

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY
Division of Social Work

SOWK 540: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
Fall, 2002

TIME/LOCATION Wednesdays, 9:00-11:50 AM Knapp Hall, Room 300

INSTRUCTOR Kristina Hash, LCSW, PhD
Knapp Hall – B17
O-(304) 293-3501 x3119 , H-(304) 296-3262 (*please do not call
after 9PM on weeknights)
E-mail:kmhash@mail.wvu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on developing the basic framework of social work practice theory and professional values to working with individuals, families, groups, and communities (from WVU-Division of Social Work Bulletin). It is an introductory one for MSW students who are entering graduate school without an undergraduate social work degree. This course is rooted in the liberal arts and draws heavily from the social sciences and the humanities.

Students are introduced to the conceptual model for generalist social work practice that embraces the use of multiple methods and models differentiated according to the unique needs of diverse populations, settings, and social conditions. Its purpose is defined as the promotion, restoration, maintenance, or enhancement of the social functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

An ecological perspective within a systems framework is employed to provide a knowledge base for the application of social work skills. Some of the skills are problem identification, exploration and data gathering, differential assessment and planning, intervention, termination, and evaluation. Both didactic and experiential learning strategies are utilized.

Emphasis of the course is placed on interviewing techniques, interpersonal skills, and the professional helping relationship. Special attention is given to the concept of human diversity and consideration of social work values and ethics are integral parts of all units of this course. Special care is paid to the application of social work knowledge, values, and skills to the rural setting.

This course is taught consistent with the program goals and mission of West Virginia University and the Division of Social Work.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

KNOWLEDGE

1. Understand the ecological systems perspective and its utility in providing a holistic view of transactions between people and their environments.
2. Understand the effects of race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, handicapping conditions, and socio-economic factors on individual, family, group, and community life. Appreciate the interactions between these variables on social work practice.
3. Understand the principles governing effective communication with and on behalf of clients.
4. Understand the ongoing, dynamic nature of the problem- solving process consisting of interwoven orderly helping stages.
5. Understand the basic principles of social work with groups.
6. Recognize the contribution of approaches to family counseling.
7. Acquire an understanding of community and community social problems with an emphasis on rural communities.
8. Understand at a beginning level the operation of social service networks.

ATTITUDES/VALUES

1. Commitment to a combination of critical judgment and open-minded attitudes as the essential stance of a professional social worker.
2. Appreciate the importance of self-awareness, self-assessment, and self-discipline as essential professional characteristics.
3. Develop respect for and awareness of values and cultures different from one's own.
4. Commitment to accepted values of the social work profession and the responsibility of the social worker to uphold the ethical standards of the profession.

5. Sensitivity to the interconnectedness between people's individual life experiences and opportunities and obstacles within the community and the larger society.
6. Commitment to a career-long process of learning, including appropriate use of supervisory, consultative, and formal educational experiences as well as ongoing familiarity with professional literature.

SKILLS

1. Demonstrate the effective interviewing, observing, and writing skills necessary for working with a range of persons and environmental systems.
2. Demonstrate in class role-plays and other assignments the general appropriate and effective communication skills characteristic of a helping professional.
3. Conduct a purposeful interview demonstrating the purpose and process of interviewing.
4. Assess the influencing biological, psychological, and social factors in the problem-person-environment configuration for the purpose of planning and guiding interventions.
5. Describe the process of forming, assessing, and intervening with groups in social work.
6. Assess family functioning in a variety of cultural and family contexts
7. Assess the intrapersonal and environmental systems that affect human functioning
8. Evaluate research studies and apply research findings to practice.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

REQUIRED TEXTS

Cournoyer, Barry. (2000). *The social work skills workbook* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks Cole.

Hepworth, D., Rooney, R., & Larson, J. (2002). *Direct social work practice: Theory and skills* (6th ed.) Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Mattaini, M. A., Lowery, C., and Meyer, C. (2002). *The foundations of social work practice* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Articles reflecting current practice issues will also be required and discussed in class. The citations for these readings will be placed on the course MIX website. Many of these articles will be available to download from the WVU Libraries website.

