

# SWK-S600 Ethics Across Practice Settings (3 cr.)

## Course Information

**Semester Year:**  
**Section Number:**  
**Location:**  
**Day:**  
**Time:**

**Instructor:**  
**Office:**  
**Email:**  
**Phone:**  
**Office Hours:**

## Course Description

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of ethical decision making across a variety of practice areas. The major philosophical formulations that underlie ethics, and relevant concepts derived from these formulations are highlighted, as is the development of ethical reasoning and decision-making skills in dealing with dilemmas that arise in social work practice. Building upon the student's foundation of general social work ethics knowledge, this course seeks to integrate various models and frameworks into practice at micro, mezzo and macro settings. Emphasis will be placed on the need for a core framework to minimize extraneous impacts on the ethical decision making process, while understanding that frameworks tend to have inherent internal conflicts.

## Course Objectives

- S693-01** Examine the role of ethics in social work and the social workers' professional ethical responsibilities.
- S693-02** Compare and analyze the major philosophical traditions and theories that underlie ethics in all professions
- S693-03** Identify, analyze, and resolve ethical concerns in cases across a variety of practice areas
- S693-04** Explore and analyze personal values to identify potential conflicts between professional and personal value-sets
- S693-05** Demonstrate the ability to distinguish between personal and professional values with diverse client systems and consider possible courses of action when conflicts exist

## Course Content

This course contains information about the foundations of professional ethics in social work, including the philosophical underpinnings of ethical decision-making processes. Multiple models of ethical decision-making will be presented and discussed. A detailed self-analysis process will be included in the course to ensure a full understanding of the self as it applies to personal ethical conflicts and those perceived in systems and others. The study of ethical frameworks and self will intersect as students are guided toward an understanding of how both individual and systemic influences must be considered in maintained ethical practice. This knowledge will be applied to solve dilemmas across a variety of practice settings.

## Required Readings:

There is no required textbook for this course. Required readings can be found via the university library and are listed in the course outline below. Readings not available through the library are located on Canvas (Files tab).

## Resources

- Canvas email will also be used a way to communicate between instructor and students. You are expected to check the course announcements on Canvas before each class.
- Additional readings might be assigned throughout the semester and will be posted on Canvas (Files tab).

## Course Content

**Be mindful that academic and experiential content in social work courses may trigger an emotional response, especially in individuals who have prior trauma history. As social workers, it is our responsibility to be present for clients who have experienced trauma; therefore, it is necessary to cultivate compassionate self-awareness and address our personal histories in a timely manner for competent social work practice. If you are triggered in the classroom, your priority is self-care as well as continuing to gain knowledge for practice. You may need to seek consultation from faculty as to your readiness for practice and/or how to better prepare for social work practice.**

## Course Outline

### Module 1 – Introduction

#### Date

**Exploration of Ethical Decision Making and Values, Discussion of Professional vs. Personal Values**

#### *Readings*

The moral Life of Babies: New York Times: [NYT Moral Life of Babies](#)

National Association of Social Workers (2017). *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Washington, DC: NASW Online:

[https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ms\\_ArtLqzel%3d&portalid=0](https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ms_ArtLqzel%3d&portalid=0)

#### *In-Class Activity*

Ethics decision-making exercise: Alzheimer's study

To be shown in class: [NYT video clip](#)

### Module 2 - The Role of Ethics and Values in the Profession

#### Date

#### *Readings*

Abramson, M. (1996). Reflections on knowing oneself ethically: Toward a working framework for social work practice. *Families in Society*, 77 (4), 195-201.

Banks, S. (2008). Critical commentary: Social work ethics. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 38(6), 1238-1249.

Freud, S., & Krug, S. (2002). Beyond the Code of Ethics, Part I: Complexities of Ethical Decision Making in Social Work Practice. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 83(5/6), 474-482.

Reamer, F. G. (2013). Social work in a digital age: Ethical and risk management challenges. *Social Work*, 58(2), 163-172.

Strom-Gottfried, K. (2015). Chapter 1: On ethics and ethical behavior. In *Straight Talk About Professional Ethics (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed)*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books.

### *Assignments:*

Online Discussion Post #1- Application of the Code of Ethics

Self-Reflection Assignment #1 (due by 7/9/18)

## Module 3 - Ethical Decision-Making: Major Philosophical Frameworks

### Date

### *Readings/Videos*

1. Utilitarianism (video): [justiceharvard.org/themoralsideofmurder/](http://justiceharvard.org/themoralsideofmurder/)  
(reading) [utilitarianism.com/utilitarianism](http://utilitarianism.com/utilitarianism)
2. Kantian ethics (video): [Justiceharvard.org/lecture-11-mind-your-motive/](http://Justiceharvard.org/lecture-11-mind-your-motive/)  
(reading) [csus.edu/indiv/g/gaskilld/ethics/kantian%20ethics](http://csus.edu/indiv/g/gaskilld/ethics/kantian%20ethics)
3. Principlism: [depts.washington.edu/bioethx/tools/princpl](http://depts.washington.edu/bioethx/tools/princpl)
4. Ross: [wku.edu/~jan.garrett/ethics/rossethc](http://wku.edu/~jan.garrett/ethics/rossethc)
5. Rawls (video): [justiceharvard.org/lecture-14-a-deal-is-a-deal/](http://justiceharvard.org/lecture-14-a-deal-is-a-deal/)  
(reading) [people.wku.edu/jan.garrett/ethics/johnrawl](http://people.wku.edu/jan.garrett/ethics/johnrawl)
6. Virtue Ethics: [scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/ethicsandvirtue](http://scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/ethicsandvirtue)

