

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

Course Number:	SW 395K	Instructor:	Robin M. Smith, LCSW- S
Course Unique Number:	88245	Contact info:	robinsmith@austin.utexas.edu 512-825-5308
Semester:	Summer 2025	Office Location:	420 Walter Webb Hall (WWH) All Zoom meetings will use this link: https://utexas.zoom.us/j/2900112569
Class meeting time/place:	T/Th 1:30p – 4:00p MEZ 1.202 (Mezes Hall)	Office Hours:	Tuesday/Thursday 4:00p - 5:00p after class or by appointment

Substance Use and Social Work Practice

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces knowledge and skills for addressing the impacts of substance use and certain substance use-related policies. The course is grounded in social work values and ethics and the profession’s biopsychosocial/spiritual perspective. It identifies psychoactive substances of concern and their properties, the prevalence of substance use and substance use disorders, and theories of substance use/use disorders. It presents micro, mezzo and, macro-level approaches for preventing substance use and its harms, reducing stigma, and humanely treating those who use substances. The focus is on evidence-based prevention, assessment and diagnosis, treatment, and policy approaches and a consideration of future directions for the field.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

1. Identify psychoactive substances of concern, their effects, prevalence, and theories that seek to explain the harmful use of these substances.
2. Explain the impacts substance use and substance-related policies and practices have had with special attention to disparate effects on historically marginalized groups and communities.

3. Describe and critically examine gaps in the continuum of care for addressing substance misuse and use disorders focusing on evidence-based screening, assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and approaches to maintaining long-term gains.
4. Assess recovery-oriented and harm reduction approaches for addressing substance misuse and substance use disorders including peer support and mutual and self-help programs.
5. Analyze federal, state, and local policies and procedures that affect those who use or misuse substances or have substance use disorders and identify ways that systems can be changed to reduce the harmful effects of substances, decrease stigma, and improve outcomes for people who use them and their families and communities.
6. Describe the need for attention to antiracism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (ADEIA) in addressing substance use and efforts that are needed to promote and sustain ADEIA in the field.

III. TEACHING METHODS

I use a variety of teaching methods with an emphasis on experiential learning for the purpose of building skills and confidence. The foundational nature of the course content requires a didactic approach as well, so I may use PowerPoint lectures, role-plays, videos, class discussions, small group and dyad exercises, and guest speakers. For success in this class, you must be willing to participate, take risks and go out of your comfort zone. Please ask questions to clarify expectations, provide me with constructive feedback in a timely manner and meet with me individually as needed and/or when requested to make the most of your learning experience.

Canvas is a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu> and is used for posting, submitting and evaluating assignments. Readings that are not in the required text, assignment guidelines and assignment grading rubrics are all posted to Canvas. You can access Canvas Help 24/7 by calling 855-308-2494. Please set notifications in Canvas so that you receive announcements and updates as soon as they are posted.

IV. REQUIRED TEXT

A. There is no required text for this course, but there will be weekly assigned readings and other material to review before each class. All required and supplemental prep material can be found in Canvas.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Class Participation (30%)

Experiential learning is a significant part of skill and knowledge acquisition in this class, so plan to attend every class to get the most out of this course. Also, “suing up and showing up” is an important life hack; you can accomplish a lot in life by showing up on time and ready to go! Students who earn full participation credit attend class consistently and on time; complete the required prep material each week; and fully participate in class discussions and activities.

Absences: I don't excuse/not excuse absences, so it will be up to you to decide whether missing class is worth the impact it will have on your learning and grade. That said, I do ask that you email me about any absence,

tardy or early departure as a professional courtesy (I worry if you go missing or rogue!). If you experience a prolonged illness or family emergency, contact me so we can discuss your needs and how to proceed.

