

Seton Hall University  
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work  
Social Work Program  
Course Syllabus

**Senior Research Seminar (SOWK 5111 NA)**

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 11:00-12:45 and 4:00-5:00; Wednesday, in office however request office visit by appointment; Thursday, 11-12:45 and 2:30-5:00. Other hours are available by appointment. Strongly advise that anything requiring action on my part be done as soon as possible; please don't wait until the "last minute". We want you to graduate in as smooth a way as possible, considering prior advisement and your planning.

This syllabus is also being distributed to field instructors to further facilitate integration of learning.

**Course Description:**

This is a 5000 level course and should be treated by students, and will be treated by the instructor, as such. In other words, all submissions, writing style, attendance, class participation, and similar course activities should reflect each student's very best work. The various numbers identified below in bold with explanation in bold are derived from The Council on Social Work Education, Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (2008), which appear, as applicable, to all social work courses.

This course is designed, as is explicated further under course objectives and learning outcomes, to further inform the student about research methodology, cultural competency, self-awareness, and person-in-environment (environment conceptualized herein as a needs and strengths assessment of the clients' communities; these are conceptualized as both or either, as may be applicable, communities of location and communities of affiliation. The instructor

realizes that it is possible for these conceptualizations of community to be interrelated. Learning activities in this course are to be integrated and exemplified by learning experiences in the respective internship. This course requires somewhat extensive literature review.

At the half-way point in this course, students will be asked to complete a mid-course evaluation, confidentially, that is to be submitted to the instructor such as to inform of any possible changes that students report as important to their learning. At the last session, the final and only written assignment (presented below) is to be submitted. Also, a final course evaluation, that is open ended and submitted to the instructor in a sealed envelope containing all, will evaluate the course and the instructor. Also, students (within the time frame allowed by the University for such) should complete the electronic evaluation of this course and instructor. We require a separate evaluation, in addition to the University evaluation, because we desire evaluations to be very specific to social work and this course. Also, students will be asked to complete a curriculum evaluation (both explicit and implicit), confidentially in a sealed envelope. Neither the final course and instructor evaluation, nor the final curriculum evaluation envelope will be opened until all final grades are submitted by all faculty members. This last evaluation, in particular, is to help us in our continuous efforts to improve our curriculum and its components that we have designed to be integrative and cumulative.

In this course, students will perform a needs/strengths assessment of community; use a single subject design to evaluate a clients progress/no change/or lack of progress with explication of possible explanations and to be used in conjunction with the mission of the internship agency (the sum total of clients' improvement is one indicator of program assessment) and also how this relates to the client's objectives for meeting with the social worker (you); discuss cultural competence as it relates to social work practice and the agency in particular; indicate self-awareness; and relate wherever possible to the *NASW Code of Ethics*).

This course requires students to be working on various aspects of the final paper continuously. Except for the single subject design which will be done over the course of the semester, other parts of this learning experience can be done simultaneously.

A schedule will be promulgated for each student to present her/his progress to date, with the understanding that early presentations are not likely to have the same rigor as later

presentations. The instructor and the class will offer instructional comments and ideas to each presenter. The order of presentations will be random (pull names out of a hat).

Clients, have needs and are typically, if not mostly, marginalized, oppressed, and at risk. Students will be asked at the second class session to indicate how they plan to conceptualize community and the instructor and class will offer suggestions and comments. For an array of reasons, clients and others are often not asked about their affectional and sexual status in terms of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transsexual (GLBT). Although students are to select their respective community in terms of needs assessment, if no one offers this topic, the instructor will assign this topic to at least one student. This is not to be interpreted as autobiographical in nature, but this very important topic must be presented in this course by at least one person. The instructor will provide appropriate assistance to all, but in particular, anyone who selects this at risk population may have difficulty, for an array of reasons, relating to other aspects of the final assignment and the instructor will provide additional assistance, as warranted/requested such that this group is presented.

The instructor anticipates, and welcomes, individual consultation with students regarding their respective assignments.

There is no bibliography for this course. Part of the requirements for this course is scholarly empirical and qualitative/descriptive research published by valid, reliable sources which students, as part of requirements for research competency, are expected to obtain by themselves. Nevertheless, the instructor is available for consultation and the program research competency requirements dictate that students be able to secure applicable research materials as they apply to portions of this course. In addition, the program has a relatively sizeable library available for students.

