Social Work Practice with Communities & Organizations

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description: In this course, participants explore frameworks, values, and skills to meet individual and family needs through interventions with work groups, organizations, and communities.

Course Objectives:
1. Articulate and define social work roles and effective engagement, communication and use of self skills in organizations and communities working with diverse populations by age, race/ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, abilities and immigrant/refugee status.
2. Relate social work roles in organizations and communities to the NASW Code of Ethics, particularly concerning social justice, self-determination, cultural competency and social and political action in working with disadvantaged populations.
3. Understand basic explanatory theories and perspectives that guide social work practice with work groups, organizations, human service systems and communities.
4. Demonstrate how to assess a community issue(s), including the strengths and needs of neighborhoods and various population groups: racial and ethnic minorities, older adults, children and youth, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees or other groups who have experienced disadvantage.
5. Understand organizational structure, culture, climate, power and decision-making processes in human service organizations.
6. Articulate strategies for how human service organizations can increase cultural competency, multiculturalism and anti-oppression.
7. Articulate how to support self-advocacy efforts among consumer and population groups that have experienced disadvantage.
8. Understand various evidence-based intervention approaches to community change through social planning, social action, community organizing and community development practice models.

9. Demonstrate how to plan an organizational, human service system or community intervention aimed at measurably improving the quality of life for a group of people.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: This course introduces students to macro social work practice – efforts to improve the quality of life for a group of people by changing organizations, systems or communities. This means starting a new program, forming a new coalition of organizations and businesses concerned about a community issue, facilitating a neighborhood organizing effort to fight crime, etc.

This course is also very helpful for students who expect to do direct social work practice. To understand how to help someone, you need to understand how their environment helps or hinders them. You need to be able to work collaboratively with other organizations and may want to know how to help clients advocate for community change.

This course emphasizes an ecological systems perspective that recognizes that neighborhood and community conditions affect behavior and outcomes. Such conditions can constitute risk or protective factors for different groups of people. Intervening at the neighborhood or community level to change these conditions is as important as intervening at the individual or family level.

Students will also be oriented to human service organizations so they begin to understand how to succeed in different work environments and how to facilitate organizational change, which will include understanding how to work well in groups.

REQUIRED TEXTS & READINGS:


Required readings, which are listed in the class schedule and reading assignments section below, will come from these assigned texts and from other sources such as academic journals. These additional readings can be accessed in the following ways:

1) At the URL stated in the reading list
OR
2) Through an electronic academic journal accessible through UNC Libraries (http://www.lib.unc.edu/) marked as “UL” (for “UNC Libraries”)
OR
3) Via Blackboard (http://blackboard.unc.edu/) “BB” (login and find SOWO 570 – Section 001 or 004, choose “Assignments” and “Course Readings” folder)
RESOURCES
All course lectures, syllabus, assignment information, and external links to useful web sites are or will be available on Blackboard, at http://blackboard.unc.edu

TEACHING METHODS
This course utilizes several methodologies, lecture, discussion, small group, experiential, and individual research and synthesis (through papers). The class will be most successful (and most enjoyable) if we are able to generate broad discussions. Listening to the ideas and views of others, developing an awareness of your point of view, being able to understand and appreciate perspectives different from your own, and linking experience to readings and assignments make a class rich in learning. I will appreciate your contributions to making this a safe and respectful class for learning and growth. We share this learning space. If the environment of the class seems unproductive to me, then I will bring it to the class’s attention, and ask students to work with me to find a solution.

CLASS ATTENDANCE:
It is expected that students will attend all classes or notify the instructor in advance and make arrangements to obtain class notes from other students if there is a compelling (illness, family emergency) reason to miss a class. Being prepared and ready to engage in the conversation makes the class richer and more fun.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS
#1: Class Participation and Contribution (15% of grade)
While students will get some credit for simply being present, this requirement will also be graded based on the degree to which students contribute to and benefit from the learning environment.

