

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

<b>Course Number:</b>	SW 381T	<b>Instructor:</b>	Alison Mohr Boleware, LMSW (she/her)
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<b>Semester:</b>	Fall 2023	<b>Office:</b>	3.104A
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b>	Tuesdays 2:30-5:30 pm SSW 2.122	<b>Office Phone:</b>	512-471-2988*  <i>*Leave voicemail if no answer</i>
		<b>Office Hours:</b>	By appointment only

**Dynamics of Organizations and Communities**

**I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the reciprocal relationship between human behavior and the social environment at the mezzo and macro levels to prepare students to work in programs, organizations, and communities. 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. Drawing on a variety of frameworks, including, but not limited to, feminist theory, ecological systems theory, critical race theory, the strengths-based perspective, social construction theory, and other theories with an anti-oppressive and antiracist focus, students will identify and critique power structures within policies, procedures and organizational culture that create inequitable access to social services and disparate opportunities for communities marginalized by the dominant culture. Students will apply this knowledge and an antiracism lens to understand how power and oppression impact populations and interventions at multiple levels. Understanding the intersectionality of racialization, ethnic origin, class, 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 is an integral part of this course. Students will also practice cultural humility by centering community voices throughout assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation. The complex tensions between dismantling systems of oppression while working within those systems as agents of change will also be discussed.

**II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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

1. Explore communities and organizations as a context for social work practice to meet individual needs, build community capacity, and promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.
2. Demonstrate knowledge, skills, critical examination, and self-reflection in engaging with 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 values and norms, priorities, and competing interests on the social structure of communities and the delivery of human services.
4. Analyze the reciprocal impacts of organizational and community dynamics on client populations and relate those impacts to the participation of clients in organizational and community governance, human service provision, and policy formulation.
5. Gain understanding of the existence of community agency and learning to center on the community's knowledge and determination of its own capacity-building and power.
6. Evaluate strategies for initiating change in organizations and communities, such as planning models, coalition building, community development, direct action, and advocacy at the mezzo and macro levels.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of how bias, power, and privilege as well as personal values and personal experiences may influence assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels.
8. Compare various evidence-based interventions and emerging approaches for working with organizations and communities.
9. Make use of knowledge and skills in strengths-based approaches to build capacity with client systems, exploring and building on existing individual and community assets.
10. Increase knowledge of internal workings of public and private organizations across the lifecycle.
11. Examine systemic and institutional racism in organizations and institutions in communities, including racial and ethnic representation in the different branches of agencies, analyzing structural elements such as boards, bylaws, and hiring practices of organizations that reinforce white supremacy culture.

### **EPAS Competencies**

The Steve Hicks School of Social Work (SHS) has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952. In order to maintain our accreditation status, the SHS 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**
  - Behavior 6a: Apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies
  - Behavior 6b: Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with clients and constituencies
- **Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**
  - Behavior 7b: Demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan

- **Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**
  - Behavior 8a: Engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals; and
  - Behavior 8b: Incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies
- **Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**
  - Behavior 9a: Select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes
  - Behavior 9b: Critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

### III. TEACHING METHODS

This course is meant to prepare you to engage in mezzo and macro practice as a social worker. Each class will have a theme, with related content and activities. Each student brings their own experiences, preferences and strengths, so many opportunities will be provided for student interaction and robust conversation. As such, we will utilize the following to simulate a working environment from a social work lens through these primary teaching/learning approaches:

- Discussion-Based Learning: guest speakers, class discussions, and Liberating Structure exercises to ensure all voices are heard
- Experiential Learning: small group activities, modelling, and practical exercises
- Learning practice skills: assignments, presentations, and materials

Canvas will serve as the learning platform for this course, including communication between students and the course instructor. The course Canvas site can be accessed at <http://courses.utexas.edu> or the Social Work web page (requires Internet connection and computer UT EID and password). The Help Desk available through the UT home page ([www.utexas.edu/its/help](http://www.utexas.edu/its/help)) or at 475-9400 is available to assist students with Canvas-related questions.

### IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

In hopes of creating a more equitable class environment, there will be no required textbook and no content will require payment to obtain. The primary text for this course will be the Community Tool Box (<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents>) 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.