As a final comment herein, this course is not designed as some form of integration seminar; we have put together a total curriculum that is designed to be integrative and cumulative throughout the students' academic career. Nevertheless, it is in the student's best interest to, wherever appropriate and applicable, relate portions of this paper (citable) to learning in other courses, both social work, required cognate, and liberal arts courses. The

course also requires students to relate content in their final paper to the NASW Code of Ethics (distributed to each student previously).

The instructor understands that the units of this course are to be done rather simultaneously. **Although the units are presented as discrete for purposes of orderliness, your actual work on these must be ongoing and focused on all; they are interrelated. In other words, this is a major (5000 level) learning experience and you are expected to simultaneously obtain information, use it, and critically think backward and forward as you make progress.** Feedback from the instructor and class are designed to help each student to cumulative produce a product that reflects meeting the interrelated objectives of the units of this course with excellence.

There is no class on March 10—spring break; April 21-Holy Thursday, University closed. Date of final exam (submission of paper and confidential course/instructor and curriculum evaluations): May 12.

**Course Pre-requisites:** SOWK 4811 and 4911.

**Course Co-requisites:** SOWK 4812, 4912.

**Required Texts:**

Di Noia, J. & Tripodi, T. (2008). *Single-case design for clinical social workers (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Washington D. C.: NASW Press.

Please note that although this book is still listed as available from NASW Press and has been used previously in this course. Without notification after the book order was submitted, we and the bookstore discovered that this book is suspended from publication. Nevertheless, we consider this an important learning experience; we consider this a seminal publication in

terms of your learning. The instructor has checked and there are numerous internet sites that have sufficient copies of this book available and thus should be secured in this manner.

National Association of Social Workers (1996). *Code of ethics*. Washington D.C.: National Association of Social Workers.

Note: This publication has been distributed to students in prior courses with advise to retain it. If a student does not have a copy of this, go to [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org) and scroll to publications and order this; quickly.

National Association of Social Workers (2007). *Indicators for the achievement of the NASW standards for cultural competency in social work practice*. Washington D.C.: National Association of Social Workers.

Note: This publication has been distributed to students in prior course with advise to retain it. If a student does not have a copy of this, go to [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org) and scroll to publications and order this; quickly.

York, R.O. (2009). *Evaluating human services: A practical approach for the human services professional*. Boston: Pearson

Note: this book has been required in other social work courses and we will be using additional readings.

### **Learning Objectives and Concomitant Course Outcomes, Unit I.**

Community Needs and Resources Assessment: Class presentation with identification of sources for obtaining this information. Both communities of geography and communities of affiliation are presented. Communities of geography information can be obtained in several ways, including but not limited to: United States Census Data; School District reports; Crime Statistics; information from any grant application your agency has; any guidebooks your agency or municipality/county/state should have available. Anecdotal information is acceptable, however should be heavily qualified in your report due to obvious issues of reliability and

validity. Communities by affiliation will require literature review as well as any information the student can secure about this population. At times, there may be strong correlation between demographics of a geographic community and communities by affiliation and these should be reported and critically examined by the student. This is designed to meet Council on Social Work Education, Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.

**Unit I. Community Profiles, Needs, and Strengths.** The instructor will present various means of obtaining, reporting, and utilizing the following in class presentations. There are comments in your Theory and Practice I and II textbook (Johnson and Yanca) that present this. This assignment, however, involves considerable individual effort on each student's part and does not consist of rote answers to easily found information. The instructor and class discussions and presentations will refine your work, depending, of course, on the effort you have put into this. Specific learning outcomes:

**2.1.4 Engage diversity in difference in practice and 2.1.9 Respond to contexts that shape practice.** Populations are elements of diversity. Explain all factual information you obtain through your needs and strengths research and explain how these elements of culture (broadly defined) may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power; gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups. Be careful of generalization, while a social environment (and we focus heavily on person-in-environment in this curriculum) may affect the client, persons also have unique characteristics, not stereotypical in nature as some literature might imply or explicitly state.

How does the knowledge you have obtained help you to understand and be competent at appraising locales and populations and to discover, appraise, and attend to changes in the population you have selected as well as to future populations you may serve as a professional social worker.

**2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.** Explain how your community needs/strengths research provides you with evidence to inform practice.

**2.1.7 Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.** Explain how community needs/strengths assessment provides a conceptual framework to guide interventions and how it helps you to apply knowledge to understand person in environment.

