

SWK-S 141 Introduction to Social Work (3 cr.)

Course Information

Semester Year:
Section Number:
Location:
Day:

Instructor:
Office:
Email:
Phone:
Office Hours:

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the profession of social work and the philosophical, societal, and organizational contexts within which professional social work activities are conducted. This course provides the opportunity for students to explore their interest in and potential for a career in social work. It introduces the knowledge, skills and values of social work as a profession and explores the role of social workers within the broad area of social welfare and social services. Social work practice requires extensive knowledge about the human condition, problems in living, problem solving, the delivery of human services, and the institutions that comprise today's social welfare system. Cognitive and interaction skills necessary for competent practice are introduced in this course. This course emphasizes the value base of social work practice and its commitment to social and economic justice. It assists students in assessing the congruence between their own values and those of the profession.

Course Competencies

Council on Social Work Education (CWSE) 2015 EPAS Competencies addressed by this course.

Primary

- 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior (CSWE, 2015 EPAS, p. 7)

Secondary

- 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
- 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Course Objectives

- S141-01:** Demonstrate an understanding of social work as a profession. (CC1, 2, 3)
- S141-02:** Demonstrate an understanding of the range of social work functions and how social workers carry them out. (CC1)
- S141-03:** Demonstrate an understanding of the use of social science and behavioral theory in the helping process. (CC1, 2)
- S141-04:** Demonstrate an understanding of the interaction between people and environment as the focus of social work intervention. (CC1, 2, 3)

- S141-05:** Demonstrate an understanding of the need for and significance of self-awareness in the helping role. (CC1)
- S141-06:** Demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity to diversity including race, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, family structure, marital status, religion, physical, and mental abilities. (CC2)
- S141-07:** Demonstrate awareness of one's own belief system and its fit with social work values and ethics, including a commitment to economic and social justice. (CC1)
- S141-08:** Explain the organizations in which social work services are delivered. (CC1)
- S141-09:** Demonstrate an understanding of social welfare as an institution. (CC3)
- S141-010:** Identify the causes and consequences of oppression and the creation of populations-at-risk. (CC3)

Required Texts

- Cox, L.E., Tice, C. J. & Long, D.D. (2016). *Introduction to Social Work: An Advocacy Based Profession* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Morgaine, K. & Capous-Desyllas, M. (2014). *Anti-oppressive social work practice: Putting theory into action*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Course Content

This course explores the key theories and populations identified by the social work profession for students considering entering the field. Systems (Ecological) Theory and Strength Perspective creates the foundation for students to establish an understanding of work with diverse populations in variant settings. Students will become familiar with the NASW Code of Ethics and use them to evaluate multiple perspectives facing social service agencies at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

The major evaluation of students' progress in accomplishing the learning objectives of this course is the signature agency evaluation assignment. Use of peer reviewed journal articles and appropriate online materials will be necessary as students will be required to analyze perspectives that are consistent with social work values and reflect how this aligns with their personal values. Students will complete a written assignment that reflects an understanding of how individuals served by an identified agency are impacted using the components of Systems Theory.

Course Outline

Module 1: Introduction to Social Work

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Understand course objectives and expectations
- B. Get to know the instructor and fellow students
- C. Become familiar with all sections of the syllabus
- D. Acquire skills for Canvas troubleshooting and navigation

Activities

1. Read syllabus
2. Ensure Canvas account is set to proper time zone
3. Upload picture to your Canvas account

Assessment

1. Discussion 1

Module 2: The Social Work Profession

Date(s):

Learning Objectives¹

- A. Define anti-oppressive social work practice (CO3)
- B. Articulate the importance of self-awareness, dialogue and liberation to effective social work practice. (CO5)
- C. Describe the work, goals, and values of social workers (CO2)
- D. Explain the importance of diversity and advocacy in social work (CO6)
- E. Appreciate the dynamic nature and roles of the social work profession (CO2)
- F. Understand educational and practice options for social workers (CO2)
- G. Compare a social work career to other human services occupations (CO2)
- H. Recognize the forces shaping the American social welfare system and social policy (CO9)
- I. Identify the historical relevance of major social welfare programs that assist people in need (CO9)
- J. Explore the lives of social work pioneers (CO1)
- K. Describe the relationship between social welfare policy and the social work profession (CO1)
- L. Explain why social welfare policies that address people's immediate needs are inadequate for promoting social justice (CO10)