### *Assignments:*

Moral Philosophy Study Guide Questions (bring to class on 7/11/18)

Essay #1 distributed (due by midnight on 7/18/18)

## Module 4 - Ethical Problem-Solving in Social Work

### Date

### *Readings*

Congress, E. (2000). What social workers should know about ethics: Understanding and resolving practice dilemmas. *Advances in Social Work*, 1(1), 1-25.

Dolgoft, R., Lowenberg, F., & Harrington, D. (2005). Ethical decisions for social work practice. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole. (reading is available on Canvas)

Mattison, M. (2000). Ethical decision making: The person in the process. *Social Work*, 45(3), 201-212.

Reamer, F. G. (2002). Eye on ethics: Making difficult decisions. *Social Work Today* (October 14, 2002). Available at: [http://www.socialworktoday.com/news/eoe\\_101402.shtml](http://www.socialworktoday.com/news/eoe_101402.shtml)

Tenbrunsel, A. Messick, D. (2004) Ethical fading: The role of self deception in unethical behavior. *Social Justice Research*, 17, 223-236.

**Assignments:**

Online exam (due by 7/16/18 at midnight)

**Module 5 - Cultural Competence in Practice- Ethical Obligations****Date****Readings**

Healy, L. M. (2007). Universalism and cultural relativism in social work ethics. (2007). *International Social Work*, 50 (1), 11-26.

[NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice](#)

**Assignments:**

In-class activity- Applying the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in social work practice

Self-Reflection Assignment #2 (due by 7/23/18 at midnight)

**Module 6 - Issues Across Practice Areas: Informed Consent and Competence****Date****Readings**

Coffman, C., & Barnett, J. E. (2015, October). Informed consent with children and adolescents. [Web article]. Available at: [societyforpsychotherapy.org/informed-consent-with-children-and-adolescents](http://societyforpsychotherapy.org/informed-consent-with-children-and-adolescents)

Linzer, N. (2004). An ethical dilemma in elder abuse. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28 (2), 165-173.

Reamer, F. G. (2002). Eye on ethics: The complexities of informed consent. *Social Work Today* (August, 2003). Available at: [http://www.socialworktoday.com/news/eoe\\_0803.shtml](http://www.socialworktoday.com/news/eoe_0803.shtml)

Regehr, C., & Antle, B. (1997) Coercive influences: Informed consent in court-mandated social work practice. *Social Work*, 42(3), 300-306.

**Assignments:**

Online Discussion Post #2

**Module 7 - Issues Across Practice Areas: Paternalism and Self-Determination****Date****Readings**

Gallagher, M., Smith, M., Hardy, M., & Wilkinson, H. (2012). Children and families' involvement in social work decision making. *Children & Society*, 26(1), 74-85.

Linzer, N. (2002). An ethical dilemma in home care. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 37(2), 23-39.

Sasson, S. (2000). Beneficence vs. respect for autonomy: A dilemma in social work practice. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 33(1), 5-16.

**Assignments:**

Essay #2 distributed (due by midnight on 8/1/18)

## Module 8 - Issues Across Practice Areas: Boundaries

Date

### *Readings*

Neuman, C. (2007). Boundary issues in the professional/client relationship. *Journal of Community Corrections*.

Reamer, F. G. (2003). Boundary issues in social work: Managing dual relationships. *Social Work*, 48, 1, 121- 133.

O'Leary, P., Tsui, M., & Ruch, G. (2013). The boundaries of the social work relationship revisited: Towards a connected, inclusive, and dynamic conceptualization. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 43(1), 135-153.

Revisit article on Ethical Fading (Module 5)

### *Assignments:*

Online Discussion Post #3

## Module 9 - Issues Across Practice Areas: Confidentiality and Duty to Protect/Warn

Date

### *Readings*

Donovan, K., & Regehr, C. (2010). Elder abuse: Clinical, ethical, and legal considerations in social work practice. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 38(1), 174-182.

Lens, V. (2000) Protecting the confidentiality of the therapeutic relationship: Jaffe vs. Redmond. *Social Work*, 45(3), 273-276.

Reamer, F. (2005). Update on confidentiality issues in practice with children: Ethics risk management. *Children & Schools*, 27(2), 117-120.

