

Course Syllabus

Seton Hall University

Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work

Social Work Program

Current Issues and Trends in Social Work (SOWK 1333NA)

Tuesday: 5:45-8:15PM

Instructor: Christine Heer Esq., MSW, LCSW, DVS

Office: Arts and Sciences Hall, Room 105A

Telephone: 973-275-5281; Social Work Office Tel: 973-761-9470

Office Hours: Mons 3:45pm-4:45pm

Weds 12:00pm-1:00pm, Tues 4:45pm – 5:00pm

By appointment: office A+S 105A

Course Pre-requisite: none

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Exams and papers are expected to represent the student's own work. Information, ideas, and so forth which are attributable to others require documentation as such. In the event a student is unsure about documentation, please see the instructor at least several days prior to submission. Any exam or paper which misrepresents the work of others as the student's own will be counted as zero in the computation of the student's final grade. There may be additional sanctions for breaches of academic integrity.

POLICY ON SPECIAL CONDITIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

DSS Syllabus Statement

It is the policy and practice of Seton Hall University to promote inclusive learning environments. If you have a documented disability you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in compliance with University policy, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and/or the New Jersey Law against Discrimination. Please note, students are not permitted to negotiate accommodations directly with professors. To request accommodations or assistance, please self-identify with the Office

for Disability Support Services (DSS), Duffy Hall, Room 67 at the beginning of the semester. For more information or to register for services, contact DSS at (973) 313-6003 or by email at DSS@shu.edu.

The Social Work Program enthusiastically supports the intent and mandate of legislation/policy providing optimal learning environments for all students, faculty, and all who are involved, directly and indirectly, with us.

Introductory Comment:

Welcome to the course; it is a privilege for me to serve as instructor for this course. This learning experience is open to all undergraduate students within the University. It is an elective for social work majors and minors. This course is currently being used as a prototype for what will be a Signature III (CORE III – Engaging the World) course. Although Engaging the World is a 3000 level course, and hence with higher learning expectations than a 1000 level course, the expectations for this course are at the 1000 level in this first offering of the course. Despite the fact that this is the first offering of this course, I have extensive experience in teaching this topic and have gauged expectations for both me and for students at the appropriate level.

Although this course is open to all undergraduate students within the University, it is still a Social Work Program course and, as such, will specifically address certain competency requirements as promulgated by the Council on Social Work Education as Social Work Program goals. These competency requirements are Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards and the acronym for this used herein is **EPAS**. Specifically, this course is designed to partially (these competencies are also developed in much greater depth in subsequent social work courses, particularly Program required courses) meet the following, as will be noted further below. **EPAS 2.1.4 – Engage diversity and difference in practice; EPAS 2.1.2 – Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment; EPAS 2.1.9 – Respond to contexts that shape practice and EPAS 2.1.5 – Advance human rights and social and economic justice** (in this course by understanding further forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination). More detailed explication of the specifics of the above are presented below. In the event a student wants to examine the entire EPAS standards, please go to www.cswe.org and click on accreditation standards. Also, the Social Work Program has a detailed Handbook regarding our operations, requirements, and philosophy. You may request this from the instructor should you be considering social work as a major/career. You may also contact the social work program director at richard.blake@shu and request a copy of this. We distribute this to all majors and also encourage anyone who is interested to carefully review this document.

Although the course, by virtue of it being a social work course offering; use of the word “practice” herein; and the title of the text, uses social work as a framework, this material will be presented and learned in terms of functioning as a member of society (a larger framework than

social work and material will be presented in such a manner, thus inclusive of social work but not excluding life in general.

Course Description:

This course is designed to help students further their understanding of human diversity, self and other awareness, the effects of environment and social contexts (broadly defined) on human behavior, and what we all have in common. Thus, there is a dual emphasis on our differences and our commonalities. In particular, and considered very important, is that much material about diversity is presented in so many contexts, in the strongly held position of both this instructor and all social work faculty, in a way that can be interpreted as stereotypical and over-generalized. Please keep in mind that any and all material pertinent to diversity with regard to groups and demographic categories of people cannot and should not be generalized to all members of that particular group and, considering such, the course stresses this. Nevertheless there are strong relationships between an individual and elements of diversity (group diversity, not one's personality) and these relationships are often manifested, not only in the values and behaviors of an individual, but also in the operation of systems that oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power.

The course uses assigned readings, groups and individual discussion, Powerpoint presentations, video presentations, and handouts to help students learn and demonstrate learning.

At the midpoint of the semester, the instructor will provide a confidential evaluation document, read and used solely by the instructor, in an effort to assure that we are progressing as per expectations and also to solicit recommendations. At the conclusion of the course a specific, hard copy evaluation of the instructor and course will be distributed and completed in class, confidentially, and submitted to the program director in a sealed envelope. This is to further assure that requirements of both students and the instructor have been met and also to serve as further development of the instructor, the course, and the overall curriculum in social work since the program is larger than the sum of its parts. This procedure is in all social work courses. These evaluations are confidential, however, will not be read by the instructor and program director until after final grades are submitted. These are read in the aggregate. On or near the last day of class (not the final exam date), students should bring their laptop to class so as to complete the University course/instructor evaluation. Of course, the instructor strongly encourages feedback from students at any time throughout the semester.