**2.1.2 Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.** How does the information you have obtained above pertain to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (be specific)

Dates: Unit I will be presented, primarily, during the first three weeks of class and, as a result of student presentations, additional instructional material will be provided both by the instructor and comments from class members. Start on this assignment as soon as possible. Over the semester, you should gain more and more information. **We will begin oral presentations using a random methodology, at the conclusion of this unit, so best to get started immediately.**

## **Unit II. Learning Objectives and Concomitant Course Outcomes (Unit II).**

This is designed to integrate the above, as well as any other learning experiences you have had, to demonstrate cultural competency with regard to the clients you are currently serving as well as others you will serve as a generalist practitioner over your career. Specific readings are derived from any and all learning experiences you have had in the social work curriculum and cognate courses. Specifically however, you are to integrate the above, in terms of community (broadly defined) and its implications for self-awareness, other awareness, and cultural competency. The required reading for this unit is *Indicators for the Achievement of the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice*. You should be critically thinking about this as you are obtaining information for Unit I.

**2.1.1 Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.**

Person-in-environment is a primary focus of social work and this objective is to help students develop a profession penchant for inquiry. This is to lead to career long learning. Identify critical indicators pertinent to your research that apply to the required reading noted above.

**2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice.** How does the required reading and your research in Unit I help you to recognize and communicate your understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences. How does the required reading and your work in Unit I help you to gain self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups.

**2.1.9 Respond to contexts that shape practice.** Although you will be writing about specifics pertaining to your agency, the world is changing. How have you learned to discover, appraise and attend to changes in geographies, populations, and any pertinent technological advances.

**Learning Objectives and Concomitant Learning Unit III (Single Case Design).** This is designed to use a research methodology such that will allow you to more competently serve clients by providing clear indicators of progress, no change, or lack of progress in your efforts to collaboratively plan and intervene with clients. **While we are not starting formal instructions on single case (system) research design until the fourth week of class, you have been exposed to this, with a learning experience, in a prior course and, considering this, should start immediately on work pertaining to single case design.** There are several techniques in single case (system) design. For most of you, you will be reporting on clients that you have been working with for some time. For now, right now, present the objectives that you have collaboratively established with a client. Then (and this depends on how often you meet with the client) present a graph in your final paper (and we will be illustrating this in class) in which at the bottom is a horizontal line indicating dates that you have met with the client. The

vertical line will be a ranking of 1 to 10 indicating the degree to which the client has reported or shown progress, no change, or lack of progress in meeting the specific objective. This will look similar to the graph of p. 393 in the York book (although hopefully in a different direction). Be sure to indicate the criteria for each ranking of 1 to 10 in your presentation. Even though we will not be formally teaching and learning more about this, start reading the beginning of Di Noia and the two chapters in York as soon as possible.

### **Required Readings:**

Di Noia, J. & Tripodi, T. (2008). *Single-case design for clinical social workers (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Washington D.C.: NASW Press (Preface and Chapters 1 – 7 and Appendix I). Respective assignment of chapters will be made as the instructor assesses student progress in the course.

York, R. (2009). *Evaluating human services: A practical approach for the human service professional*. Boston: Pearson (Chapters 12 and 15).

Respective chapters will be assigned as we progress through the course and your work will constantly be refined. These books also contain content on being culturally sensitive with regard to evaluation. After week four, we will be focusing on class presentations and use part of the class time for presentations and feedback and the remaining time to instruction and reading assignments regarding single case (subject) design.

**2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.** You are to use practice experiences to inform scientific inquiry and research evidence to inform practice.

**2.1.10 d: Evaluation.** You are expected to know how to critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions. **Please note that while evaluation is typically listed in various publications as one of the final steps in working with a client, this is actually an ongoing process beginning with engagement; evaluation is circular and constant.** Single-case

**methodology gives us, and clients, opportunity to continuously see the effects of intervention and to make any changes in the problem solving method.**

**Means of Assessment of Learning:**

The instructor recognizes that this is a complex learning exercise; albeit critical to social work, as all classes are, however this is a 5000 level course with great expectations.

Class presentation equals 20% of the final grade, recognizing that students at the beginning of the semester have not been given the same amount of time as those who go later, in terms of the interrelated complexity of this learning. The order of presentations will be by means of “pulling names out of a hat”

Class participation equals 30% of the course grade. Students are expected to keep up; learn from the presentations of others; and contribute to the learning of others. Obviously, if you are absent, late, distracted, and so forth, you are not fully participating.