B. SUD support group attendance with reflection (20%)

You will attend one SUD support group outside of class and write a short (one-page, single spaced) reflection on your experience. If you’ve never attended a 12-step meeting, I recommend you attend that type of support group because they’re so prevalent. If you have attended a 12-step meeting before, then choose a different type of 12-step group or try Al-Anon or a SMART meeting. **Additional guidelines, links to support group schedules & due date for this requirement can be found in Canvas.**

C. SU Professional Portfolio (50%)

Over the term, you will compile a professional portfolio and do a brief presentation of your portfolio on the last day of class. The portfolio will have 4 sections and a short draft of each section will be submitted for feedback and credit prior to the final presentation of the completed portfolio. **Additional guidelines & due dates for the SUD professional portfolio requirement can be found in Canvas.**

This table shows how each assignment for this course is weighted:

Assignment	% of Grade
A. Participation	30
B. SUD support group attendance with reflection	20
C. SU Professional Portfolio	50
Total:	100

Course grading: You will earn points for each requirement based on the quality of your work, and the sum of those points will form the basis of your final grade. If I observe that your work is consistently at a non-passing level, I will initiate a discussion with you and provide feedback on how we can get your learning back on track. Depending on the challenges you face, I may initiate a formal plan of improvement. The graduate grading scale (below) is used to reflect your final letter grade for the course.

Students who were admitted to 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.

VI. COURSE GRADING

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- (Class failed/no credit)
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

Social work students must adhere to the Student Standards for Professional Conduct of the UT School of Social Work and the NASW Code of Ethics and assume responsibility for their own conduct.

Find the MSSW Handbook at <http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/current/forms/>

Find the MSSW Graduate Guide to Field at <http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/field/forms/>

A. Professional Conduct in Class: I expect students to behave with respect and professionalism in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate and show courtesy to others, even those they disagree with. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Another aspect of professionalism is protecting the confidentiality and privacy of clients when seeking consultation in class. Please avoid using clients' names and keep clients' personal details, especially those irrelevant to the discussion, to yourself.

B. Student Privacy & Confidentiality: Class discussions or role plays can on occasion bring up strong emotions or raise issues of a personal nature. For student privacy, it is recommended that students not discuss matters of a highly sensitive nature in class. If you need to talk in depth about a personal matter, come see me after class. Your privacy and confidentiality will be protected unless the matter must be reviewed by the School of Social Work or must be reported by law (please refer to the MSSW Handbook and Title IX requirements). I will connect you with resources in the community if your personal needs exceed what can be provided by me or by UT services.

C. Client Privacy & Confidentiality: If class work prompts you to reflect on past or current client contact, and sharing information about that contact is necessary for the learning process, it is your professional obligation to protect the client's privacy and confidentiality as much as possible by sharing judiciously and anonymously (this applies to information shared about staff at your field agency as well).

D. Classroom Civility: A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social Work 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.

Personal Pronouns: Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and

nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

E. 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/>. Professor Smith can also make a confidential referral directly to the CARE Counselor in our school which may expedite your getting an appointment. Please talk to me privately if you think you might need a mental health referral and would like my help.

F. Grading Policies

All assignments – including late assignments – must be submitted to Canvas for assessment and feedback. Except where noted on the course schedule (Section IX, below) assignments are due **Tuesdays by 11:59 pm**. If you think you cannot turn in an assignment by the due date, contact me and we will discuss an alternate due date for you based on your circumstances. I do not mind giving you extra time to finish an assignment when possible if it means you'll get more out of it, turn in a higher quality product or preserve your mental wellness. I'm also very happy to discuss alternative assignment formats to meet your individual learning needs.

VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Grading Scale

[No A+]	87.0 to 89.999	B+	77.0 to 79.999	C+	67.0 to 69.999	D+	
94.0 and Above	A	84.0 to 86.999	B	74.0 to 76.999	C*	64.0 to 66.999	D
90.0 to 93.999	A-	80.0 to 83.999	B-	70.0 to 73.999	C-	60.0 to 63.999	D-
				<i>*minimum to pass course</i>	Below 60.0	F	

Attendance and Academic Behavior. At the University of Texas at Austin, regular attendance at all class meetings is expected. Instructors are responsible for implementing an attendance policy and must notify students of any special attendance requirements. See more information at <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/attendance/>. Furthermore, students are expected to abide by the Standards for Social Work Education (available at <https://socialwork.utexas.edu/student-resources/bsw/policies-and-procedures/>). The student shows potential for responsible and accountable behavior by being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, and keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements.

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 Center for Access and Restorative Engagement at <https://community.utexas.edu/care/>. The University does not maintain a list of religious holy days.

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.

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.

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>.

Steve Hicks School of Social Work Policies

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.

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.

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 and Mental Health 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.

Resources, Prevention of Discrimination, and Safety

Disability Accommodation 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: <https://community.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.

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.

Covid-19 Related Information. The University's policies and practices related to the pandemic may be accessed at: <https://protect.utexas.edu/>

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/>.

Title IX Accommodations for Those Pregnant, Nursing and Parenting. Pregnant, nursing and parenting students, faculty, and staff are eligible for accommodations through the Title IX Office that support equal access to education and work and prevent discrimination. Students may reach out to the Title IX Office for help with accommodations to make up missed classes, complete missed coursework, keep them safe in the classroom, apply for leaves of absence, receive priority registration and other related support. Faculty and staff, including undergraduate students who work on campus and graduate student employees, may reach out for assistance with job or schedule restructuring and obtaining modified or additional work equipment. Visit the [Title IX pregnancy and parenting resource page](#) for more information or contact the [Title IX Support and Resources team](#) connect with a Case Manager.

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.

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 – Summer 2025

All prep material and assignment guidelines can be found in [Canvas](#). Changes to the schedule may occasionally be necessary and I will announce changes with as much advance notice as possible.

WK	DATE	TOPIC	Prep to be completed by class time.	All assignments due Tuesdays by 11:59 pm except where noted.
		MODULE 0 – INTRODUCTION		
1	THU 6/5	Review Syllabus & Assignments Getting acquainted, creating context	See Canvas for prep material	
		MODULE 1 – ASSESSMENT & PREVENTION		
2	TUE 6/10	An anti-oppressive systems approach; basic knowledge of substances	See Canvas for prep material	
	THU 6/12	Harm reduction vs. abstinence only; overdose prevention	See Canvas for prep material	
3	TUE 6/17	Brief assessment & referral; relapse prevention	See Canvas for prep material	Due by 6/17 midnight: Portfolio draft 1 - Special population
	THU 6/19	Skills practice!	See Canvas for prep material	
		MODULE 2 – POLICY		
4	TUE 6/24	History of substance use & drug policy in the US	See Canvas for prep material	
	THU 6/26	The impact of criminalization - race, class & US drug policy	See Canvas for prep material	
5	TUE 7/1	The impact of de-criminalization - race, class & US drug policy	See Canvas for prep material	Due by 7/1 midnight: Portfolio draft 2 - Policy
	THU 7/3	Skills practice!		
		MODULE 3 – TREATMENT		
6	TUE 7/8	The SUD treatment landscape & ethical challenges	See Canvas for prep material	
	THU 7/10	Culturally competent; trauma- informed interventions	See Canvas for prep material	
7	TUE 7/15	Harm reduction & MAT	See Canvas for prep material	Due by 7/15 midnight: Portfolio draft 3 - Resources
	THU 7/17	Skills practice!	See Canvas for prep material	
		MODULE 4 – RECOVERY		
8	TUE 7/22	Peer support & Alternatives	See Canvas for prep material	Due by 7/22 at midnight: SUD support group attendance & reflection
	THU 7/24	Psychedelic assisted therapies – promises and challenges	See Canvas for prep material	
9	TUE 7/29	Portfolio presentations	See Canvas for prep material	Due by class time on 7/29: Completed portfolio with presentation

X. Bibliography

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