Course Purpose:

This course is the first of two in the foundation practice sequence, which is designed to provide first-year M.S.W. students with foundational knowledge, values, and skills in social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. In the first semester, the emphasis will be on the development of foundational practice knowledge and competence for work with individuals, and, in the second semester, the emphasis will be on the development of foundational practice knowledge and competence for work with families, groups, organizations, and communities. Attention to the needs of vulnerable populations and to the implications of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, socioeconomic background, age, sexual orientation, religion, and disability in effective social work practice will be an integral part of both semesters. The student’s field experience is integrated with classroom content throughout both courses.

This course builds on critical thinking skills and knowledge of psychological, social, economic, cultural and biological considerations gleaned from a liberal arts perspective. It provides a base for practical application of theories of human behavior presented in SWRK 602 (Human Behavior in the Social Environment). The student is provided with an understanding of practice which incorporates an awareness of the impacts of structural oppression, as presented in SWRK 603 (American Racism and Social Work Practice), and, as presented in SWRK 601 (History and Philosophy of Social Work and Social Welfare), ways social policies affect and are influenced by clients, agencies, and communities. In preparation for the second-year advanced practice courses (SWRK 704-714 and SWRK 708-718), students are introduced to concepts derived from core approaches and perspectives in social work practice, including the functional approach, the strengths perspective, empowerment practice, and the ecological systems perspective. Students will be oriented to evidence-based practice and will learn to draw upon the best available evidence, clients’ preferences, practice competence, and critical thinking to guide their practice.

Educational Objectives:

Initially, students are introduced to the “Penn Approach” and the values, concepts and principles that are integral to the practice of social work. Following this introduction, the social and agency context of social work practice is explored, along with an introduction to phases of the helping process and the skills needed for culturally-competent practice. Students gain understanding of and skills in engagement, assessment, contracting, planning, intervention, evaluation, and termination in social work with individuals in diverse service contexts. Throughout this course, emphasis is placed on the practice and application of skills through the use of role-plays and other interactive exercises.

Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate at a foundational level:

1. An understanding of social work practice, its value base, professional ethics, major conceptual frameworks, use of evidence-based practice, and broad domains of intervention, particularly in relation to vulnerable populations;

2. Knowledge of the history of the social work profession and the role of social workers as agents of social change;
3. An understanding of the history, purpose and function of the field practice agency and the roles of agency context in service provision and client experiences in the setting;

4. An understanding of and respect for differences among individuals related to age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and socioeconomic resources, and an ability to incorporate this understanding and respect into culturally-competent social work practice;

5. Knowledge and skills to engage in ethical social work practice;

6. Knowledge and skills in interpersonal relationship building and interviewing necessary for beginning social work practice, with attention to the professional use of self in the helping relationship;

7. Knowledge and skills in engagement, assessment, and problem-solving with individuals;

8. Knowledge and skills in the evaluation of one’s own practice and goal attainment with clients; and

9. Critical thinking skills that enhance understanding of people in their environments and strengthen the capacity to engage in effective practice.

Course Requirements:

Expectations

Classroom learning is a fundamental component of your professional education. Students are expected to attend each class, arrive to class on time, and be in attendance of the full class. In the event that you are unable to attend class for any reason, you are asked to notify your instructor in advance. Excessive absenteeism (i.e., missing more than two classes) and lateness (i.e., being late more than 3 times) are considered serious problems that instructors will address by meeting with the student and determining whether the student's academic advisor should be notified and how the student's grade will be affected. Excessive absenteeism could result in course failure.

Students are expected to: (a) participate substantively in class discussions; (b) read on a weekly basis and come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignments; (c) demonstrate professional behavior; and (d) submit written assignments by the due date and in accordance with the specified format. Some instructors may include written or verbal reading reflection assignments as part of the class participation grade.

Grading Policies

Grades will be based on:

- Class Attendance, Participation & Preparedness: 20%;
- Agency Context and Social Justice Paper: 25%;
- Process Recording: 20%; and
- Assessment, Goal Setting and Intervention Paper: 35%.

Instructors may make minor modifications in the weighting of the assignments (within 5%).

