

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

SW 312: Generalist Social Work Practice: Skills, Knowledge, and Values

Course number:	SW 312	Instructor:	Jennifer Lawson, PhD, LMSW
Unique number:	60680	Email:	jennifer.lawson@austin.utexas.edu
Semester:	Spring 2023	Office:	SSW 3.104A
Meeting time:	Mon/Wed 11:30-12:30	Office Hours:	Mondays 12:45-1:30
			and by appt.
Classroom:	SSW 1.214		

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is the first practice course you will complete in the social work curriculum. In this course, you will be introduced to the change and problem-solving process with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. You will learn the purpose of theory in social work and begin to understand the theories that most influence generalist practice. The impact and guidance of the NASW Code of Ethics and other codes/principles of ethics on generalist social work practice will also be explored. Several sets of beginning social work skills, including observation, relationship building, interviewing and assessment skills, will be developed in this class. Experiential learning is emphasized as skills evolve, including a 30-hour service learning requirement that involves opportunities to interact with community members. In addition, in this course, you will learn how to reflect the needs of diverse individuals, groups and communities – as categorized by racialization, ethnic origin, class, gender, gender identity and expression, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical and mental disabilities, caste, immigration/refugee status, national origin of communities and tribal sovereign status.

This course carries the Ethics flag. Ethics courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments involving ethical issues and the process of applying ethical reasoning to real-life situations.

Prerequisite: S W 310, Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare, with a grade of at least C.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Define the major dimensions of generalist social work practice and the planned change/problem solving process with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

2. Understand the purpose of theory, how theoretical perspectives fit with individual beliefs and values, and how theory works to provide a framework for social work practice.
3. Explain how the lenses of ecosystems perspective, critical race theory, strengths-based approaches, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and social constructionist theory can be applied to generalist social work practice.
4. Discuss anti-racism in generalist practice, centering racialization, and using perspectives developed by Black, Indigenous and other scholars of color.
5. Using a social justice lens, identify policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist and oppressive ideas and actions and suggest strategies for change.
6. Demonstrate basic skills in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities including:
 - a. Observation,
 - b. Engagement,
 - c. Communication,
 - d. Interviewing,
 - e. Assessment,
 - f. Goal setting and intervention,
 - g. Evaluation,
 - h. Collaboration, and
 - i. Problem solving.
7. Demonstrate use of tools in generalist practice including, but not limited to ecomaps, culturagrams, and genograms.
8. Demonstrate the ability to differentially use basic social work skills to reflect the needs of clients of diverse groups distinguished by racialization, ethnic origin, class, gender, gender expression, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical and mental disabilities, caste, immigration/refugee status and national origin of communities.
9. Identify ethical issues and recognize when client, legal, policy, societal and/or personal values conflict, emphasizing understanding, affirmation and respect for human diversity and social justice in the practice of social work.

III. TEACHING METHODS

In this course, we will use a combination of teaching and learning methods, which may include lectures, class discussion, small group discussion, polls, case studies, experiential lab activities, videos, outside-of-class assignments, and guest speakers. Students are encouraged to provide feedback and meet with the instructor individually as needed to enhance their learning.

There will be at least two instances where I cannot be present in class because of work commitments I had prior to accepting this teaching position. For the days I cannot attend class, there will asynchronous activities instead that may include watching a recorded lecture or completing other activities to be determined in lieu of physically attending class.

IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

Birkenmaier, J., Berg-Werner, M., and Dewees, M.P. (2017). *The practice of generalist social*

work. (5th ed.) New York: Routledge.

Students are also expected to review:

UTSSW Standards for Social Work Education

<http://socialwork.utexas.edu/dl/files/academic-programs/other/standards-sw-education.pdf>

NASW Code of Ethics

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners Code of Conduct (page 87)

<https://www.bhec.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SW-February-2022-v3.pdf>

NASW Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence

<http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/PRA-BRO-253150-CC-Standards.pdf>

NASW Policy Statement on Professional Self Care

<http://www.compassionstrengths.com/uploads/NASW.ProfesionalSelf-Care.pdf>

****Any additional required weekly readings and handouts will be posted on Canvas.****

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The following components represent brief descriptions of your graded assignments for the semester. We may make changes as we go. We will discuss them in depth during class, and I will provide detailed instructions for each one that will be posted on Canvas as we move through the semester. I will also use grading rubrics, which you will receive with the assignment instructions.