Activities

1. Read Chapters 1 and 2 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice & Long)
2. Read Chapter 1 from the *Anti-oppressive Practice* text (Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas)

Assessments

1. Discussion 2

Module 3: Generalist Social Work Practice/Advocacy

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Describe how self-awareness and critical reflexivity on values help to support anti-oppressive social work practice (CO5)
- B. Describe the knowledge base for generalist social work and direct practice (CO3)

¹ The majority of module learning objectives for the course are drawn directly from *Introduction to Social Work: An Advocacy Based Profession* (2nd ed.) written by Cox, Tice and Long (2016).

- C. Describe the five theoretical bases of generalist practice (CO3)
- D. Explain the purpose of the National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics (CO1)
- E. Define roles available for generalist social workers (CO2)
- F. Identify the five steps in the client change process (CO3)
- G. Explain how the advocacy program and policy model applies to the change process (CO3)
- H. Explain how generalist social workers can advocate for change across client systems (CO2)
- I. Differentiate case advocacy and cause advocacy (CO2)
- J. Summarize the ethical issues involved in advocacy (CO1, 2)
- K. Explain how advocacy is a signature aspect of social work practice (CO1)
- L. Identify costs and benefits associated with advocacy (CO3)
- M. Describe a cycle of advocacy (CO2)
- N. List and describe four tenets of the dynamic advocacy model (CO3)

Activities

- 1. Read Chapters 3 and 4 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)
- 2. Read Chapter 2 from the *Anti-oppressive Practice* text (Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas)

Assessments

- 1. Discussion 3

Module 4: Poverty and Inequality

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Define the term poverty (CO3)
- B. Describe who is considered an individual and why (CO3)
- C. List various factors associated with poverty (CO10)
- D. Define at least five programs or services designed to address poverty (CO8)
- E. Apply the dynamic advocacy model to poverty and inequality (CO2)
- F. Describe the role of social workers in addressing issues of poverty (CO2)
- G. Describe three critical and progressive theories that inform social work practice (CO3)

Activities

- 1. Read Chapter 5 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)
- 2. Read Chapter 3 from the *Anti-oppressive Practice* text (Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas)

Assessments

- 1. Discussion 4

Module 5: Environmentalism and International Social Work

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Define the terms person-in-environment perspective and ecological social welfare and practice (CO4)
- B. Describe how environmental sustainability is linked to social work practice (CO1)
- C. List various factors associated with misuse of the environment (CO3)
- D. Apply the dynamic advocacy model to issues related to the environment (CO2)
- E. Identify and describe the role of social workers in addressing environmental issues (CO2)

- F. Define international social work (CO1)
- G. Explain social work's professional commitment to global human needs and rights, and social, economic, and environmental justice (CO1)
- H. Differentiate charity from empowerment (CO2)
- I. Articulate key social work principles guiding international practice (CO1)
- J. Identify and explain important considerations for culturally competent social work practice (CO6)
- K. Describe major global issues in relationship to social work practice (CO1)
- L. Identify and describe important considerations, including safety and self-care, for social workers entering international social work practice (CO5)

Activities

- 1. Read Chapters 16 and 17 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

- 1. Discussion 5

Module 6: Communities At Risk and Housing

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Describe the relevance of community practice in social work (CO1)
- B. Explain what puts communities at risk (CO10)
- C. List the major forms of housing (CO3)
- D. Define major considerations for a person buying a home or renting an apartment (CO3)
- E. Explain the link between poverty and segregation and their effect on communities (CO10)
- F. Describe social work advocacy with housing and communities at risk (CO2)

Activities

- 1. Read Chapter 13 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

- 1. Discussion 6

Module 7: Midterm Assessment

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Review content and assignments for the second half of the course