This course requirement will be comprised of the following elements:

1. Class attendance
2. Participation in class discussion and small group activities
3. Obvious familiarity with the readings
4. Willingness to connect learning in the classroom with experiences and learning outside the classroom

Electronic Discussion
Recognizing that some students are quiet learners, credit will be given toward this requirement for students who wish to augment their participation in the classroom by using the Discussion Group feature on Blackboard. This does not absolve the student from speaking at all in the classroom. The instructor will review posts weekly for the degree to which they extend and contribute to classroom discussions and course content.
#2: - Organizational Assessment (15 points)

**Product:** Completion of a written organizational structure and culture assessment concerning the student's field placement agency or organization, results of which will be shared by students in class on the due date. *(10/13)*

**Brief Description:** To complete this assignment, students will observe and record field notes (called an ethnographic study) regarding the level of hierarchy in their field agency or employing organization, how power is distributed and exercised, prevailing organizational culture and contributing factors, etc. Students will compare and contrast their observations in class using the assessment tool on Blackboard.

* An Ethnographic study “a genre of writing that uses fieldwork to provide a descriptive study of human societies. Ethnography presents the results of a holistic research method founded on the idea that a system's properties cannot necessarily be accurately understood independently of each other.”

**The written assessment will be 4-6 double spaced pages long, not counting the reference section. This is not a research paper, so extensive references are not necessary unless the student cites a particular text to support a point or perspective. The rubric by which the assignment will be graded will be posted on Bb under assignments.**

**Major assignments:** (50% of grade)

Students will choose between

- a) completing an Assessment & Intervention Plan (Parts 1 & 2) independently, or
- b) working with a team on an outside project in Orange county, and then independently writing up a paper to culminate the experience

**Option a)**

- **Part 1: Assessment:** students will develop a problem theory--assess a quality of life issue that affects a group of people who are considered underserved or oppressed. Examples might include the lack of housing for persons of low income; accessibility to health care; lack of support services for person’s who have special needs children; isolation of rural elderly; poor school quality in low income areas; ban on community college attendance for undocumented persons; absence of parenting education for
cognitively delayed parents; lack of ‘voice’ for residents in low income unincorporated areas.

In Part 2 - Design, students will develop a program theory that is based on their work in Part 1. The program theory is students’ ideas about what their organization could do to address the quality of life issue they explored in Part 1.

Students must receive instructor approval for their assignment topic by completing a one page abstract, which is due on September 22, 2009 that identifies the following:

1. **Issue or opportunity** – Identify and briefly describe the issue or opportunity that will be the focus of your assignment. What is the quality of life improvement in which you are interested?
2. **Target population** – Identify the group of people that will benefit from your intervention. Be specific – “3rd to 5th grade students of Clover Elementary School who exhibit aggressive behavior”.
3. **Intervention setting** – Identify the organization(s), school, neighborhood or community in which your intervention will take place.
4. **Intervention idea** – Briefly describe the intervention you think your organization can implement to improve quality of life for the target population.

The purpose of the abstract is for the student to begin to conceptualize their project and gain feedback from the instructor about whether they are on the right track before any submitted work is evaluated. An example is available on Blackboard in the Assignments folder.

Both parts of this assignment are described further below.

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<tr>
<th>Part 1 - Assessment (20 points; Due 11/3)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Product:</strong> Written paper, 6 to 10 double-spaced pages (not including tables, charts and graphs, which should appear in an Appendix) in length using APA format with at least eight scholarly sources (see additional information below).</td>
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<td><strong>Purpose:</strong> To develop a comprehensive assessment of your selected issue and target population, the selected venue and the steps needed to help define and build support for the intervention.</td>
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Students will develop a problem or opportunity theory by:

- Finding different types of data that describes characteristics, needs, strengths and experiences of the target population;
- Describing how the target population’s quality of life is affected by the problem or opportunity;
- Explaining different reasons why the problem or opportunity exists;
• Describing and analyzing the intervention venue, including forces for and against change;

Learning Objectives:
1. Understand what types of data can be used or collected to develop a better understanding of the issue, target population and change opportunity.
2. Relate significant social work related theories and perspectives to an understanding of the selected issue and target population.
3. Articulate how issues and change opportunities are defined by different stakeholders.
4. Articulate how support is built through an agency, organization, coalition, neighborhood or community for the change opportunity and what may stand in the way.

Part 2 - Design (30 points; Due 12/1)

Product: Written paper, 10 to 12 double-spaced pages (not including Appendices) in length using APA format.

Purpose: To develop a plan for a macro social work intervention intended to result in quality of life improvement(s) for the target population.