Students are expected to complete reading assignments prior to the sessions for which they are assigned and be able to discuss these readings in class. Students are also encouraged to bring in current newspaper and magazine articles that highlight course issues.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

The quality of the class sessions will be greatly affected by students sharing their ideas, opinions, and experiences. For this reason, students are expected to attend and participate in all class sessions.

Your attendance record can be used to improve your final grade if your average falls slightly below a grade cutoff. Students who attend 85% or more of the class sessions will be considered for a grade increase if their average falls within 2 points of the next letter grade.

Out of courtesy to the other students, please avoid coming to class late and leaving class early.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are four assignments for this course. The guidelines for assignments are outlined below. Students are expected to complete and turn in assignments when they are due. Extensions and incompletes will only be granted in extenuating circumstances that are beyond the student's control and must be discussed with the instructor prior to the due dates. Points will be deducted for late papers. Additionally, there may be ungraded required activities or assignments in which the student is expected to participate.

ASSIGNMENT 1: **Skills Workbook**

Due Date: **September 18th (Chapters 1-7), November 20th (Chapters 8-11)**

20% of final grade

Description: There is a skills workbook required for the course (Cournoyer). The assignments are to be completed and turned in for evaluation.

ASSIGNMENT 2: **Case Study Analysis (in-class)**

Due Date: **October 16th**

30% of final grade (group grade)

Description: You will be given a case to review on October 9th. On October 16th you will be divided into groups and given questions to answer about the case, requiring you to apply what you have learned about social work intervention thus far in the course.

ASSIGNMENT 3: **Group Proposal**

Due Date: **November 13th**

20% of final grade

Description: Based upon your area of interest, propose a group that you would be interested in facilitating in the future. This proposal should be written as if it were being submitted to an agency director and/or its board members. Identify the type of group (support, educational, growth, therapy, or socialization). Also detail the group's purpose, goals, leadership, composition, size, frequency and duration, process, funds and space needed, plan for participant recruitment, evaluation, and special issues for consideration. The proposal should include literature relevant to the topic area and should be 4-6 pages in length.

ASSIGNMENT 4: **Community Assessment**

Due Date: **December 4th**

30% of final grade

Description: Conduct an assessment on the community of interest. Follow the format on the attached handout. This assignment must also be proofread by a classmate prior to its submission. Please have the classmate sign the back of the assignment.

GRADING

GRADING SCALE:

90 - 100 = A
80 - 89 = B
70 - 79 = C
60 - 69 = D
Below 60 = F

Plagiarized material in any assignment will automatically result in a grade of “F” for the assignment.

According to WVU’s Academic Calendar, the last day to withdraw from a course with a mark of “W” is October 25th.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: **INTRODUCTION, COURSE OVERVIEW AND REVIEW OF SYLLABUS**
(8/21)

Week 2: **THE FOUNDATIONS, PURPOSES, AND CHALLENGES OF**
(8/28) **GENERALIST SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE--**
 THE ECOSYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE--

Readings: Mattaini, Lowery, and Meyer--Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2
 Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen--Chapter 1 & 2

Cournoyer—Chapters 1 & 2

Week 3: **VALUES AND ETHICS**
(9/4) **ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN PRACTICE**

Readings: Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer --Chapter 3 & Appendix A (Code of Ethics)
 Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen--Chapters 3 & 4.

Cournoyer—Chapter 3

Week 4: **MAKING CONTACT: BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP**
(9/11) **DIVERSITY, ETHNIC COMPETENCE, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**
Readings: Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer --Chapter 4
 Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen--Chapters 5 & 6

 Cournoyer—Chapters 4 & 5

Week 5: **DEEPENING THE RELATIONSHIP**
(9/18) ****Skills Workbook Due (C. 1-7)**
Readings: Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer --5 & 6
 Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen--Chapters 7 & 12

 Cournoyer—Chapters 6 & 7

Weeks 6 **PRACTICE WITH INDIVIDUALS**
& 7:
(9/25, 10/2)
Readings: Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer --Chapter 7
 Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen--Chapters 8 & 9

 Cournoyer—Chapter 8 (begin)

Weeks 8 **PRACTICE WITH FAMILIES**
& 9: ****10/16—In-class Case Study Analysis**
(10/9, 10/16)
Readings: Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer --Chapter 8
 Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen--Chapter 10 & 19