This course actively integrates your field placement experiences, and your professional social work behavior is considered in your grade for this course. Final grades in this course take into account activities and evaluations in both class and field placement. A passing grade in your field placement is required to pass this course. A marginal passing grade in your field placement is a serious concern that, in general, will result in a 1/3 reduction.
in your final grade in this course (e.g., a B+ would become a B); however, the reduction may be greater at the discretion of the instructor. It will also involve follow-up discussion with you, your field instructor, and your practice instructor/field liaison. A final grade of C+ or below is insufficient to pass this course. Please refer to the M.S.W. Student Handbook for the School’s grading policy. Students whose grade in this course is minimal or failing at midterm will be notified in writing.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the University’s Code of Academic Integrity. Care should be taken to avoid academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, fabrication of information, and multiple submissions (see descriptions below).** Students who engage in any of these actions will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct, which investigates and decides on sanctions in cases of academic dishonesty.

1. Plagiarism: using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgment. Example: copying, in part or in its entirety, another person’s paper, article, or web-based material and submitting it for an assignment; using someone else’s ideas without attribution; not using quotation marks where appropriate, etc.

2. Fabrication: submitting contrived or altered information in any academic exercise. Example: making up data or statistics, citing nonexistent articles, contriving sources, etc.

3. Multiple submissions: submitting, without prior permission, any work submitted to fulfill another academic requirement.

**It is the student’s responsibility to consult the instructor if unsure about whether something constitutes a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity.

Written Assignments

Students will be responsible for one ungraded and three graded written assignments during the semester. Specific information regarding each assignment is provided at the end of this syllabus. Instructors may modify due dates as needed.

Week 4: Learning Contract Due (ungraded, but must be submitted to receive field practicum credit)

Week 5: Agency Context and Social Justice Paper Due

Week 9: Process Recording Due

Week 13: Assessment, Goal Setting and Intervention Paper Due

Format for Written Assignments

- All papers must be typewritten in 12-point font, double-spaced, and page-numbered with 1” margins on all sides. The first page should include the title of the paper, the student’s name, course number, instructor’s name, and the date. Papers should be stapled, not paper-clipped.

- Any information that is related to clients should be presented in ways that preserve confidentiality (e.g., names and identifying information should not be included); this expectation also applies to information
shared in class. Please consult your practice instructor, field instructor, and/or field liaison if you have questions regarding confidentiality expectations.

- All ideas of others must be properly cited with the specific source, including authors’ last names and year of publication. Please use in-text citations following APA style guidelines. Direct quotes must have the specific source and page number(s). Quotations longer than four typewritten lines must be single-spaced and indented. A list of cited references should be included at the end of each paper, using APA format.

- Please proofread all papers carefully for spelling, punctuation, and other similar errors.

- Papers written for other classes may not be submitted for written assignments in this course. Direct substitution of papers between courses may result in a failing grade for that assignment.

- You should keep a copy of each paper submitted.

- The instructor will gladly answer any questions regarding format.

Readings

It is expected that students will read and think analytically about the required readings for the class, as well as other materials of their own choosing.

Field Visit

During the first semester, each student's practice instructor or field liaison will make a visit to the field placement. The instructor or field liaison will take responsibility for scheduling the meeting with the student and the field instructor. The purpose of the visit is to review the student's learning objectives in light of opportunities at the field placement and to address ways to support the student in having an optimal learning experience. The learning contract will provide the basis for this review.

Required Reading:

Required Texts


Additional required readings for each week can be obtained online via Canvas.

Recommended Text

**Week 1: Course and Year Introduction**


**Week 2: The Professional Context of Practice—Social Work Values and Ethics**


**Week 3: Frameworks for Social Work Practice**


**Week 4: Engagement**

**Skills Lab: Engagement**

Learning Contract is due.


**Week 5: Engagement, Culturally-Competent Practice and Self Awareness**

Agency Context and Social Justice Paper is due.


Week 6: The Professional Context of Practice—Critical Thinking, Evidence-Based Practice, and Listening and Communication Skills

Skills Lab: Listening and Communication Skills

Chapter 4, “Exploring the Problem with Reflecting Statements,” pp. 61-78.

“Listening,” pages 208-211; exercise will be done in class.

Chapter 5, “Critical Thinking: Integral to Evidence-Based Practice,” pp. 94-114.

Week 7: Assessment


Week 8: Assessment

Skills Lab: Assessment


Week 9: Motivational Interviewing

Process Recording is due.


Week 10: Goal Setting, Contracting and Evaluating Progress toward Goals

Skills Lab: Goal Setting and Contracting


Week 11: Intervention

Skills Lab: Intervention

   Chapter 13, “Planning and Implementing Change-Oriented Strategies,” pp. 364-422.

Week 12: Intervention


Week 13: Termination and Field Placement Interviewing

Skills Lab: Field Placement Interviewing

Assessment, Goal Setting and Intervention Paper is due.