1. Service learning

All students enrolled in SW 312 are required to complete 30 clock hours of service learning in a community agency or organization. Additional instructions, forms and due dates for this course requirement will be discussed in class and made available on Canvas. If you have questions, ask me or reach out to April Ashley Oviedo, Graduate Assistant, at april.oviedo@utexas.edu.

You will receive a set of forms to give to your service learning supervisor at the beginning of the semester. They will need to be filled out and signed by the supervisor to receive full credit. Tracking service learning hours will occur on GivePulse; you are also expected to track your own hours as you go.

It is in your interest to get started early on your hours. You cannot pass the class without completing your service learning.

2. Movie analysis

You will watch a movie and write a brief paper exploring the unique strengths and needs of the main character based on their life experiences, identities, and circumstances. I will provide a list of options or you can select your own with instructor approval.

3. Video dyad project

You will work with a partner to create a video demonstrating basic social work practice skills, focusing on engagement, communication, relationship building, and problem exploration. You will take turns role-playing as the social worker and the client. You will show your video to the instructor and a small group of peers for feedback.

4. Service learning reflection paper

You will complete a reflection paper on your service learning experience and an application of course content. A detailed prompt will be provided.

5. Quizzes

There will be quizzes at three points during the semester to evaluate your comprehension of important readings.

Assignment	Points
Service learning	25
Movie analysis	20
Video dyad project	20
Service learning reflection paper	10
Quizzes (three - 5 pts each)	15
Attendance and participation	10
Total	100

VI. GRADING

94 and above	A
90 to 93.9	A-
87 to 89.9	B+
84 to 86.9	B
80 to 83.9	B-

77 to 79.9	C+
74 to 76.9	C
70 to 73.9	C-
67 to 69.9	D+
64 to 66.9	D
60 to 63.9	D-
Below 60	F

VII. CLASS POLICIES

Instructor Contact

You can reach me via email (Canvas works best) and office hours. I have a regular full-time job that requires my presence during work hours. Though I will make every effort to check my UT email regularly and respond as soon as possible, it is important for you to know that there are times I will not be able to respond to student emails until the evening. I will always respond within 24 hours. Because I cannot always respond to emails immediately, *it is critical that you do not wait until the last minute to email me with urgent questions*. It is your job to make sure you understand assignments well before they are due so that you have time to ask questions during office hours or by email.

Attendance and Participation

On-time attendance and active participation are mandatory. Participation entails completing assigned readings before class and actively engaging in discussion and class activities. Each student is expected to demonstrate investment in learning. This investment is, in part, demonstrated by attitude, attention, and attendance. Students are expected to attend class regularly, submit complete assignments on time, stay awake and alert, seek help on assignments or course content from the instructor when necessary, and treat others with respect. These behaviors and attitudes are aligned with professional behavior that will be expected in the work environment as you move into your post-college careers.

Each student will be allowed two (2) absences, for any reason, without penalty. Beyond those absences, you will receive a deduction of 5 points (half of a letter grade) from your final course grade for each absence. Additional excused absences beyond your “free” ones will be granted only in the event of truly extenuating circumstances, so *use your excused absences judiciously*. If you have an assignment due on a day you are going to miss class, the due date will not be extended; your assignment will still be due at the regularly assigned due date. Two late arrivals or early exits will equal one absence. If you are sleeping in class you will be counted absent.

Please do not come to class if you are sick with a communicable illness. If you are going to miss class, please email me to let me know so I can give you any instructions for catching up.

If you are ill, you can just tell me you are ill in general terms– please do not share any personal health details. It’s critical that you communicate with me if there are circumstances (illness or otherwise) that may cause you to miss classes beyond your two excused absences.

Electronic Devices

Use of laptops, tablets, digital readers, cell phones, or other devices is not permitted during class time, except during breaks, or when permitted for use during an in-class activity.

Late Assignments

Written assignments must be submitted as a word document on Canvas *before midnight* on the due date. Ten percent of an assignment’s points will be deducted for *each day* it is submitted past the due date. Issues such as work schedules, other course assignments, transportation issues, or computer/technology problems will not be considered valid reasons for submitting a late assignment. Assignments will not be accepted later than 5 days after the due date without permission from the instructor.

