

SOCI 2350 - Introduction to Social Work

Texas A&M University–Texarkana Course Syllabus

Fall 2019

Instructor: Kris Doty-Yells, Ph.D., LCSW, CATP
Email: kyells@tamut.edu (Please reference SOCI 2350 in the subject line)
Class Days: Tues & Thur
Class Hours: 8:00 – 9:15 am
Classroom: UC 248

General Course Information

Required Text: Kirst-Ashman, K. (2017). *Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare: Critical Thinking Perspectives* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole. ISBN: 9781305388390. There is a text for use in the library if you choose to not purchase or rent one.

Prerequisite: none

Course Description: Students will gain an historical and practical overview of the social work profession, which includes practice theory. You will learn how social workers engage in generalist practice and how it is applied with individuals, groups, and communities. You will hear from social workers who practice in a variety of settings, such as the juvenile justice system, hospitals, and government and private agencies. This course integrates knowledge of social work practice, values, ethics, social welfare policy, and social justice issues. Students will explore current topics and career opportunities in social work.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Discuss the historical roots and current development of social work theory and practice.
2. Describe the social work profession including career facts, code of ethics, certification and licensure, employment projections, and future trends.
3. Explain the wide variety of social work professional practice settings and social concerns such as poverty, mental health, and crime.
4. Demonstrate an increased awareness of the dynamics of human suffering.
5. Demonstrate increased tolerance and acceptance of the diversity of the human experience in a social/cultural context.
6. Demonstrate awareness and increased sensitivity for complex social issues.

Methods of Evaluation
(245 total points possible)

1. **Introduction** (15 points total). Please write a 1-2 page paper to introduce yourself. (15 points). Tell me about YOU. What is your major? What are your personal and career goals? What are you most looking forward to learning in this class? What is *one* interesting fact about you? Feel free to include any other information that will help me get to know you. Your grade will be based on your writing, not content. ***Due Aug. 30th.***

2. **Cultural Competency paper** (25 points). In the social work field, you will have the opportunity to work with people of other races and cultures. This 2-3 page paper is designed to have you reflect upon the various populations discussed in the chapter and apply it to yourself. What population would you like to work with or know more about? What population are you unsure about? What stereotypes have you identified that you hold and what are you going to do to overcome them? There are NO right or wrong answers – just personal insights. The paper is between you and me, so please be open and honest. Dig deep for this one. ***Due Oct. 3rd.***

3. **Poverty Program Application and Reflection.** (30 points). Have you ever applied for an income-based government assistance program such as TANF, Section 8 housing, or food stamps? Well here is your chance. Find out where to go or what to do to apply for one of these programs. Go through the process so you can understand how a client feels. You need not submit the application to the agency unless you want to, but you must submit a copy of the printed application with your paper. Black out any sensitive or identifying information. Write a 1-2 page reflection paper to share what you learned about how it feels to be on the other side of the desk. ***Due Oct. 30th.***

4. **Social Worker Interview** (50 points): Students will conduct a face-to-face interview with a social work practitioner who has either a **BSW** or **MSW** degree. The social worker can be a private practitioner or can be employed in any human service agency or hospital.

Prior to the interview, students are to make a list of questions they plan to ask. These questions are to include (a) practitioner's educational and practice background; (b) description of his/her current position/duties; (c) how he/she became interested in social work; (d) what the social worker finds most exciting and frustrating about her/his work; and (e) what advice the social worker would give to an individual considering the field of social work. The student should create three carefully thought out additional questions as well. A 3-5 page report of the completed interview, in narrative form, will be required. Do not submit a transcript of the interview, but rather a discussion of it along with your impressions. ***Proper spelling and grammar weigh heavily into the grade. Due Nov. 21st.***

5. **Critical Reflection Paper** (25 points). You will quickly learn that social work encompasses work with a variety of populations in a myriad of settings. I have not worked in every area, so I bring in guest speakers who augment my experience and they share their expertise and insight. You will write critical reflection papers on one of the speakers. Choose one who makes you critically think about their topic and experience. Who, or what topic, moved you to reconsider your opinions or made you want to tackle a social issue? What did you learn? What surprised you about their work assignments? Is it a work you could do in the future? How does it make you feel and react? How does it challenge your biases, stereotypes and political views? ***This paper is due within a week of the speaker's visit.***

6. **Point Earning Opportunities (PEOs)** (20 points each; 100 points total): There will be 6 PEOs given in class based on the previous two week's reading and class discussion. There are no make-up PEOs, but the lowest score will be dropped. PEOs are unannounced.

Course Policies

Grading Scale (%)

100 – 94 = A
93 – 86 = B

85 - 78 = C
77 - 70 = D

69 – 0 = F

Writing Guidelines: Because you are in college, I expect your writing efforts and presentation to be at the college level. When you turn in writing assignments, please follow these guidelines.

