SYLLABUS: SOWO 3910 - SOCIAL WORK FIELD PRACTICUM
Auburn University

BULLETIN DESCRIPTION: Introduces fields and settings of social work practice via placement in a selected social service agency. Includes a concurrent integrative seminar to analyze their experiences.


COURSE DESCRIPTION
SOWO 3910 Field Practicum provides students with the opportunity to explore social work settings and the specific strengths and needs of various client populations. This course requires department approval prior to enrolling, and is restricted to Social Work majors and minors, and those seeking a concentration in social work and women’s studies. Social Work students must successfully complete SOWO 2000, Introduction to Social Work, prior to enrolling in this course or obtain permission from the Instructor.

SOWO 3910 involves attending a weekly integrative seminar and completing 90 hours in a social work agency. In this course students gain exposure to specific social service agencies, their services and their clients, primarily through observation.

This course provides the opportunity for students to apply basic concepts from SOWO 2000, Introduction to Social Work, in a local agency setting. This course provides a practical basis for understanding further social work education, including interpreting human behavior in SOWO 3800, HBSE I and SOWO 3850, HBSE II; and developing generalist social work practice skills in SOWO 4060, Social Work Practice Methods I; SOWO 4070, Social Work Practice Methods II; and SOWO 4080, Social Work Practice Methods III.

This course often serves as a mechanism for students and for the program to evaluate and select out when a student is not suited for the Social Work profession.

SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM OBJECTIVES
1. Students will apply critical thinking skills within the context of professional social work practice.
2. Students will understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards and principle and practice accordingly.
3. Students will practice without discrimination and with respect, knowledge, and skills related to clients’ age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation.
4. Students will understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and apply strategies of advocacy and social change that advance social and economic justice.
5. Students will understand and interpret the history of the social work profession and its contemporary structure and issues.
6. Students will apply the knowledge and skills of generalist practice work with systems of all sizes.
7. Students will use theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand individual development and behavior across the life span and the interactions among individuals, and between individuals, groups, organizations and communities.
8. Students will analyze, formulate, and influence social policies.
9. Students will evaluate research studies, apply research finding to practice, and evaluate their own practice interventions.
10. Students will use communication skills differentially across client populations, colleagues, and communities.
11. Students will use supervision and consultation appropriate to social work practice.
12. Students will function within the structure of organizations and service delivery systems and seek necessary organizational change.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
By the end of the course the student will be able to:
1. Describe the organizational structure of a social service agency. (P.O. 1, 5, 8, 12)
2. Compare and contrast various client strengths, needs, and concerns. (P.O. 1, 6, 7)
3. Identify and critically analyze the degree of congruence between his/her personal interests, strengths, and needs, and the social work profession. (P.O. 1, 3, 11)
4. Demonstrate knowledge of social work values, and an ability to integrate them in observations and interactions within an agency setting and in seminar. (P.O. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12)
5. Demonstrate written and oral communication skills which are essential in effective social work practice. (P.O. 10)
6. Demonstrate the ability to apply critical thinking to practice situations, and to begin to evaluate and measure practice outcomes. (P.O. 9)

REQUIRED TEXT

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Attendance
Regular attendance is required both in seminar and in the practicum agency at all scheduled times. Students are expected to call ahead to their agency field instructors if they must miss a scheduled agency time. Students are to turn in excuses for absences either prior to the absence or immediately upon returning to class.

Assignments and Class Participation
Students are expected to complete reading and written assignments in advance of the unit being covered in class in order to facilitate class discussion. Weekly seminar is an integral part of the Practicum experience, and active participation is expected and required, as well as showing respect for fellow students. (See Assignment 4 for more information regarding participation.) All written assignments are to be typed double-spaced in #12 font with 1 inch margins.

Participation grades are based on the quality and frequency of the student’s participation in class including demonstrating proper preparation for class through familiarity with readings and other assigned material, answering questions with correct answers based on the coursework, contributing substantively to class discussions with remarks grounded in the coursework and assignments.

