowledge and understanding about the practice of social work, the history of social work and social welfare, social and economic justice that advances human rights and supports well-being, diversity and inclusion, AND to support you in learning to reflect on what you are discovering, to process your own emotions, beliefs and values. I will evaluate the *process* of your doing and learning, not just the *product*.

This course will use the following platforms for learning:

- **Canvas** —a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu/>. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that their e-mail address is correct on this site so that class e-mails are received. To reach your class site on Canvas, please go to <http://courses.utexas.edu>. You will need a UT EID and password. The Help Desk, available through the UT home page ([www.utexas.edu/its/help/](http://www.utexas.edu/its/help/)), can assist you with your computer and blackboard questions. You can also call them at 475-9400. Additionally, the Learning Resource Center at the SSW has computers and computer assistance.
- **OfCourse**  
Students will access a variety of informational/instructional videos using the OfCourse online platform.

#### **IV. REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND COURSE MATERIALS**

##### **Required Course Materials:**

A subscription for OfCourse!, Topics in Social Justice & Social Welfare Policy (<https://www.ofcourseworks.com>) will be required for this course. Each week’s materials and readings will be assigned or shared with students in modules in Canvas

#### **V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. Online Discussion Questions                                     | 30pts  |
| 2. Introduction Video  | 5pts   |
| 3. Research Paper  | 25 pts |
| 4. Social Work Practice Area Group Presentations                   | 30 pts |
| 5. Attendance and Class Participation (and Exit Ticket Completion) | 10pts  |

#### **REQUIREMENTS**

##### **Introduction Video**

**5pts.**

Students will be expected to record a video introduction using animoto and upload to Canvas. This video should include basic introductory information about the student (name, pronouns, hometown, family, pets, major, area of interest in social work, etc...) as well as some photos. Videos will be used to get to know each other in this class and assign groups for the group project.

**Due 9/5/21**

##### **Online Discussion Learning**

**30-32.5 pts.**

Students will be required to watch videos, complete readings and complete exercises related to the topics of that week as asynchronous activities for the Thursday class meeting time. In order to integrate what is learned for that week, students will be required to complete a discussion question in Canvas. The discussion question will be assigned in Canvas at least one week in advance. Students should use critical thinking skills in answering the question. Student responses

should be 150-250 words and should summarize observations, reflections, and any new directions or questions about the assigned materials. Students should also provide at least one 100-150 word response to one of their peer's answer(s) on the Discussion Board. Each Discussion Board Answer and Response will be worth a maximum of 2.5 points. There are 13 weekly Discussion Boards in all. Students may complete 12 Discussion Boards for full credit or 13 Discussion Boards for another 2.5 Extra Credit. *All Discussion Board posts will be due, at the latest, at 11:59pm on Sundays weekly.*

### **Research Paper**

**25 pts.**

There will be an 8–10-page, double spaced final research paper on a chosen social issue in the United States. The research paper will explore the issue, and how it affects at least 3 marginalized populations differently. Students will be expected to explore how intersecting identities impact these problems as well as apply a theory (critical race theory or ecological systems theory) to analyze the problem. Please follow APA formatting including 12pt Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins. **An outline of key points in the paper will be due on 10/4/21 and will be worth 5 points. Students will receive feedback on their outlines to aid in the completion of the final paper due on 10/25/21.** Students are encouraged to use the Writing Center's services. Information on available services can be found at <https://uwc.utexas.edu/>. (Please see Extra Credit section below on information regarding this.)

**Due 10/25/21 (Outline due 10/4/21)**

### **Social Work Practice Area Group Presentations**

**30pts**

Students will be required to coordinate with an assigned group and record a presentation with that group at the end of the semester. Recorded presentations will be shared with other class members for feedback and discussion. Assigned student groups will be used for other purposes in synchronous and asynchronous work during the semester, supplying students with opportunities for coordination and reflection with a small student group. This assignment will require students to explore a type of social work practice in depth and include research about client experiences and outcomes in this topic area as well as at least one interview with a social worker who is practicing/has practiced in this area. Some of the total points for this assignment will come from viewing and providing feedback on other group's presentations. A separate assignment sheet will be provided.

**Due 11/22/21**

### **Class Participation**

**10pts**

This will be determined on attendance in synchronous class meeting times and the quality of participation in class discussion and small group exercises. Attending the entire class period is expected in order to receive credit for attending class that day.

Attendance will be taken using a class meeting "exit ticket" which you will complete for each in-person class session. You will complete exit tickets with your name and a very brief reflection and/or question regarding your learning for that class session. Instructions will be given each class session.

Due to the format and content of this course, both attendance and contribution are imperative.

## Extra Credit

2 pts

Students who make and complete an appointment with a UT writing center consultant to review their Research paper will receive 2 extra points on their final grade. Students may schedule appointments here: <https://uwc.utexas.edu/services/writing-appointments/> It usually takes 1-2 weeks to get an appointment scheduled with the writing center so plan ahead. Verification of completion of a writing appointment must be sent to the class instructor to receive credit.

## VI. GRADES

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

## VII. CLASSROOM POLICIES

**Participation and Attendance:** Students are expected to attend class sessions regularly and to participate in an interactive framework between collegiate students and professor. Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments.