Final term paper: This paper should be an orderly exercise of proceeding through the units and the meaning each has to each other; it is worth 50% of the final course grade. It is to be presented using subheadings and the citation style in the body of the paper and on the Works Cited page must be APA as has repeatedly been stressed and instructed. Minor infractions, like a typo may be left alone, but substantive inappropriate citation will result in a one to two full grade reduction, depending upon severity, repetition, and/or inconsistency. You will be finishing the social work major soon and will be a colleague. You will be a social worker and are expected to write like one. Feel free to consult with the instructor if you are having difficulty with this assignment; I welcome this opportunity. See the handout distributed in T and P I which exemplified multiple kinds of things to cite and how to do it within the body of the paper and in the Works Cited page. You may locate brochures and the like and these should just be identified as best you can in terms of author and sponsor. No .com sites because

there is no typically no rigor to these types of citations. Use, wherever possible, scholarly, referred materials: journal articles, books, government publications. If you use a government publication or website, make sure that it contains specific factual information and is not merely public relations. We have been through this before. The library website has innumerable reference material and the above provides sufficient “key words” to help you with this assignment. Library reference staff is eager to help students find material, as is the instructor. Our Program library has much material pertaining to this assignment and should be examined as soon as possible.

The paper is to be approximately twenty pages in length (not counting the title and references pages) and contain at least twenty references. These references should apply to all units in the course; citations about the need for knowledge about communities; knowledge about cultural competence, and knowledge about the importance of evaluation; in other words the specific competencies promulgated herein within each unit. Number 12 font, one inch margin on the left and not right justified, and stapled in the upper left hand corner. I am enthusiastic about helping each of you with this assignment, however if and when you seek assistance, you should bring with you a hard copy of your work to date and specific issues you have. The paper must be handed directly to the instructor and the student will be given a receipt for it. No one other than the instructor is permitted to accept this paper. Of course, all sorts of things can happen and the instructor is reasonable. For extraordinary circumstances, in the opinion of the instructor, this can be emailed as an attachment (that starts with your last name and what it is).

When you submit this paper, which represents your best effort, the odds are very high that you will very soon be joining the instructor as a colleague. Congratulations and it has been a pleasure (despite all the APA corrections!) and a privilege to have served as one of you instructors and helping you to launch your career in serving others.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ALL COURSES OFFERED BY THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM**

### **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***

The following is the official University position in this regard. *Disability Services Statement: Students at Seton Hall University who have a physical, medical, learning or psychiatric disability, either temporary or permanent, may be eligible for reasonable accommodations at the University as per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. In order to receive such accommodations students must identify themselves at the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS), provide appropriate documentation, and collaborate with the development of an accommodation plan. The DSS phone number is (973) 313-6003. For further information, please go to our website at; <http://studentaffairs.shu.edu/dss/>*

The Social Work Program enthusiastically supports the intent and mandate of legislation/policy providing optimal learning environments for all students.

### **TERM PAPERS, EXAMS, AND OTHER LEARNING ASSIGNMENTS**

Term papers and similar assignments are to be submitted on or before the final due date. For those assignments that are to be submitted in class by a specified date, this is defined as submitted to the instructor at the beginning of the class session. Late papers will be penalized one full grade for each calendar day late. Written assignments will not be accepted via e-mail. No staff or faculty member in the department of social work, other than the respective instructor, is authorized to receive/accept any written material from a student.

There are no automatic incomplete grades. Students who have reason to request such must do so by completing a formal request. Without an approved request for an incomplete grade, within the time frame required for processing (typically about one week), students will receive a grade of F for the course, which may be changed subsequently.

All social work courses, and thus respective learning assignments where applicable in each course, emphasize diversity, social justice, and values. Students are expected to complete exams and similar learning assignments on time. In the event a student misses an exam, only one make-up will be scheduled for all students who missed the exam. The instructor will schedule only one make-up exam session for each exam missed and this will be at the convenience of the instructor. Make-up exams can cover all content (lectures, readings, and so forth) for any particular learning unit being tested. Prior to the submission of final course grades, any makeup final exam which is arranged can and will cover content from readings, lectures, and other learning opportunities for the entire semester. Due to scheduling issues, it may not be possible to arrange a make-up for a missed final exam until the subsequent semester and any make-ups must be tentatively scheduled and approved by the respective faculty member.

### ***CLASS ATTENDANCE***

Students are expected to attend all class sessions.