Activities

- 1. Prepare for the midterm assessment

Assessments

- 1. Midterm assessment

Module 8: Families and Child Welfare

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Define family in light of contemporary family structure (CO3)
- B. Describe the tension between the rights of children and the rights of parents (CO3)

- C. Describe services and programs designed to help children and families (CO8)
- D. Describe the belief systems that underpin opinions about child and family services (CO3)
- E. Identify how the education system could be improved to help families and children (CO4)
- F. Explain how diversity affects family and child welfare (CO6)
- G. Apply the dynamic advocacy model to family and child welfare (CO2)

Activities

1. Read Chapter 6 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

1. Discussion 8

Module 9: Health Care

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Describe health challenges and the American health care system (CO4)
- B. Recognize health disparities, stigma, and ethical dilemmas with health care (CO6)
- C. Evaluate the current state of health care policy in the United States (CO9)
- D. Articulate trends in health care (CO9)
- E. Identify health care settings that employ social workers and the roles of social workers in those settings (CO2,8)

Activities

1. Read Chapter 7 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

1. Discussion 9

Module 10: Physical and Mental Health Challenges/Developmental Challenges

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Identify three main categories of physical, cognitive, and developmental challenges, and types of challenges within those categories (CO3)
- B. Understand the importance of stigma in the lives of people with physical, cognitive, and developmental challenges (CO6)
- C. Distinguish between Americans' historical and current views of physical, cognitive, and developmental challenges (CO3)
- D. Identify federal policies relevant to people living with physical, cognitive, and developmental challenges (CO9)
- E. Understand why people with physical, cognitive, and developmental challenges are more likely to experience disparities in health and health care (CO6,10)
- F. Articulate social work roles and careers related to people with physical, cognitive, and developmental challenges (CO2)

Activities

1. Read Chapter 8 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

1. Discussion 10

Module 11: Mental Health

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Explain the differences between mental health and mental illness, and between normal and abnormal mental health (CO3)
- B. Identify at least five types of serious mental health disorders (CO3)
- C. Explain the medicalization of mental health and its effect on individuals as well as on mental health professionals and organizations (CO1,8)
- D. Describe in broad terms how mental health has historically been defined and treated (CO3)
- E. Understand the importance of mental health parity and its current status (CO9)
- F. Identify mental health social work roles and settings (CO2,8)
- G. Recognize how diversity affects mental health and mental health treatment (CO6)

Assignments

1. Read Chapter 9 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

1. Discussion 11

Module 12: Substance Use and Addictions

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Explain why substance use and addiction occur and why they are so hard to overcome (CO3)
- B. Understand the role of codependency in substance use and addiction (CO3)
- C. Explain why prevention of substance use and addiction is so important (CO3)
- D. Understand social workers' roles in substance use and addiction (CO2)
- E. Identify substance use and addiction treatment concepts and settings (CO8)
- F. Explain why some forms of treatment present moral, personal, and social dilemmas (CO3)
- G. Recognize how stigma and bias impede the drug abuse recovery process (CO6,10)

Activities

1. Read Chapter 10 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

1. Discussion 12

Module 13: Aging

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Understand the variations in normal aging (CO3)
- B. Appreciate the biopsychosocial-spiritual and family aspects of aging across the life span (CO3,4)
- C. Describe gerontological social worker practice and policy roles (CO2)
- D. Identify and understand available services and policies that relate to older adults (CO8)
- E. List at least three ways the aging population is changing American society (CO3)

Activities

1. Read Chapter 11 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

1. Discussion 13

Module 14: Criminal Justice

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Identify and describe important concepts and terms in the criminal justice system (CO3)
- B. Analyze the contextual nature of criminal behavior, as politically defined and relative to time and place (CO3)
- C. Identify and describe the intended functions of punishment and imprisonment in the United States (CO3)
- D. Describe and explain the differences and tension between social work and criminal justice perspectives concerning criminal behavior (CO1)
- E. List and explain areas to advocate for change and reform in the criminal justice system (CO2)
- F. Describe and analyze how specific population groups are advantaged and disadvantaged in the criminal justice system (CO6,10)
- G. Describe the importance of empowerment of victims and criminals in advocating for fair and just legal processes and systems (CO10)