Students will develop a program or theory by describing a macro social work intervention, which is defined as:

A set of organized, professional activities that take place within or through a human services organization that is intended to improve the quality of life for an identified group of people (target population).

Students may choose an intervention that will best meet the needs of the group under study. They might include:

- A new program of an organization
- Program innovation – improving an existing program
- Community development initiative
- Community organizing effort
- Organizational development initiative
- Human service system improvement

The chosen intervention must be a set of activities that is expected to directly benefit the target population by improving their quality of life in a meaningful way.

Students will develop a program theory by:

• Writing clear, measurable outcome objectives that represent the quality of life changes for the target population that they expect the intervention to produce;
• Describing specific activities and a timeline— who, what, when, where and how— that clearly indicates the intensity, frequency and duration (“dosage”) of the intervention;
• Describing how clients or residents will be involved in planning the intervention and how it will address issues of diversity and/or discrimination;
• Characterizing students’ roles as social workers in implementing the intervention, i.e. strategies and tactics for creating change in the selected organization or community and how the intervention reflects social work values and ethics;
• Outlining the resources that would be needed for the intervention;

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Articulate outcome objectives that are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timed-bound.
2. Link a program theory to a problem theory.
3. Clearly identify key aspects of a planned intervention and what your role might be as a social worker.
4. Become familiar with logic models as intervention planning tools.
5. Understand the types and amounts of resources that are needed for new interventions and how forces operate for and against change.
6. Appreciate the importance of involving clients or residents in intervention planning and the social work values and ethics that guide change efforts.

**Actually implementing a macro intervention takes several months, if not years. Students are not expected to actually implement their plans!**

**Option b) Community Project (50 points; paper due 12/1)**

Students will work in teams with the Orange County Organizing Committee (OCOC), an Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) affiliate and a broad-based network of 25 local institutions—faith communities, nonprofits and neighborhood associations—that works to build the relational power and shape public policy for social change. Students who choose this option will learn about a specific community organizing practice model (IAF) and will have less written work to complete in lieu of service learning activities.

The service learning activities of this assignment will involve grassroots organizing to support OCOC’s inaugural assembly in late October at which the new organization (to be named) and its action agenda (housing, jobs, etc.) will be announced and candidates for local office (Town of Chapel Hill Council, Carrboro Board of Aldermen and Orange County Board of Commissioners) will be asked for their support of this agenda.

The **service learning requirements** for this option are:

1. Attendance and participation in a 3-hour community organizing workshop led by IAF on a Saturday morning in late September/early October in Chapel Hill or Carrboro.
2. Participation in a neighborhood walk and petition drive on a Saturday morning in mid October.
3. Attendance at the OCOC Assembly the evening of Monday, October 26 as observers
4. Assistance in preparing for these events through work teams focused on student recruitment, online social networking, publicity/media relations, logistics, etc.

In addition, each student will write an 8 to 10 page double spaced paper in APA format with at least eight scholarly references. Students will reflect on their experience by integrating course readings and other sources, summarize their understanding of and critically reflect upon the IAF model and discuss how what they learned can be applied in other areas of social work practice.

**Quizzes:**
There will be two quizzes that will deal specifically with material from the readings. They will be multiple choice, electronic on Blackboard. Each quiz will count for 10 points.

**EXPECTATIONS FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**
Students are expected to use good academic English; grades will be lowered for poor grammar, syntax, or spelling. Those who have difficulty writing are STRONGLY encouraged to use online resources of the campus Writing Center (http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/) and/or seek assistance from Diane Wyant or Susan White in the School of Social Work.

The School of Social Work faculty has adopted APA style as the preferred format for papers and publications. All written assignments for this course should be submitted in APA format. A summary was distributed at orientation. The web sites listed below provide additional information, though students are strongly encouraged to purchase the following text:


- [http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html](http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html) (APA Style for material in electronic formats)
- [http://owlenglish.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html](http://owlenglish.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html) (general information about documentation using APA style)
- [http://www.bartleby.com/141/](http://www.bartleby.com/141/) (electronic version of Strunk's The Elements of Style which was originally published in 1918)
- [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/resources.html](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/resources.html) (The Writing Center, links to online reference material and many other useful sites for authors)
GRADING SYSTEM:
The School of Social Work operates on an evaluation system of Honors (H), Pass (P), Low Pass (L), and Fail (F). The numerical values of these grades are:

- H: 94-100
- P: 80-93
- L: 70-79
- F: 69 and lower

A grade of P is considered entirely satisfactory. The grade of Honors (“H”) — which only a limited number of students attain -- signifies that the work is clearly excellent in all respects.