Regular and punctual attendance to each in-person class is expected for this course. Student will lose one participation point for every missed class synchronous meeting beyond one missed class unless a student has accommodations approved in advance through University Services for Students with Disabilities. Students are expected to contact the professor by email or phone in a timely manner about absences, and alert the professor about late arrivals or early departures. Any student missing more than three synchronous classes in total maybe in jeopardy of not passing this course.

“Attendance” and participation for the asynchronous portion of this class will be evaluated based on the completion of online activities and discussion boards. Students will complete a discussion board question ( or questions) that relates back to the online activities. These discussion boards are worth 2.5 points each.

Students are responsible for any material missed due to absences. Course material will be posted in Canvas.

**Due Dates and Late Assignments:** It is expected that all assignments will be turned in on time. Assignments are generally due at 11:59pm on the due date. Exceptions to this time will be announced when applicable. Assignments, including papers, are due on the date and time indicated in Canvas. Late assignments will be penalized 5% of the assignment point value for each day late. After 7 calendar days, late assignments will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Frequent communication is key when needing to turn in a late assignment. Email and meetings with the instructor to plan for late assignments are the key to success if a student is encountering barriers to turning in an assignment.

**Papers:** The instructor of this class recognizes there are many styles of writing that serve varying audiences. Students are expected to produce effective, clear written work in terms of for the one formal, academic paper in this course. When using information from sources to complete that paper, references and the bibliography should conform to current APA style. The American Psychological Association (APA) – 7th edition format should be used. Written material should be carefully proofread and errors (punctuation, typographical, spelling, etc.) corrected prior to submission in order to avoid losing points in the assignment grade. Instances of plagiarism will be addressed according to University policy. Questions about grades should be raised with the instructor within one week of receipt of the grade. Discussion Board posts and other forms of writing in this class may be written in a more informal style.

**Use of Cell Phones in the Classroom:** Cell phones should be turned off when class begins and remain off throughout the duration of synchronous class times unless the student has spoken with the instructor prior to class beginning about an urgent need to have the phone available during class.

**CLASSROOM SAFETY AND COVID-19** To help preserve our in person learning environment, the university recommends the following.

- Adhere to university mask guidance.
- Vaccinations are widely available, free and not billed to health insurance. The vaccine will help protect against the transmission of the virus to others and reduce serious symptoms in those who are vaccinated.
- Proactive Community Testing remains an important part of the university’s efforts to protect our community. Tests are fast and free.
- Visit [protect.utexas.edu](https://protect.utexas.edu) for more information.

## **VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**COVID-19 RELATED INFORMATION.** The University’s policies and practices related to the pandemic may be accessed at: <https://protect.utexas.edu/>

**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.

**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://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

**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 race, 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. This atmosphere includes working intentionally to recognize and dismantle racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism in the classroom. 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 <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 (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. blogs) 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.

**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>.

**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 on the basis of sex <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>. Faculty, field instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, or any other forms of sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

**CAMPUS CARRY POLICY.** The University’s policy on campus carry may be found here: <https://campuscarry.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.

**BEHAVIOR CONCERNS and COVID-19 ADVICE LINE (BCCAL).** If students have concerns about their behavioral health, or if they are concerned about the behavioral health of someone else, students may use the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns. 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 <https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line>. The Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line has been expanded to support The University of Texas at Austin community during the COVID-19 pandemic. By calling 512-232-5050 - Option 2 for COVID-19, students, faculty and staff can be assisted in English and Spanish with COVID-19 support.

**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.

### **IX. Class Schedule**

**Methods of teaching, such as assigned readings, TED talks and videos will be posted on Canvas and may be updated throughout the semester. Students are expected to check the Canvas modules on a regular basis for additionally assigned material. Please note that all assignments will be posted on Canvas with requirements and instructions. Below are topics assigned to each class period. Please see the course CANVAS site for detailed modules for each week. Any changes to the course schedule will be noted on Canvas.**

Week of 8/23	Introduction/Syllabus Review Academic Writing and Citations Using APA Writing in Social Work The Art & Science of Social Work Practice
Week of 8/30	Class Guidelines NASW Code of Ethics Primary Functions and Focus of Social Work History of Social Work and Social Welfare
Week of 9/6	NASW Code of Ethics History of Social Work and Social Welfare <b>Introduction Video due 9/6</b>
Week of 9/13	History of Social Work and Social Welfare
Week of 9/20	Generalist Practice and Theories Advocacy
Week of 9/27	Critical Race Theory Anti-racism
Week of 10/4	Knowing Self in Social Work Allyship/Co-conspiring <b>Research Paper Outline due on 10/4</b>

Week of 10/11	Intersectionality
Week of 10/18	Poverty Housing
Week of 10/25	Mental Health Substance Misuse <b>Research Paper due on 10/25</b>
Week of 11/1	Healthcare Aging
Week of 11/8	Disability Families and Children
Week of 11/22	International Social Work No In-Person Class This Week due to UT Student Holiday <b>Social Work Practice Area Group Presentation Due on 11/22</b>
Week of 11/29	Environmental Justice End of Semester Reflection

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