Activities

1. Read Chapter 12 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

1. Discussion 14

Module 15: Veterans, Their Families, and Military Social Work

Date(s):

Learning Objectives

- A. Understand military culture, values, and beliefs (CO3)
- B. Understand the history and practice of military social work with veterans, members of the armed services, and their families (CO2)
- C. Identify contexts where soldiers, veterans, and their families may seek social services, health care, and mental health/addiction counseling (CO8)
- D. Understand challenges and stressors in military families (CO3,6)
- E. Identify policies, models, and interventions to assist veterans and their families (CO2)

Activities

1. Read Chapter 15 from the *Introduction to Social Work* text (Cox, Tice and Long)

Assessments

1. Agency Assessment Due
2. Discussion 15

Assignments and Grading

Students admitted to the Bachelor of Social Work degree program are expected to provide evidence of Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) mandated competencies defined in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Assignments demonstrate introductory learning in accordance with these educational standards. Five (5) assignments are required of students enrolled in the course.

Assignments

The overall course grade is determined by the student's performance on the five assignments described above. The evaluation/grading framework is delineated below.

1. Module-level Assessments
DUE:
Final Grade Percentage:.....
2. Midterm Assessment
DUE:
Final Grade Percentage:.....
3. Critical Reflection Writings
DUE:
Final Grade Percentage:.....
4. Agency Assessment (Signature Assignment)
DUE:
Final Grade Percentage:.....
5. Class Participation
DUE:
Final Grade Percentage:

Assignment Details

Module-level Assessments

Module-level assessments (e.g., short writing assignments, quizzes, etc.) will be given throughout the semester. These assessments will be administered during the class session or via Canvas, and will be based on assigned readings and other material covered in class. Module-level assessments count for 20% of the final grade.

Midterm Assessment

A midterm assessment (e.g., paper, presentation, exam, etc.) will be due or administered in Module 7. The midterm assessment will be derived from readings and material covered in class during the first eight weeks of the course. The midterm assessment counts for 25% of the final grade.

Reflection Writings

This assignment asks the student to select and critically reflect on the central focus of two of the five chapters addressing the various fields of practice. Reflection writings must be submitted on the day the

selected chapter will be discussed in-class or on the indicated date in Canvas. In combination, the two critical reflection writings count for 20% of the final grade.

Course Participation

Participation is an integral component of the student's overall success in the course. Course participation is conceptualized broadly as engagement in assigned readings prior to class or before scheduled online discussions, attending class (if in-person course), and participation in classroom or online discussions and exercises. Students are expected to prepare for and attend each class or participate in each online module. Students will be engaged regularly in in-class or online activities and writing exercises around the readings. A participation grade will be determined for each of the class sessions or weekly modules based upon the student's presence in class, participation in classroom or online activities, and/or submission of short in-class or online writing exercises. Course participation counts for 10% of the course grade.

Signature Assignment: Agency Assessment

Each student will complete a formal paper based on their learning and research. The purpose of this paper is for students to utilize their learning experience, research, and critical thinking to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and theories presented in the course. Students will reflect upon and analyze their experiences with an identified agency as they relate to broader social issues. Special emphasis will be on the analysis of experience as they relate to social work values, systems theory, the strengths perspective, and scholarly research. This paper will be turned in toward the end of the semester and will be considered the final course assessment. The agency assessment counts for 25% of the final grade.

The suggested length of the paper is 8 pages not including the cover page and reference page. The paper must follow APA style. No abstract or conclusion is required, however, the paper must include a title page, running header with pagination, be double spaced using Times New Roman 12 pt. font, use in-text citations where necessary, and include a separate reference page.