Week 14: Wrap-Up and Integration

Preparing for 614, Spring 2018

Next semester, we’ll be focusing on social work practice with families, groups, communities, and organizations.

We’ll begin our focus on social work practice with families during the first week of 614. Please read the chapters below to prepare for the first day of class after the Winter Break.

   Chapter 10, “Assessing Family Functioning in Diverse Family and Cultural Contexts,” pp. 251-278.


The community-focused portion of the course will involve conducting a community assessment—either individually or in a small group—that addresses a social problem affecting a community served by your agency; it will include assessing the community’s strengths and challenges in relation to the specified social problem. To prepare for this component of the course, please consider a community and social problem that is of particular interest to you. Additionally, instructors may recommend reading the following materials prior to the start of classes next term:

   Chapter 9, “Perspectives on Communit(y)ies,” pp. 498-544.

**Written Assignments**

**The Learning Contract**

**Due Week 4—Ungraded—signed, completed contract is required to receive field placement credit**

Using the educational goals listed in this syllabus as a starting point, please create a learning contract that includes the following information:

1. Brief description of three to five learning goals you have established in collaboration with your field instructor for your professional development for this semester.

2. For each goal, a concrete plan for measuring progress toward the goal. This plan should clearly specify how you will know that you have reached each goal.

3. Specific steps you will take to ensure that each goal is met.

Suggested steps for writing a learning contract:

1. Student writes a rough draft of the learning contract.

2. Student shares rough draft with field instructor for feedback/input; student revises contract based on field instructor feedback.

3. Both the student and the field instructor sign the final copy of the learning contract.

Please make four copies: one for the student, one for the field instructor, one for the practice instructor, and, as it applies, one for the field liaison.

**Practice in an Agency Context**

**Due Weeks 5, 9, and 13—Graded Papers**

Central aims of this course include:

- understanding your field agency context and its implications for direct practice;
- engaging in ethical social work practice;
- developing foundational capacity to engage in assessment, goal setting, intervention and practice evaluation with clients; and
- enhancing critical thinking and professional use of self.

The assignments described below contribute to these goals.
This assignment focuses on understanding your agency setting, reflecting upon your initial responses to the agency, examining your role in the agency, reflecting upon social justice in the agency, and considering implications of the agency setting for direct practice. Please address the following topics in relation to your field placement:

1) the agency and setting, including agency mission, history, function, funding sources, leadership, people served, attention to serving diverse populations, community setting, relationship with the community, relationships within the network of agencies serving your agency’s population (i.e., leadership role, collaborative relationships, interagency referral patterns), and other information you deem pertinent to understanding the agency context;

2) the type of intervention(s) provided within your particular program (e.g., does it focus on individuals, families, social networks, and/or broader communities; does it address particular social issues, e.g., physical illness, crises, housing, mental health, education, poverty; what methods are generally used), the theoretical/conceptual framework that guides practice in the setting, and the ways in which the program evaluates progress toward the goals of intervention;

3) the value of social justice as described in the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) in the agency setting, including factors which appear to facilitate and/or hinder the application of this principle in practice;

4) your initial responses to the agency and its setting;

5) ways in which the information provided in parts 1-4 of the assignment might influence clients’ experiences with the agency, service provision, and your direct practice with clients.

The analysis required for part 5 of the assignment may be interwoven throughout the paper or discussed as a separate section. It is a central element of the assignment that should be given considerable attention in the paper.

- For this assignment, it will be important to consult your field instructor and other agency staff, as well as agency documents and publications.
- Additionally, you are asked to integrate findings from a minimum of 3-5 empirical studies from academic journals to inform your discussion of the agency setting and services provided. These studies might identify key issues to consider in working with the agency’s population and/or provide information regarding the effectiveness of the types of interventions provided.
- Be sure to cite the sources that inform and support your discussion, including agency documents, course readings, and other relevant literature.
Students will turn in a process recording focused on the beginning process of direct practice with a client in the agency setting. Some instructors may request that students turn in two process recordings, in which case, students will select one process recording to be graded for the assignment.

**Guide for Preparation of Process Recording**

- It is necessary to obtain your supervisor's permission to use agency case material for class presentation. The process recording should be reviewed and initialed by the supervisor before submission to the instructor. Adequate time will be needed to allow for this process.
- Names and other identifying information for clients and other people must be disguised. Do not use initials or humorous pseudonyms. Agency names do not need to be disguised.
- Material must be typewritten, single-spaced, using only one side of the paper. Material may be photocopied and presented for classroom use; therefore, the paper must be submitted in this final form.
- Text may be single-spaced for this assignment.