Required text:

Ewalt, P.L, Freeman, E.M, Fortune, A.E., Poole, D.L. & Witkin, S.L. (1999). *Multicultural issues in social work: Practice and research*. Washington, DC: NASW Press. ISBN# 0-87101-302-9. This book is available at the college bookstore.

*Please note that we are aware that this book is twelve years old. Nevertheless, it is the latest book available from National Association of Social Workers that specifically addresses the objectives of this course as it has been conceptualized. Thus, is considered important to us as

social workers. Additional and updated information, where warranted, will be provided by the instructor. Also, see comments below regarding additional reading material.

Towle, C. (1987). *Common human needs*. Washington, DC.: National Association of Social Workers. ISBN 0-87101-154-9

*Please note that we do not expect this book to be available at the college bookstore. In fact, it has taken the Program some time to receive a copy from an alternate source other than the bookstore or the publisher directly and thus we consider it unreasonable to expect students to try and locate this book. It is not out of print but is listed by the publisher, as of this writing, as currently not available. Thus, you are not expected to purchase this book. Within copyright laws, the instructor will distribute hard copies of those elements of the book deemed particularly necessary for achieving the purposes of this course. This book was originally published (although there have been some revisions) in 1945 and is considered by the Program, and others, to be a classic, seminal exemplar of thinking about common human needs in relationship to social work and civil life in general. The writer, at the original time of publication has focus on public assistance work, however this is to be interpreted as generalist social work practice.

Recommended readings:

The Program has a very broad array of books that focus on virtually any and all elements of human diversity. This in addition to access you have through the library to electronic and current source material, particularly scholarly publications. The Council on Social Work Education delineates factors including: age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. You are strongly encouraged to look through our library in our conference room and use whatever reading materials you might find; they are specifically located on a bookshelf. We ask that these materials be used in the conference room only for a two hour limit at one seating such that all students have access. These books will not be available after one week before any assignment that requires outside reading is due.

We also have several copies of the most recent editions of *The Encyclopedia of Social Work*, *Social Work Speaks*, various brochures and smaller publications. These publications have substantial, and current, information about our topics. We strongly encourage you to use these, albeit in the conference room only. If you need special consideration, please contact the instructor or program director.

Do not use any .com site for reference material for this course. As a general rule, the Program considers these to be not refereed, not scholarly, and potentially dangerous considering who might create these sites.

Course Objectives:

For students to:

gain further comprehension of the complexities of human diversity and life experiences and how this diversity can serve all of us in a positive manner;

gain further comprehension of the commonalities we all share;

gain further comprehension of themselves in terms of the infinite array of elements of diversity that each of us possesses, albeit in different ways;

gain further comprehension that a culture's (one of many elements of diversity) structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power. Please note that although the word "culture" is presented above, this is conceptualized as including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.

Please note, insofar as the above objectives, that this is a social work course and will be taught within the ethics and values of the profession of social work. We recognize that this material can be uncomfortable for some and this is a good thing because this can spawn critical thinking. We recognize, due to the elective nature of this course, that there are students in this class who have philosophical/political values and ideologies that run from the far left to the far right. While we very strongly encourage open discussion of ideas, this course will be taught, and learning expectations are derived from, facts and these facts are derived from scholarly, refereed, government publications and statistics. All members of this class, including the instructor, will comport themselves in a most respectful manner toward one another.

We also recognize that there will be students in this class who experience some of the issues discussed "first hand", while others may not have or feel this to the same degree. This course is designed so that everyone is on equal ground regarding expectations.

Course Outline:

Please note that we will use reasonable flexibility regarding date and assignments. This syllabus has been revised considering an upcoming hurricane (thus effecting students getting to school, bookstore availability and similarly) and the following week is the Labor Day weekend. We recognize that these factors may impact ability of students and the instructor. Nevertheless, we will finish this course having met all learning expectations.

Unit I. What is this course about and why is this considered important.

Instructor and group discussion.

Discussion of Professional Ethics and Values

Self-Awareness Exercise and small group discussion

Assignment: Each student will submit a two page summary, which integrates the preface of the text, perusal of the table of contents, instructional comments from the first class meeting, and this syllabus. This summary will answer the question “why is this course important and what are the readings and other learning experiences designed to accomplish”? This is due the second week of class. This assignment is worth **10%** of the course grade and must be submitted on time.

Unit II. Human commonality.

Readings: Chapter 2, *Common Human Needs*. This will be distributed in hard copy to the class during the first class session.

Exercise: Awareness of other

Abraham Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Needs*. Class power point presentation and distribution. Please note that this area of learning will present Maslow’s seminal work in the traditional manner and also, in a “stair step” manner indicating that while each of us, as humans, live our lives in this hierarchy, for some there is a larger step up to the next level than for others, for an array of reasons that will be discussed in class.