Corbin, J.R. (2012). Confidentiality and the duty to warn: Ethical and legal implications for the therapeutic relationship. Available at: [Confidentiality and the duty to warn](#)

### *Assignments:*

In-class review

Essay #2 Due by midnight

## Module 10 - Wrap-up and Review

Date

### *Assignment:*

Online Discussion Post #4 (due by 8/6/18 at midnight)

Final Exam (Online- to be completed prior to 8/6/18 at midnight)

## Assignments and Grading

More specific instructions for each assignment will be posted on Canvas. The instructor also will discuss details or answer any questions related to assignment during the class and office hours. In addition to the

assignments listed below, students will receive 5% of their final grade for attendance and professional participation in class sessions.

All assignments should be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, carefully edited and proofed, using no smaller than a 12 point font, and conforming to APA style (6th ed.)

## Assignments

1. Case Application Essay Papers
  - a. DUE: .....various
  - b. Final Grade Percentage: .....30%
2. Exams
  - c. DUE: .....date
  - d. Final Grade Percentage: .....30%
3. Self-reflection papers
  - e. DUE: .....date
  - f. Final Grade Percentage: .....25%
4. Online Discussion Posts
  - g. DUE: .....date
  - h. Final Grade Percentage: .....10%

## Assignment Details

1. Case Application Essay Papers: Students will complete two essay papers. Students will be provided a case vignette for each paper and will be asked to identify an ethical problem and discuss a central concept relevant to the case that bears upon ethical decision making in social work practice. Students should apply ethical philosophies or decision making strategies to resolve the dilemma and explain their decision-making process. Students will be provided specific instructions for each essay. (30% of final grade)
2. Exams: Two exams will be given in the semester that will allow students to demonstrate their understanding of primary ethical concepts and issues related to ethical philosophy and social work practice. (30% of final grade)
3. Self-reflection papers: Two class assignments will include a self-analysis of values, beliefs, and assumptions related to the moral and ethical decision-making process. This activity will provide the opportunity for students to recognize the interface of personal dynamics with moral concepts and issues associated with and important to ethical decision-making and practice. These assignments will explore the relationship between students' personal morals and values and their professional values and ethics. (25% of final grade)
4. Online Discussion Posts: Students will participate in four online discussions throughout the class. A discussion forum will be created for each topic with specific questions or points to address. After reading the assigned module content, you should post in the discussion forum for that module. Your posted comments or responses should reflect an understanding of the module content and readings and should help demonstrate your comprehension of the material. In the online discussion forum, you

should also respond to at least two other students' posts to receive full credit for discussion forum participation. (10% of final grade)

## 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.

In the Indiana University School of Social Work MSW program, grades of B are the expected norm. Reflecting competency and proficiency, grades of B reflect good or high quality work typical of graduate students in professional schools. Indeed, professors typically evaluate students' work in such a way that B is the average grade. Grades in both the A and the C range are relatively uncommon and reflect work that is significantly superior to or significantly inferior, respectively, to the average, high quality, professional work conducted by most IU MSW students. Because of this approach to grading, students who routinely earned A grades in their undergraduate studies may conclude that a B grade reflects a decrease in their academic performance. Such is not the case. Grades of B in the IU MSW program reflect the average, highly competent, proficient quality of our students. In a sense, a B grade in graduate school is analogous to an A grade in undergraduate studies. MSW students must work extremely hard to achieve a B grade. If you are fortunate enough receive a B, prize it as evidence of the professional quality of your work.

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 MSW 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 graduate 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 MSW 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 graduate 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 MSW 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 graduate student and a future MSW-level professional. We anticipate that a small percentage of MSW students will earn unsatisfactory grades of C-, D, and F.

### *Grading scale*

Grade minimums are as follows [Note: grades below C are Unsatisfactory in the MSW 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 MSW students)
B-	80%	Satisfactory Quality
C+	77%	Marginal, Modestly Acceptable Quality
C	73%	Marginal, Minimally Acceptable Quality
C-	70%	Unsatisfactory Quality

## Course Policies

### Assignments

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time via Canvas unless given other instructions for submission. If you need to extend a deadline you MUST speak to the instructor in advance of the due date to get approval and reach an agreement. Late submission (except by prior agreement) will be marked down 10% per day late. IU has a subscription with the Turnitin plagiarism detection service, and faculty members have the right to submit student papers to the service to check for originality. Turnitin.com service will be used for all student papers in this course.

### Attendance and participation

Students are expected to attend and participate in all class sessions. Students should complete readings and homework as assigned and come to class prepared for discussion and questions. Because of the nature of this course and group assignments, regular attendance is required and extremely important. Class attendance and active participation in class activities are considered essential for the satisfactory completion of the course objectives. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to get notes from other students regarding materials covered during your absence. If you are absent on the day when an assignment is due, you need to submit your assignment before the beginning of the class. Missing more than 1 of the scheduled classes will result in a letter-grade deduction for the course. Late arrivals and early departures will also lead to course point deductions. It is up to the instructor's discretion to decide the deduction points. Since this is a hybrid course during a summer session, if you miss two or more class sessions, you will fail the course.