**Instructions for Introduction**

1. Provide a brief description of the agency to which you have been assigned. Include in this description the services the agency provides, population served, needs addressed, and physical setting, including the neighborhood in which the agency is located.
2. Provide the context of the session within ongoing services, focus of the session, and context of the presented segment within the session.
3. Specify the people involved in the presentation.

**Instructions for Case Material**

Presentation should be in both narrative and column format. A brief narrative, preceding the content of the interview should include the following:

- **“Tuning in”:** As you prepare to meet with the client, anticipate his/her thoughts, feelings, and possible interests as he/she enters the interview. Consider your own thoughts, feelings, and interests as you anticipate this interview.

- **Focus for work/connection to overall purpose:** What did you want to pay special attention to in the interview?

- **Content:** Presentation of interview content includes a selective presentation of the significant verbal and nonverbal content necessary to understand the interaction. In other words, you will not present the entire interview, rather, you will present an excerpt of the longer interview, ensuring that you provide an adequate introduction as described above to inform the reader. Events should be recorded in chronological order to reflect the progression of the interview. In this section, you can include your thoughts – ones that occurred during the interview itself and/or ones that developed at a later time (e.g., while writing the process recording). This information helps you and the reader understand both the interactive process and the internal process that led you to respond in a particular way.

- **Column presentation of interview content:** Use three columns. The left-hand column should contain the dialogue between you and client(s). This section presents, in detail, what transpired in the session or session
segment(s) selected for presentation. Narrative providing continuity between separate segments within a session may be included in this column. The middle column reflects your unspoken feelings and reactions to what is happening (as described in the first column). The third column (far-right) provides your analysis of the interaction, the client’s feelings, your feelings, your verbal and nonverbal responses to the client, other possible responses, etc. Please note that you will be graded on the quality of the analysis, not the quality of the practice, although the instructor will also provide feedback on the practice. The analysis is covered in the third column and in the conclusion.

**Conclusion & “next steps”:** The concluding paragraph should be an assessment of what you learned from this interview, as well as how you felt you used yourself during the course of the interview. Please consider the following additional questions: what concept(s) were relevant in your professional use of self and the interactions between you and the client? What might be next steps in your next interaction with the client? Are there things that you need to learn and/or consider prior to the next interview?

Throughout the assignment, be sure to cite relevant literature from the class and beyond to inform your discussion and analysis.

**Paper Three: Assessment, Goal Setting, and Intervention**

**Due Week 13**  
**Approximate Length:** 6-8 pages  
**Total Possible Points:** 35

In this paper, you are asked to draw upon your work with a client in your field placement, course readings, a minimum of 3-5 additional empirical studies from academic journals (beyond those cited in the Agency Context and Social Justice paper), and other relevant literature to discuss assessment, goal setting, evaluation, and beginning intervention with the client. You are also asked to consider the implications of the agency context in your work with this client as you review the effectiveness of your practice with the client in the final section of the paper.

The assessment should include attention to the client’s sociodemographic background, presenting concerns, ecological context, strengths, resources, challenges, and needs. One or more practice frameworks or perspectives that we’ve addressed in this course should be used to guide and organize the assessment. **In your assessment, be sure to go beyond listing or summarizing information regarding the client and to consider the meaning and implications of the information for understanding the client in his/her environment, the presenting concern(s), salient goal(s), and beginning interventions that are likely to facilitate progress toward the identified goals.**

The assessment should inform the identification of 1-2 beginning goals of intervention. Clearly specify these goals and identify a plan for monitoring progress toward them. The monitoring plan might include individualized or standardized measures. If you use an individualized measure, be sure to provide a complete example of it (e.g., an example of a self-anchored rating scale).

The interventions you have conducted or propose to conduct (depending on the current phase of work with the client) should aim to facilitate progress toward the specified goal(s). Clearly describe actual or proposed interventions, their effectiveness in facilitating progress toward the specified goal(s), and the current state of the intervention process with the client.

In the final component of the assignment, you are asked to analytically reflect on your work with the client and to consider factors that facilitated and/or hindered the effectiveness of assessment, goal setting, evaluation, and intervention(s) with the client. In this process, be sure to address the following considerations: agency and system factors; evidence-based practice; culturally-competent practice; ethical practice; critical thinking; professional use of self; and what you might do similarly or differently in the future.