This is in keeping with **EPAS 2.1.4 –Engage diversity and difference in practice** emphasizing that some individuals and groups are born with or have easier access to levels of Maslow’s hierarchy and abilities to meet common human needs while other individuals and groups are thwarted in their attempts to move forward and upward in the hierarchy; this is considered social injustice. This discussion will all present that different groups and individuals, by virtue of their own unique personalities and cultures may have values such that how achievement of the various steps in the hierarchy may represent different things to different people. For example, for some a car is merely transportation; while for others it is a symbol of success. This is also pertinent to **EPAS 2.1.9-Respond to context that shape practice**. Specifically, how changing locals and populations and other societal trends affect the well being of people.

First Examination – date to be established with class with sufficient notice: This will be an in-class examination and ask questions about our commonalities and how, within these commonalities, we are each unique. This exam is worth 20% of the course grade and will last no more than 75 minutes.

Unit III. Understanding and serving ethnically diverse clients.

Readings:

Chapter 1, “A Constructivist Perspective on Clinical Social Work Practice with Ethnically Diverse Clients”. Please note that this chapter will be discussed in class; we recognize that not all students are majoring in social work or are pursuing clinical social work. We will focus on the main points of the authors of this chapter.

Chapter 8, “Toward a Values-Based Approach to Multicultural Social Work Research”.

Chapter 20, “Politically Correct or Culturally Competent”?

Instructor presentations and power point handouts regarding diversity and cultural competency.

Class Exercise: First Learnings

Film: Brown Eyed Blue Eyed Experiment

This unit is designed to meet **EPAS 2.1.4 – Engage diversity and difference in practice.**

Second Examination – date to be established with class with sufficient notice: This will be an in-class examination and ask questions about what must be considered in working with diverse peoples in contemporary society. This exam is worth 20% of the course grade and will last no more than 75 minutes.

Unit IV. Issues pertinent to resettlement.

Reading: Chapter 48, “Resettlement: A Cultural and Psychological Crisis”.

This unit will address **EPAS 2.1.5 –Advance human rights and social and economic justice.** To help students understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination.

Exercise: Star Power

Films: Out at Work

Final Examination (on formally scheduled date of final exam). Please note that evening courses typically have the final exam one week after the last class meeting. This class meets on Tuesday and one week after the final exam that Tuesday has been designated as a “reading day”. Barring any change in the formal University schedule, this exam will be given two weeks after the last class meeting. Please plan on this before making any travel arrangements because absence from this exam will result in a grade of F for the course (which may, at the instructor’s discretion be given opportunity to be changed at some later date at the instructor’s convenience and will be much more rigorous

considering the extra time that the student had; nor will anyone be allowed to take this exam “early”. This exam is worth 20% of the course grade and will last no more than 75 minutes.

Term Paper: You will note from the above that exams and the first brief paper total 70% of the course grade. Also, you will notice that not all the chapters in the required text are required above. Throughout the semester, the instructor will be assigning respective chapters as deemed pertinent to class discussions. 20% of the course grade will be derived from a term paper. Specifics of this paper:

Due the last day of class (not the date of the final examination), no exceptions. Also on the last day of class, bring your laptop and you will be asked to use and complete the University electronic course instructor evaluation. Please note, however, that there is a quick de-activation of this system so you are also encouraged to complete this yourself when it becomes available to you as you are notified by University email.

Title page, including your name, course name and number, date, instructor’s name, and title. The title should be XXXXXX(a group you have selected to write about): Their Strengths and Struggles. Then the paper should contain information about this; it is very straightforward. Try to use subheadings as much as possible to avoid a run-on submission. This will also help you when writing the paper.

The paper should be approximately four pages (not counting the Title and References pages) in length (#12 font, double spaced, normal margins). It should focus on one group for which there is at least one chapter in the text book (and some groups are contained in several chapters and each should then be included as text reference material and you must make specific reference to information from that chapter(s). In addition, you must provide additional source material from at least three sources other than those contained in the text. The social work program has extensive material on the topic of this course and the instructor can and will provide help with references. Our library has a vast amount of current material available through its scholarly and governmental search engines. Please note that reference material in the Program offices are only available for a two hour seating at one interval and will not be available one week before this assignment is due. In other words, best to start early.

Papers should be cited as per NASW-APA style, however we recognize that many students may be majoring in disciplines that do not use this style; use the style of your major. The instructor will be giving a tutorial on writing for social work early in the semester and you will be notified and invited, however we recognize the diversity of majors in this class. No matter what style of reference you use however, avoid excessive use of quotes – this is your paper. Also, no .com references or Wikipedia references are acceptable. Let us help you.

Note that the instructor will be providing supplemental materials for learning in the form of Blackboard presentations and videos, where applicable. You should include reference to anything you have learned in these videos and presentations in the term paper. This is not a “canned” term paper; it is about you, what you have learned about others and yourself, and how this course has facilitated this.

NOTE: The content of this class can be challenging to one’s understanding of self and values system. Students are strongly encouraged to maintain a personal journal (electronic or hand written) to document thoughts, feelings, struggles, conflicts that may arise with the material. This journal may also assist the student in preparation for writing the final paper.

Final Comment: This course requires active, respectful, informed participation. The instructor reserves 10% of the course grade for assessment of your participation. Again, thank you for the privilege of serving as your instructor.