The Agency Assessment assignment asks students to identify the main issue/problem that the assigned agency addresses. It also asks students to identify at least 2 perspectives on the issue. For example, if the issue is housing, one perspective might be that local communities should take the lead while a second perspective is that the federal government should play a larger role. Research is a major requirement for this part of the assignment. Sources that are NOT appropriate for an academic paper include, Wikipedia (although this site is a good starting point for finding initial ideas about a topic, some of their information and attached resources may not be reliable), Blogs, tweets, personal websites, Forums, questionable sites created by organizations that may have political or biased agendas, sites that provide biased information, self-published sources, opinionated articles such as editorials and sites of companies that conduct their business over the internet. On-line sources with an .edu or .org are more likely to be reliable sources. At least one source must be a peer reviewed article from a scholarly journal. Headings for this paper are listed below. Include headings in the paper as indicated.

Heading 1: Primary Issue (suggested length 1 page)

1. What is the main issue/problem that your identified agency is designed to address?
2. Using research including at least one peer reviewed article, what are two perspectives on this issue?

Heading 2: Social Work Values (suggested length 2 pages)

1. Using a “social work lens” to analyze the perspectives, what is the perspective that is the best fit with social work values?
2. What are at least two social work values that are most important?

Heading 3: Systems (Ecological Theory) (suggested length 2 pages)

1. What societal conditions create the need for the services provided by this agency? (For example, economic inequality, racism, health disparity, etc.)
2. How do systemic conditions impact the individuals who receive services and contribute to the conditions that warrant services? (Think person-in-environment and a demonstration of your understanding of systems theory using citations in your answer.)

Heading 4: Strengths Perspective (suggested length 1 page)

1. Using your experience, is the strengths approach utilized in the agency setting? If so, describe. If not, how could the strengths perspective/approach be utilized in this setting?
2. How might that approach benefit the clients/consumers of services?

Heading 5: Self-Reflection (suggested length 2 pages)

1. What were your pre-conceived ideas about the population served by your agency?
2. How did your experience counter or confirm your ideas?
3. Did you encounter any value conflicts?
4. As a social worker, what would you do if you encounter a situation or issue that conflicts with your personal values? Examples include abortion, religion, marriage equality or how people in poverty use resources.
5. Is this an agency or population you would like to work with in the future? Explain.

Grading Standards

Papers are graded on the quality of the final product not on the effort you extended completing them. The grade of A is reserved for truly outstanding work that goes beyond basic requirements.

Grades of A reflect Excellence. Excellent scholarly products and academic or professional performances are substantially superior to the “good,” “the high quality,” “the competent,” or the “satisfactory.” They are unusual, exceptional, and extraordinary. Criteria for assignments are not only met, they are exceeded by a significant margin. Excellence is a rare phenomenon. As a result, relatively few BSW students earn A grades.

Grades of B signify good or high quality scholarly products and academic or professional performance. Grades in the B range reflect work expected of a conscientious student in a professional program. Criteria for assignments are met in a competent, thoughtful, and professional manner. However, the criteria are not exceeded and the quality is not substantially superior to other good quality products or performances. There is a clear distinction between the good and the excellent. We expect that most BSW students will earn grades in the B range—reflecting the good or high quality work expected of competent future helping professionals.

Grades of C and C+ signify work that is marginal in nature. The scholarly products or professional performances meet many but not all of the expected criteria. The work approaches but does not quite meet the standards of quality expected of a student in a professional school. Satisfactory in many respects,

its quality is not consistently so and cannot be considered of good or high quality. We anticipate that a minority of BSW students will earn C and C+ grades.

Grades of C- and lower reflect work that is unsatisfactory. The products or performances do not meet several, many, or most of the criteria. The work fails to approach the standards of quality expected of a student and a future BSW-level professional. We anticipate that a small percentage of BSW students will earn unsatisfactory grades of C-, D, and F.

Grading scale

Grade minimums are as follows [Note: grades below a C are Unsatisfactory in the BSW Program]:

A	93%	Excellent, Exceptional Quality
A-	90%	Superior Quality
B+	87%	Very Good, Slightly Higher Quality
B	83%	Good, High Quality (expected of most BSW students)
B-	80%	Satisfactory Quality
C+	77%	Marginal, Modestly Acceptable Quality
C	73%	Marginal, Minimally Acceptable Quality
C-	70%	Unsatisfactory Quality

The above schedule and procedures are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.