 Cournoyer—Chapter 8 (finish)

Weeks 10 **PRACTICE WITH GROUPS**
& 11:
(10/23, 10/30)
Readings: Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer --Chapter 9
 Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen--Chapters 11 & 17

 Cournoyer—Chapter 9 (begin)

Weeks 12 **PRACTICE WITH COMMUNITIES**
& 13: **** 11/13—Group Proposal Due**
(11/6, 11/13)
Readings: Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer --Chapter 10
 Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen--Chapters 15

 Cournoyer—Chapter 9 (finish)

Week 14: **PRACTICE WITH ORGANIZATIONS AND GENERALIST PRACTICE**
(11/20) **** Skills Workbook Due (C. 8-11)**

Readings: Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer --Chapters 11 & 12
 Cournoyer—Chapters 10 & 11

Week 15: **THANKSGIVING BREAK- NO CLASS**
(11/27)

Week 16: **WRAP-UP AND EVALUATION**
(12/4) **** Community Assessment Due**

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOLARLY WORK

The faculty of the Division of Social Work is increasingly concerned about the issue of appropriate scholarly ethics, and agrees that all of the statements that follow constitute a framework of minimum scholarly standards recognized in higher education.

In submitting a paper or class project at the Division of Social Work, the student warrants and affirms the following:

1. That the work presented is an original piece of research/scholarship/creativity done entirely by the listed author(s).
2. That the entire work, or substantial portion thereof, is not copied or paraphrased directly from the published work of another author.
3. That all quotations, direct paraphrases, empirical research findings, and other suitable restatements of the research, scholarship or creative work of others are appropriately annotated with standard bibliographic citation methods.
4. That the work in question was prepared especially for the class assignment for which it is submitted, had not been submitted previously, and will not be submitted later in substantially its present form.
5. That in those instances when a similar or identical topic, theme, issue, population, problem, or method is examined in the course assignments for two or more courses, the written consent or approval of both instructors has been obtained before the assignment is turned in. Instructors are under no obligation to provide their consent.
6. That appropriate credit is provided, in a footnote, for assistance provided by faculty, other students, etc., in preparing the paper.
7. That no part of the assignment was prepared by a commercial or nonprofit Term Paper Preparation Service.
8. That the student has read or examined all sources cited and has personal knowledge that the quotations and findings attributed to those sources in the student's work are substantially correct.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR MAJOR PAPERS

1. **DEMONSTRATION OF KNOWLEDGE:** Literature chosen for the paper must be appropriate, relevant, and suitably applied. Discussion of the topic must be thorough. Writer must demonstrate an ability to apply theory to practice. Paper must relate well to the content of the course and its objectives.
2. **CLARITY OF EXPRESSION:** Paper must communicate thoughts and theory effectively, i.e., non-ambiguously and coherently. Each thought should lead to the next in a clear and logical manner. Paper must be well organized and make use of subheadings, following the guidelines in the syllabus. Papers that seem disjointed and incoherent do not meet this criterion.
3. **TECHNICAL WRITING:** This criterion includes spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and proofreading. The writer is to demonstrate control of the standard conventions of American prose (proper use of idiom, appropriate syntax, correct spelling, etc.). Papers with many careless errors will suffer when graded.
4. **DOCUMENTATION OF SOURCES:** Research papers must show appropriate references in a standard form. Use the APA (American Psychological Association- 5th edition) style manual in preparing references.

ETHICAL CONDUCT

All students formally admitted to the Division of Social Work are bound by the Code of Ethics established by the National Association of Social Workers. A copy of this code may be found in the Student Handbook provided by the Division of Social Work as well as in your course text, *The Foundations of Social Work Practice* (3rd ed.). Failure to abide by and conduct yourself within the parameters of this code may be grounds for initiating disciplinary action.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our university does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such an environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (304) 293-6700.

CONDITIONS FOR GIVING AN “I”

Students are expected to complete course work in the semester in which the course is taken. From time to time events that are clearly beyond the control of the student may prevent the timely completion of the course. Should you find yourself facing such circumstances, you may wish to discuss this with your instructor and see if an incomplete should be given until the late work can be completed. Faculty are not required to give an incomplete and would not be expected to do so where there are no compelling reasons to justify the request.