Students needing accommodations should arrange a meeting the first week of class. Come during office hours or email for an alternate time. Bring the Accommodation Memo and Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. Discuss items needed in this class. If you do not have an Accommodation Memo but need special accommodations, make an appointment with The Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT)

Academic Honesty: Students are expected to behave with integrity. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in the manner specified in the Tiger Cub.
Students may withdraw (although with a W on their transcript) until midsemester.

Make-ups for all missed and late work are allowed with proper University approved excuses within one week of the original due date.

Student emails will be answered within 48 hours of receipt.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Agency Performance

Learning Objectives:
1. Students will learn agency structure, policies and procedures, and will function within these parameters during practicum hours. (C.O. 1; P.O. 1, 5, 8, 12)
2. Students will consistently demonstrate basic professional work skills including attendance, punctuality, time-management, and task follow-through. (C.O. 4; P.O. 12)
3. Students will communicate consistently with agency field instructors and the course instructor regarding developing and attaining learning goals, identifying and re-evaluating individual strengths and needs, and problem-solving practicum-related concerns. (C.O. 2, 4, 5; P.O. 1, 3, 10, 11)
4. Students will demonstrate an ability to integrate social work values and ethics when interacting with clients, agency staff, and community resource representatives. (C.O. 4, 5; P.O. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12)

Description:
SOWO 3910 is primarily an agency-based learning experience. Because the majority of this course involves the 90 required hours in a specific agency setting, your agency performance is critical to completing this course successfully. Professionalism, respectfulness, dependability, and active participation in the learning experience are important elements related to agency performance.

Assessment:
The course Instructor will visit you and your agency field instructor during Week 3, and again at mid-semester to discuss your progress, strengths, and needs related to agency performance. The agency field instructor will evaluate you at mid-semester and at the end of the term. Copies of the evaluation forms are provided in class.

35% of your final course grade is based on agency performance, with the grade assigned by the course Instructor.

Assignment 2: Developing a Learning Contract

Learning Objectives:
1. Students will develop learning goals which are clear, meaningful, and related to the agency experience. (C.O. 3, 4, 5; P.O. 1, 10, 11, 12)
2. Students will develop strategies and steps which are specific, sequential, and congruent with the identified goals. (C.O. 3, 4, 5; P.O. 1, 3, 10, 11)
3. Students will identify measurements to evaluate goal attainment. (C.O. 5, 6; P.O. 9)

Description:
Social Work practice is driven to a large extent by activities related to accomplishing goals with individuals, families, groups, and communities. As such, the development of realistic and meaningful goals and steps to accomplish goals is an important social work skill.

Students are to develop learning goals to structure their unique practicum experience. A total of 4-5 goals are required, with corresponding steps. Steps should specify who, what, when and how much. You may use the form in your text as an outline for developing a learning contract.
Once you have completed the learning contract, received feedback from the field instructor and course instructor, and made corrections, you are required to obtain signatures on your contract (student, field instructor, and course instructor), and to provide a copy to each.

Assessment:
The Learning Contract will be graded based on the following:
1. Organization, specificity, and congruence between goals, steps, and measurement
2. Inclusion of micro, mezzo, and macro goals
3. Clarity of writing (spelling and grammar included)
4. Appropriate signatures obtained and copies distributed by the end of Week 4

Due Date: January 28

Assignment 3: Weekly Journal / Other Written Assignments

Learning Objectives:
1. Students will demonstrate basic professional writing skills (appropriate grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.). (C.O. 5; P.O. 10)
2. Students will document specifics related to observations and interactions. (C.O. 2, 5; P.O. 1, 7, 8)
3. Students will learn and practice professional documentation skills
4. Students will document an integration of social work values and ethics in agency related experience. (C.O. 4, 5; P.O. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8)
5. Students will utilize documentation for self-assessment and evaluation related to the learning contract, social work values, methods of helping, etc. (C.O. 3, 4, 5; P.O. 1, 2, 3, 4)

Description:
Students will complete weekly journals which reflect the integration of social work concepts in a specific agency setting. Students will also demonstrate critical thinking and self evaluation by noting their observations, reactions, questions and new learning. Students will submit journal entries to the course instructor at the beginning of each seminar. When the instructor returns the journal entries, students will compile them in a notebook, which will be submitted at the last seminar.