In addition to the Community Tool This course uses a variety of materials that will be available through Canvas in advance, including academic articles, news articles, podcasts, and videos. Some of the materials include personal opinions of the hosts and guests and belong to the host and guests alone.

All materials will be available through Canvas in advance of the class and students are encouraged to review materials prior to each class. As a masters level class, it is expected that you come prepared to class having read all of the materials and ready for meaningful discussion.

## V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **Assignment #1: Organization or Agency Analysis Paper (60 points – 20% of your grade)**

Each student will write an analysis on an organization or agency answering key questions related to: mission, vision, values, purpose, programs, and more. The paper must be 4-6 pages, 11-point font and double-spaced. More details will be provided on Canvas.

### **Assignment #2: Podcast or Documentary Analysis Paper (60 points – 20% of your grade)**

Each student will write an analysis of a podcast or documentary that focuses on an organization, agency, or community. The paper must be 4-6 pages, 11-point font and double-spaced. More details will be provided on Canvas.

### **Assignment #3: Common Assignment: Group Presentation & Individual Reflection\* (150 points – 50% of your grade)**

The goal of this assignment is to give students an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding and mastery of the CSWE Competencies taught throughout the semester via readings, lecture, and assignments.

The common assignment will be composed of two parts:

- Group Presentation
- Individual Reflection

As part of an assigned group, students will select a community or organization (i.e. city, county, school district, zip code, for/not-for profit organization) and a topic (i.e. gun violence, social determinants of health, anti-discriminatory practices/policies, housing insecurity) to explore as a community or organizational case study through the EPAS competencies listed in the course syllabus. These competencies guide students as they *Engage, Assess, Intervene,* and *Evaluate Practice* with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

The results of the community or organizational case exploration will be presented in the form of a 'Needs Assessment' that will provide contextual information on the community/organization, the identified problem, proposed solution(s), and tools to track for evaluation.

NOTE – Sources of data collected on a community and topic may be pulled from but not limited to:

- Actual interviews (i.e. Meeting with community or organizational members/leaders)
- Simulated interviews (i.e. Hypothetical townhall meetings, focus groups)
- Publicly available data (i.e. Census Data, County Health Records, filed 990 tax records)
- Hypothetical data (i.e. Agency turnover rates, Strategic plans)

**Group Presentation (30 Points)** – Grades will be shared by group members and will reflect how well the group describes and presents efforts to *Engage, Assess, Intervene, and Evaluate Practice* with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

**Individual Reflection (120 Points)** – Students will provide a written reflection that allows them to briefly describe their work within each of the *Competency Behaviors* found across the four EPAS competencies. Responses for each outcome measure will be graded on a score ranging from Advanced Competencies to Insufficient Progress. A minimum of ‘Competent’ score is required to achieve full credit for each Outcome measure graded as ‘Advanced Competency’ will provide the option of extra credit.

**Assignment #: End of Semester Reflection Paper (30 points – 10% of your grade)**

Self-awareness and reflection is essential to your career as a social worker. Each student will draft a reflection paper using the prompt on Canvas.

\*Common assignment required

Assignment	Due Date	Points	% of Course Grade
<b>Assignment #1:</b> Organization or Agency Analysis Paper	Sept. 19 at 11:59 pm	60	20%
<b>Assignment #2:</b> Common Assignment Group Presentation	Oct. 24 at 11:59 pm	60	20%
<b>Assignment #3:</b> Common Assignment Group Presentation & Individual Reflection		150	50%
<b>Assignment #4:</b> End of Semester Reflection Paper		30	10%