POLICY ON INCOMPLETES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

A paper is considered late if it is handed in any later than the start of class on the day it is due. Late papers will lose 2 points per day, including weekends. If a student has extenuating circumstances regarding either a late assignment or possible consideration of an Incomplete for the course it is the student's responsibility to initiate a conversation with the instructor prior to the due date of the paper. The student should initiate a request for an Incomplete before the end of the course—instructors have no responsibility to give an Incomplete without such a request.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Most frequently, incidents of academic dishonesty derive from a misunderstanding, or a disregard for rules governing presentation of another’s words as one’s own. When completing written assignments, please refer to the APA Style Guide, The SSW Manual, and the SSW Writing Guide for information on attribution of quotes, plagiarism and appropriate use of assistance in preparing assignments. All written assignments should contain a signed pledge from you stating that, “I have not given or received unauthorized aid in preparing this written work”.

In keeping with the UNC Honor Code, if reason exists to believe that academic dishonesty has occurred, the student will be notified of this concern, and a referral will be made to the Office of the Student Attorney General for investigation and further action as required.

POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities that affect their participation in the course and who wish to have special accommodations should contact the University’s Disabilities Services and provide documentation of their disability. Disabilities Services will notify the instructor that the student has a documented disability and may require

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accommodations. Students should discuss the specific accommodations they require (e.g., changes in instructional format, examination format) directly with the instructor.

**Policies On The Use of Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Use of any electronic devices is restricted to activities directly related to classwork in progress: note taking, following a power point presentation, or using the device as an accommodation for a disability. Use of laptops, cell phones, etc. for email, texting, surfing the net during class is prohibited. Students who habitually utilize phones or laptops for other functions during class time will be restricted from their use at anytime during class. Use of electronic equipment during exams is not allowed, unless specific permission is given by the instructor or is a verified accommodation for the student.

**Other Policies/General Information**

Papers can be handed in, or emailed to the professor prior to the start of class on the day the assignment is due.

BlackBoard will be used for discussion of material not mentioned in class (voluntary) or to post information. The professor will utilize BlackBoard to communicate with students in the class. It is the student’s responsibility to have a forwarding mechanism in place, if the student regularly uses a different email address than the School’s usual assigned email.

Grades will be posted on BlackBoard after all papers are complete.

**Readings and Course Outline**

**Class 1  
September 1, 2009**

**Introduction to Management & Community Practice**

- Introductions, class norms, syllabus review
- What is macro practice?
- *Macro history* in social work
- What is useful about learning about larger systems even if your plans are to practice with individuals and families?

**Focus:**

a) Why is it important to intervene at the organization and community level to improve outcomes for people?

b) Some say that, as a profession, we favor social work roles that emphasize work with individuals and families. What, in your experience of social work would support or oppose that statement?
Class 2
January 23, 2009

Theories, Models & Perspectives
Explanatory theory/ model/ intervention strategy
Theories in macro work:
Conflict theories
Ecological systems theory
Structural-Functional theory

How might you think differently about entering a community depending on the model you emphasized?

What models of community practice do you see in your field agencies? Does the model utilized seem to make the most sense for the function and population served? Would you suggest something different?

Readings:
LTM, Chapter 3: Considerations for the practitioner. pp 50-73
LTM, Chapter 10-Promoting a Just Society. pp.206-225.

Class 3
January 30, 2009

Theories, Models, & Interventions continued...

Risk & resilience in macro practice
Identifying and utilizing the strengths of vulnerable communities
What does Saleebey consider to be an empowered neighborhood and what role does he think we should play to make this happen?

Readings:
LTM: Chapter 4. Calling on consumer and citizen strengths. 74-93.
In Class Activity
- Strengths of communities in which we live
- Examples of empowered neighborhoods

Class 4
February 6, 2009

Organization/ Community Assessment DUE

Focus on Social Work in Communities
- Social work roles at the community level
- How does the community culture affect social work?
- Social capital
- Does a strengths perspective matter or is it only spin?