Students will also complete at least two narrative recordings of client contacts.

Assessment:
1. Integration of social work values, principles, and practices
2. Degree of self assessment and evaluation
3. Organization and specificity
4. Clarity of writing (spelling and grammar included)
5. Timeliness

See Course Topics and Assigned Readings List for Due Dates

Assignment 4: Participation in Seminar

Learning Objective:
1. Students will apply social work values, self evaluation, and critical thinking to the observations and experiences from their practicum field placement which they discuss in seminar, and to the experiences shared by other students in the seminar. (C.O. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; P.O. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12)

Description:
Students will discuss in seminar their observations and experiences in field practicum regarding agency services and policies, client systems, client strengths and needs, and their reactions to their experiences. Each student is expected to do the following:

• Discuss in detail one activity/experience from that week in the practicum placement which affected him/her most (positively or negatively)
  o Include thoughts, feelings, and reactions
• Analyze the activity/experience in relation to one of the following:
  o Social work values or ethics
  o Organizational structure of the social service agency
  o Client strengths, needs, and concerns
  o Congruence between personal strengths and needs, and the social work profession

COURSE GRADING
The final grade is based on the following:
• Agency Performance
  Course Instructor assigns grade in consultation with agency field instructor 35%
• Learning Contract 15%
• Journal / weekly written assignments 25%
• Quality of participation in seminar 25%

100%

All sections (Agency Performance, Learning Contract and Agency Presentation, Weekly Journals/Written Assignments, and Participation in Seminar) must be completed with a “C” or higher in order to pass the practicum course. It is the responsibility of the Course Instructor to assign the mid-term and final grades. GRADING SCALE: A-F.
Grading Scale: A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = 0-59%.

COURSE TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS (WITH DATES)
• WEEK ONE: SETTING UP THE FIELD PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE
  Date:

• UNIT TWO: PREPARING TO LEARN
  Date:
  Assigned Reading: Text – Chapter One
  Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry #1

• UNIT THREE: PLANNING YOUR ORIENTATION
  Date:
  Assigned Reading: Text – Chapter Two
  Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry #2
  Beginning Agreement (p.35) – copies for agency Field Instructor, Course Instructor, and student

• UNIT FOUR: FOCUSING YOUR LEARNING
  Date:
  Assigned Reading: Text – Chapter Three
  Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry #3
  Learning Contract (use Learning Contract on p.53 and develop 4-5 goals)

• UNIT FIVE: BEGINNING THE WORK
UNIT SIX: BEGINNING THE WORK, CONTINUED
Assignment: Agency Presentations
(Agency presentations are 5 minute presentations to the class based on the Presentation Outline, page 37, which may include agency brochures or other informational material.)

UNIT SEVEN: BUILDING SKILLS IN SUPERVISION AND FEEDBACK
Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry #4
Continuation of Agency Presentations
Discuss the A.U. Social Work Admissions Application

UNIT EIGHT: CONFRONTING DIFFICULT ISSUES
Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry #5

MID-SEMESTER EVALUATION VISITS

UNIT NINE: SHAPING A PROFESSIONAL SELF
Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry #7
First Narrative Recording

UNIT TEN: AGENCY VISIT
Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry # 8

UNIT ELEVEN: TAKING RISKS
Assignment: Journal entry containing a brief two-page report on the agency visit, including a description of the agency environment, clientele, and services as well as the student’s observations / assessment of the agency is due at the next seminar

UNIT TWELVE: POSSIBLE SECOND AGENCY VISIT
Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry #9

UNIT THIRTEEN: ENDING AND LOOKING FORWARD
Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry #10
Assignment: Journal entry containing a brief two-page report on the agency visit, including a description of the agency environment, clientele, and services as well as the student’s observations / assessment of the agency is due at the next seminar

- UNIT FOURTEEN: REVIEW OF LEARNING AND TERMINATION; STRESS MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL WORK
  Dates:
  Assignment: Weekly Journal Entry #10
  Final Narrative Recording of Client Contact

- UNIT FIFTEEN: PRACTICUM REVIEW
  Date:
  Assignment: Compiled Notebook of Weekly Journal Entries
  Student’s Evaluation of Practicum Experience