**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. CLASS POLICIES

- **Class Agreement:** On the first day of class, we will decide on our Class Agreement for respectful engagement and collaboration. Each student is expected to abide by the agreement throughout the semester. If anything comes up regarding the agreement, please reach out to me to discuss.
- **Respectful Dialogue:** This class depends on meaningful discussion of reading material and students’ critical thinking and “learning in public”. Students’ analytical thoughts and respectful opinions are welcome, but disrespectful language will not be tolerated. Students are expected to participate in co-creating the Class Agreement during the first class, and hold each other accountable to those ground rules.
- **Health & Wellbeing:** Some subjects in this class could be triggering or hard to hear. Please practice meaningful self-care and lean on supportive resources when needed. More information is found in the University Policies section of the syllabus.
- **Course modifications:** Should any modifications or changes need to be made to the course (e.g., calendar, assignments), students will be notified in class and on Canvas.
- **Electronic devices:** Electronic devices are welcome (encouraged) in class, to support learning. Please be mindful that they do not serve as a distraction to you or those around you.
- **Breaks:** Each class will have a 15-minute break during the class, exact time will depend on class material and speaker availability.
- **Attendance:** Your presence is necessary for everyone’s success in this course. You are allowed to miss three class meetings. Any absence after the third may impact your engagement with content and ideas shared in class, so I encourage you to remember this. Please be proactive in situations where you will be absent, if you experience an emergency, or anticipate a prolonged absence for any reason.
- **Bonus points:** There will be opportunities to receive bonus points throughout the semester, including attending virtual and in-person events.
- **Classroom Maintenance:** Please dispose of trash and return chairs and desks before leaving the classroom.

## 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.

**ACCESSIBLE/COMPLIANT 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 touch base with your instructor to discuss your Accommodation Letter as early as possible in the semester so your approved accommodations can be implemented.

**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 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 DISCLOSURE.** Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Education Code, Section 51.252 (formerly known as Senate Bill 212) requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report to the [Title IX Office](#) any information regarding incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive information about incidents of this type (including, but not limited to, written forms, applications, one-on-one conversations, class assignments, class discussions, or third-party reports) must report it to the Title IX Coordinator. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX-related incident, please remember that I will be required to report this information.

Faculty, staff, graduate assistants, teaching assistants, and graduate research assistants are [mandatory reporters](#) under federal Title IX regulations and are required to report [a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct](#), including the types of misconduct covered under Texas Education Code, Section 51.252. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex – including pregnancy and parental status – in educational programs and activities. The Title IX Office has developed supportive ways and compiled campus resources to support all impacted by a Title IX matter.

If you would like to speak with a case manager, who can provide support, resources, or academic accommodations, in the Title IX Office, please email: [supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu). Case managers can also provide support, resources, and accommodations for pregnant, nursing, and parenting students.

For more information about reporting options and resources, please visit: <https://titleix.utexas.edu>, contact the Title IX Office via email at: [titleix@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu), or call 512-471-0419.

**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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>August 22</b>	<b>Welcome! Syllabus &amp; Intros</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Syllabus
<b>August 29</b>	<b>Definitions &amp; Common Assignment Topic Discussions</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Canvas Module 1
<b>September 5</b>	<b>History of Social Work, Communities, and Organizations</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Canvas Module 2
<b>September 12</b>	<b>EPAS: Engage  Engaging with Communities Best-Practices</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Canvas Module 3

September 19	<b>EPAS: Assess Community Needs Assessments</b>	<b>Organization or Agency Analysis Paper Due at 11:59 pm</b>	Canvas Module 4
September 26	<b>EPAS: Intervene  Organization and Community Intervention Best-Practices</b>	n/a	Canvas Module 5
October 3	<i>Work Day – No Class!</i>	n/a	Canvas Module 6
October 10	<i>Leadership Panels for Common Assignment Interviews</i>	n/a	Canvas Module 7
October 17	<i>Leadership Panels for Common Assignment Interviews</i>	n/a	Canvas Module 8
October 24	<b>EPAS: Evaluate  Program Evaluation: How and Why it Matters</b>	<b>Podcast or Documentary Paper Due at 11:59 pm</b>	Canvas Module 9
October 31	<b>Organization Functioning: Finances, Fundraising, and More</b>	n/a	n/a

<b>November 7</b>	<b>Community Advocacy: Local, Regional and State Advocacy</b>	<b>n/a</b>	n/a
<b>November 14</b>	<b>Case Studies &amp; Presentation Prep</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Canvas Module 10
<b>November 21</b>	<i><b>Holiday Week / No Class!</b></i>	<b>n/a</b>	n/a
<b>November 28</b>	<b>Group 1: Presentations</b>	<b>n/a</b>	n/a
<b>December 5</b>	<b>Group 2: Presentations / Reflections &amp; Closing</b>	<b>End of Semester Reflection Paper due at 11:59 pm</b>	n/a

## **X. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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