Readings:
LTM. Chapter 6 Developing community resources and capacities. 117-143.

Week 5
February 13, 2009

Community Assessment
- Community Practice-history
  - Changes in perspective over time
- Steps in community assessment
- How do we help disenfranchised people find and use their voice to help create positive social change?
- What do you think makes it so difficult for human services agencies to release power to the communities being served? Should they?

Readings:

In class activity:
- Howe TX exercise

Class 6
February 20, 2009
Community Organizing
Methods of community organizing
- “principle of least contest”
- lobbying, mobilizing and organizing

Video: Holding Ground
1. What were the main forces for change in Roxbury?
2. What were significant barriers?
3. How did the neighborhood get started? How were initial strategies arrived at?
4. What are you most skeptical about, after watching this video, and thinking about your own community/organization?

Readings:

Class 7
February 27, 2009
Social Justice in Community Practice
- Social Justice
- What does being an ‘expert’ mean in community practice?
- Are we as social workers really committed to promoting a just society or do we only give this principle lip service?
- Advocacy

[Course direction discussion]

Readings:
Long, Tice, Morrison, Chapter 12: Promoting a social justice nd ideological outlook. 249-276.
http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd/hiddentreasures.pdf
(Read pp. 1-9; 67-76; & 86-92) BB; only the pages written have been scanned in.

Class 8
March 6, 2009
Change Assessment DUE
Organizations
• Structure
• Function
• How do structure and function affect ability to meet objectives and mission?
• Social Work role in organizations

Readings:
Gibelman & Furman, Navigating Human Service Organizations
Chapter 1 – Getting to Know the Human Service Organization, pp. 1-21
Chapter 2 – Distinguishing Features of Organizations, pp. 22-47
Chapter 4 – Who has the Power? Roles in Human Service Organizations, pp. 74-88
Long, Tice, Morrison: Chapter 5, Enriching Organizational Life, pp 95-116

March 13, 2009---Spring Break -NO class!!

Class 9
March 20, 2009
Organization capacity for change
• Determining focus for change
• Targeting change strategies
• Logic Models
• Force Field Analysis

Readings:
Gibelman & Furman, Chapter 9 The changing Environment of Organizations 166-183.

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Class 10
March 27, 2009
Developing Interventions
- Participatory change in organizations
- Social Planning
- Engaging, collaborating, creating dialogue within and outside organizations

Readings:
Long, Tice and Morrison, Chapter 7: Social Planning. 144-163
Gibelman & Furman, Chapter 10 Internal Sources of Organizational change, 184-198.
Gibelman & Furman, Chapter 11, Coping with Change. 199-214.

Class 11
April 3, 2009
Improving Human Services Delivery
- Discrimination in organizations
- Organization Culture
- What is the risk/responsibility in promoting cultural competence, strengths perspectives in one’s organization?
- Ethics in everyday work

Readings:
Gibelman & Furman, Chapter 12 Lending a helping hand: Making your organization better. 215-229.

April 10, 2009—Good Friday—No class!!

Class 12
April 17, 2009

Intervention Plan DUE

Managing the work
• Supervision, Management
• Monitoring for Progress
• Evaluating effectiveness of interventions
• Funding, grantwriting, budgets

Readings:
Gibelman & Furman, chapter 5: Supervision within the organizational setting. 89-110.
Long, Tice, and Morrison; Chapter 8. Administration from a strengths perspective. 165-185.
Review the following online program budget samples:
http://www.casenet.org/program-management/planning/pmbud1.htm
http://www.bushfoundation.org/apply/ProgGrantSampleBudget.htm
http://www.clevelandfoundation.org/page1679.cfm (read “Online Project Budget Guide”, “Project Budget Form” and “Project Budget Narrative”)

Class 13
November 25, 2008

Learning Goals Reflection DUE

Leadership in Organizations and Communities
• Leadership from any seat in the room
• Qualities of leaders

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Readiness to take on leadership roles

Evaluation & Check Out

Discussion of Learning Goals
1. Did your definition of community change or stay the same?
2. What did you learn in this course and how do you plan to apply it in practice? What commitments are you willing to make?
3. To what degree did this course help you to meet your learning goals? How did you contribute to our learning community?