Proseminar in Jewish Communal Leadership

Social Work 692/695, Fall 2012

Wednesday, 5:00-8:00, Room 1794

Course Description:

The professional seminar in Jewish communal leadership provides a critical space within the Jewish Communal Leadership Program curriculum for students to integrate different approaches to knowledge, skills and experience -- acquired in their SSW and Judaic studies courses and in their board and field placements -- into a coherent whole. It provides opportunities for participants to meet with relevant professional and lay community leaders, to explore the relationship of personal and professional identities, to work collaboratively on soliciting and addressing communal problems gathered from the field, to participate in generating public programming related to Jewish communal issues, to consult with SSW faculty about the application of Social Work approaches to Jewish communal problems, and to gather peer feedback and establish relationships with each other.

The seminar also serves as a setting for the exploration of general societal concerns from the perspective of Jewish communal interests and traditional values, and for bringing the perspectives and skills that are a part of Social Work study and practice to addressing Jewish communal concerns.

The seminar provides the intellectual home for the Jewish Communal Leadership Program, offering a forum for students to grapple with understanding the Jewish community within its broader societal context. It provides a space for students to engage with issues of pluralism – addressing the place of Jewish community in a diverse society and the challenges of diversity within the Jewish community.

Course Objectives:

The proseminar and related extra-curricular JCLP activities are focused on enabling students to:

a. Gain familiarity with the historical antecedents, contemporary organizational structures, and critical problems defining contemporary Jewish community
b. Combine appropriate modes of practice and analysis drawn from both Social Work and Judaic Studies to discuss and address communal issues.

c. Integrate relevant professional and Judaic studies course work with board and field placement experiences, and connect these with emerging career interests.

d. Establish relationships with lay and professional leaders in Jewish communal service, relevant sub-fields, and allied occupational settings.

e. Integrate practice knowledge and skills with approaches that are responsive to the traditional values and cultural experiences and sensitivities that define Jewish community in response to specific contemporary issues and issues that arise in the course of study and in field placements.

f. Work together to create an open class forum for the discussion of challenging issues.

g. Begin to bring their voices to bear into the broader discourse of concerns and debates animating today’s American Jewish community.

Student Responsibilities and Assignments:

Class Participation The course depends upon the active participation of all students. This includes regular, prompt attendance. Please let me know if you must miss a class – more than three absences may result in a failing grade. Active participants make their presence felt through both their own participation and their full engaged attention to the contributions of others, whether the instructor, other students, or guests. They offer informed, thoughtful contributions; listen carefully and respectfully; and ask probing, challenging questions of the instructor, guests, and each other. Engaged participation and thoughtful journal responses that explore and develop themes raised in class discussions are both ways to demonstrate “active participation.”

Potential external distractions such as laptop computers, phones, ipads, etc. should only be utilized in a manner directed toward class engagement. If it appears that such items are causing more distraction than engagement, students will be asked to put them away.

All students are responsible for the highest level of academic integrity. Students must submit only their own work and cite all sources of ideas and information taken from other sources. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

If there are any special circumstances that I and/or the class should know to allow you to participate fully, please consult with me about them so that we can make appropriate adaptations.

Article/media/text discussion

JCLP students are expected to follow current commentary in the blogosphere and in printed and on-line media related to current Jewish communal issues. Much of the focus for group discussion this semester will focus on issues of leadership, inclusion, and current challenges facing Jewish communities. Working
in pairs (4 pairs should include one 1st year and one 2nd year student. The 5th pair will consist of two 2nd
year students) Students will be responsible for choosing an article, or presentation in other media ,for
group discussion once over the course of the semester, sharing it before class, and leading an in-class
discussion related to the article, lasting for 30 minutes. Presentations may also take the form of a brief
d’var torah leading to a text study.

Journal / E-Portfolio

Students will continue keeping a self-reflective narrative record of their learning and experience in the
context of the Jewish Communal Leadership Program. This record will incorporate pieces of the School
of Social Work’s integrative e-portfolio modules, but may otherwise be constructed in whatever format
is most conducive to each individual’s writing, learning, and assessment style. Journal entries should be
composed at a minimum of once per week. They may focus on questions, thoughts, and experience that
arise within the proseminar, Judaic Studies, or Social Work classes or that emerge in the context of
community involvement, board placements etc. Students will maintain this journal throughout the
program and will, ideally, use this format to integrate their experiences across the different facets of
their academic program and community engagement.

Journals may be used to further reflect upon in-class discussions (this should go beyond simply your
notes from the discussion); experiences in field placement, other classes, or other community settings;
to ponder communal questions; to reflect upon your own interests and development; to raise questions
for yourself or for the program. Urmila Venkatesh, the SSW’s teaching consultant, will meet with us to
introduce the SSW’s module on developing a working philosophy statement, and this piece of the e-
portfolio should be incorporated into the Fall-semester journal.

Students will submit their journals at different points during the semester. Cumulative journal entries
should be submitted by 5 pm on:

1. October 5, 2012,
2. November 9, 2012, and
3. December 14, 2012 (must include working philosophy assignment)

Community engagement assignment, grant application, proposal, contest, or blog:

Students will be expected to add their voice to the broader community’s public discourse
over the course of this academic year – this could be via an RFP, grant application, blog
entry or contest submission, website, etc. Students may work by themselves or with any
number of other JCLP students (additional participation should be proportional to effort
required by the project) to complete a submission for the particular RFP, contest, or
publishing opportunity, and submit it for both formal and class consideration. Students are
encouraged to look out for such opportunities and to share them with each other and the
instructor.

Community Programming:
Second-year students will be responsible for organizing and presenting a “Communal Conversation” during the Winter semester that will represent JCLP’s signature public program for the year. It should be ambitious in scope and topic and engage the broader community in a compelling program and conversation. First-year students will be responsible for at least one smaller-scaled public program over the course of the year, created either for the School of Social Work or for the broader Ann Arbor Jewish community. Options for this event will be discussed in class. In general, the community engagement assignment and the public event assignment should be completed in different semesters.

**Proseminar Schedule, Fall 2012**


[September 26: Yom Kippur, no class]

October 3: Sukkot Open House

October 10: *Article discussion*. Jewish leadership: historical and contemporary.

October 17: Jewish religious community and authority and leadership, local rabbinical leaders.

October 24: leadership: Misha Galperin, President and CEO, Jewish Agency, *Reimagining Leadership in Jewish Organizations*.

October 31: [Irwin Kula?] *Article discussion* Urmila Venkatesh on Working Philosophy portfolio #2

November 7: Miryam Rosenzweig, director, NEXTGen Detroit

[GA: November 11-12]

November 14: *Article discussion* Perry Ohren, exec director, Jewish Family Services of Metropolitan Detroit

[Thanksgiving]

November 28: Rabbi Will Berkovitz, Senior Vice President, Repair the World
December 5: *Article discussion*  [Bob Aronson?]

December 12 [exam week]: semester retrospective