Grade Dispute Policy

If you want to dispute a grade on an assignment, you must do so in writing within 3 days of receiving your graded work back. You must clearly identify each issue that you dispute and your rationale for why the grade should be reconsidered. Disputed grades may be raised or lowered after reviewing assignments.

Communication and Writing

Communication is a critical element of any pre-professional course. All written work is expected to be typed, proofread, in APA style, using professional language, with sufficient references and examples to support the points in the paper. These elements will be part of grading criteria for all assignments. Please read the required handouts for week one to get tips on academic writing.

Information on APA style and format can be found at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) in the Steve Hicks School of Social Work and on the UT library website. Another excellent source is Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL).

Academic Honesty

Integrity is a core social work value. Assignments that bear your name are presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless

you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor.

We will discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it during in class. In your written work, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals, but only with proper attribution. "Proper attribution" means that you have fully identified the original source of the words or ideas of others that you use in your work for this course. Using someone else's (including AI) *thoughts or ideas* requires that you identify the original source material in text and on your reference list. Using someone else's *exact words* requires that you identify the original source, including the page number(s) of the quote, *and* use quotation marks. I will provide you with guidelines for proper attribution. You will be *required* to read these guidelines and you will be graded based on your adherence to them. *Failure to use proper attribution when using the thoughts, idea, or words of others is plagiarism.*

Neither plagiarism nor cheating will be tolerated in this course. Any evidence of either will result in a score of zero (0) on that grade component and may result in more serious consequences at the SSW and/or university levels.

Course Modifications

It is likely that the course schedule (for example, due dates or assignment details) will change as we go, so we can be flexible and adapt where we need more time or less time. Any modifications, amendments, or changes to the syllabus and/or assignments are at the discretion of the instructor, who will communicate these to the students. Changes will be announced in class and posted to the Canvas course site.

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.

DISABILITY ACCOMODATION STATEMENT. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/> . If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and how they apply in my class.

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 Steve Hicks School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader community.

Policy on Academic Integrity: Students who violate University rules on academic 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 academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.

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.

University Electronic Mail Student Notification: Electronic mail (email), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send email communications to all students, and the University will expect that email communications will be received and read in a timely manner. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <https://it.utexas.edu/policies/university-electronic-mail-student-notification-policy>.

Religious Holy Days: A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable period after the absence. A reasonable accommodation does not include substantial modification to academic standards, or adjustments of requirements essential to any program of instruction. Students and instructors who have questions or concerns about academic accommodations for religious observance or religious beliefs may contact the [Office for Inclusion and Equity](#). The University does not maintain a list of religious holy days.

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. COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change, and it likely will. Keeping a little flexibility will help us adapt as we go – to add more time when we want to focus in on something, or to move more quickly when it makes sense. Think of this as a dynamic outline rather than a rigid, static schedule. Any modifications will be clearly discussed in class and posted to Canvas.

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings	Assignments due
1	January 9 and 11	Course introduction Syllabus review Service learning	Writing handouts	
2	January 16 and 18 *no class January 16 – MLK holiday	Overview of generalist practice	Book chapter 1	Quiz #1
3	January 23 and 25	Social work values, ethics, and theory (guest lecturer on 1/25)	Book chapter 2	
4	January 30 and February 1	Working with diverse populations Self-awareness, cultural competence		Quiz #2
5	February 6 and 8	Engagement, attitudes, building relationships	Book chapter 3	
6	February 13 and 15	Engagement, effective communication, interviewing, problem exploration		Quiz #3
7	February 20 and 22	Assessment, problem exploration	Book chapter 4	
8	February 27 and March 1	Assessment, stages of change, crisis intervention, assessing suicide risk	Podcast (link below under week 8)	Movie analysis paper
9	March 6 and 8	Planning and implementing	Book chapter	

		change, goal setting, motivational interviewing, evidence-based practice	5	
10	March 13 and 15	Spring Break		
11	March 20 and 22	Mezzo practice (families and groups)	Book chapters 6 and 8	
12	March 27 and 29	Macro practice (organizations and communities)	Book chapters 10 and 12	Video dyads
13	April 3 and 5	Video presentations		
14	April 10 and 12	Video presentations		
15	April 24	Course wrap up		Service learning hours completed and entered in GivePulse Service learning reflection paper

X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center at Cornell University, <http://www.human.cornell.edu/che/BLCC/index.cfm>

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