- All assignments are to be submitted through Blackboard.
- Use subheadings that coincide with your questions to organize the report.
- Use standard English. No contractions, slang, excessive wordiness, or text messaging language (i.e. 'LOL' or "IMHO"). Be clear and concise.
- The report should be typewritten with 12-point Times, Calibri, or Arial font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins top, bottom, left and right.
- Include a title page that includes your name, the name of the course, and the semester.
- Please proofread your paper prior to submission and get help from the Writing Center if needed. You can email them at tutor@tamut.edu.
- Please note the date and time the assignment is due as stated in Blackboard and submit it on time! You have plenty of notice so plan accordingly.
- Use subheadings that coincide with your questions to organize the report.
- Proper spelling and grammar weigh heavily into the grade, so if you desire a high grade in the course, you **MUST** write well. This simply means that I should not have to work hard to understand what you are trying to say!*

Confidentiality: Although you are not required to engage in a high degree of self-disclosure in this course, discussion of social problems and services are often very relevant to most of the class. Remember also that a key issue in the course is learning about social stigma and your own prejudices - how you contribute to stigma, and how stigma and your prejudices affect your life and how you practice. Thus, learning to open up and discuss your own experiences with social work and/or services appropriately can help you and your classmates understand the real-life impact of the profession. However, since we are in a class with people you probably don't know very well, and emotional safety is important, you are not required to self-disclose. Please give careful thought to how much you are willing to discuss about your own life and then participate to the degree you feel comfortable. Likewise, because opening up about these issues can be so stigmatizing, I expect everyone in class to respect and honor the life stories of your peers. In other words, whatever is discussed in class, stays in class.

Attendance and Participation: You are expected to have the reading assignment done before the class period. Regular class attendance will be necessary to fully understand the material presented in this class and do well on the quizzes, but the responsibility for regular attendance is entirely yours. I do not take attendance in class, other than on days we have guest speakers. However, if at the end of the term I am evaluating grades and a student is within a few points of

a higher grade, then I will consider class attendance, punctuality, and participation and reserve the right to bump the student up to a higher grade. I will know the student has attended mostly because of his/her scores on the quizzes and how well I know the student; those who participate and engage in the class will obviously be better known to the instructor.

Late Assignments: Please be organized; keep track of assignment due dates and turn things in on time. I usually do not accept late assignments, although exceptions to this policy are individually determined. Late assignments that are accepted may lose up to 50% of the points AFTER the assignment is graded.

Cell Phones and Laptop Computers: Answering cell phone calls and sending and receiving text messages during class is rude and inappropriate. Please set your cell phones to silent and put them away. Any exceptions should be discussed with the instructor. Laptops are to be used only for notetaking - not checking email, Pinterest, Facebook, etc.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism (whether intentional or unintentional), and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of 'F' in the course and/or disciplinary actions. For additional information, see the university catalog.

A&M-Texarkana Email Address: Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M-Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis.

Drop Policy: To drop this course after the census date, a student must complete a Drop/Withdrawal Request Form, located on the University Registrar's webpage or obtained in the Registrar's Office. The student must submit the signed and completed form to the instructor of each course indicated on the form to be dropped for his/her signature. The signature is not an "approval" to drop, but rather confirmation that the student has discussed the drop/withdrawal with the faculty member. The form must be submitted to the Registrar's office for processing in person, email Registrar@tamut.edu, mail (7101 University Ave., Texarkana, TX 75503) or fax (903-223-3140). Drop/withdraw forms missing any of the required information will not be accepted by the Registrar's Office for processing. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the form is completed properly before submission. If a student stops participating in class (attending and submitting assignments) but does not complete and submit the drop/withdrawal form, a final grade based on work completed as outlined in the syllabus will be assigned.

Disability Accommodations: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal non-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this law requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Office of Student Life on the 4th floor of the UC, or call (903)223-3116.

Extra Credit: I do not offer extra credit, so please – I beg you – do not ask. ☺

Course Outline

Please note - All dates are **approximate**

Week:

- Aug 27, 29 - Introductions. Course overview and expectations; What is social work and social welfare? What is critical thinking? Differences between majors. How to read a textbook. **Introduction due Aug. 30th**
- Sep 3, 5 - Ch. 1 – Conservative – Liberal continuum; Social work careers, licensing, Social work accreditation
- Sep 10, 12 - Ch. 2 - Social Work values and ethics. Please download the NASW Code of Ethics from NASW and bring to class.
- Sep 17, 19 - Ch. 6 – Overview of social work history.
- Sep 24, 26 - Ch. 3 – Diversity in social work. Working with vulnerable populations. Racial self-awareness. *Guest speaker: Bobbie Player*
- Oct 1, 3 - Ch. 4 – Generalist practice and micro-level social work. Strengths-based practice. **Cultural Competency paper due by Oct 3rd.**
- Oct 8, 10 - Ch. 5 - Social Work with groups (Mezzo practice).
- Oct 15, 17 - Ch. 7 - Social welfare policy (Macro practice).
- Oct 22, 24 - Ch. 8 – Poverty programs, The importance of self-care
- Oct 29, 31 - Ch. 9 – Social services for children and families. *Guest speaker: Andrea Smith, with DFPS. Sand Tray therapy with children. Poverty program paper due October 30th.*
- Nov 5, 7 - Ch. 10 – Social Work and services for older adults. *Guest Speaker: Claire Rodriguez, LCSW, Heritage Hospice*
- Nov 12, 14 - Ch. 14 - Social Work and substance abuse and addictions. *Guest Speaker: Dr. David Yells.*
- Nov 19, 21 - Ch. 13 – Social work and Mental Health services. Trauma Informed Care. *Guest Speaker: Kelli Cook, LCSW, Director, Genesis PrimeCare Hope and Recovery Center. Social Worker Interview due November 21st.*
- Nov 26, 28 - Ch. 12 – Social work services in health care. Medical social work, crisis intervention. No class on the 28th - Thanksgiving Holiday
- Dec 3, 5 - Ch 12 – Medical Social Work, cont'd. *Guest Speaker: TBA.* Final thoughts. The

TAMUT MSW program.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change.