Course Description

This seminar provides an intensive integrative and continuous learning experience for students who concentrate in Community Organization (CO), in order to strengthen social justice and social change at the community level. It examines core concepts of practice, major models and methods, and practical steps in the process. It is designed to build upon and prepare for more advanced courses in the CO curriculum.

Course Objectives

The course will enable students to:

1. Describe core concepts of community organization for a diverse society
2. Identify major models, methods, and steps of practice.
3. Establish relationships with students and faculty members.
4. Integrate personal and professional goals.
5. Identify questions of ethics and values.

Course Design

Responsibilities include readings, discussions, and structured learning activities through three mini-courses sequenced over three semesters: Fall ’13, Winter ’14, Fall ’14. Students take the entire seminar, but register for 1 c.u. in each of the semesters.

The first semester will provide an orientation to the core concepts of practice. The second semester will develop a toolkit of strategies and skills for social workers as community organizers and community planners, including an intensive integrative practice simulation. The final semester will examine key learning experiences, integrate knowledge and skills gained in the program, and formulate a philosophy statement that expresses core values and professional goals.

Relationship of Course to Curricular Themes

Multiculturalism and Diversity: Students will identify ways in which community organization can address race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and other forms of stratification of inequality.

Social Justice and Social Change: Emphasis is placed on how community organization can strengthen social change and social justice through community building in economically disinvested and squirted areas.
Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation: The course will focus on how to prevent social problems and promote healthier communities rather than to take the frequent common curative model approach.

Behavioral and Social Science Research: Relevant research and best practices from diverse social science disciplines and professional fields will contribute to understanding of empirically-based practice.

Social Work Ethics and Values

The NASW Code of Ethics establishes responsibility for social workers to engage in socially-just political action addressing the needs of diverse and disadvantaged populations.

Class Climate

We want to create a classroom climate in which everyone can experiment with new ideas or skills; explore their own cultural competencies and their implications for social and political action; consult with others on assignments and projects; and identify areas for future learning.

Using Laptops

Using laptops for taking notes is acceptable, but using them for other purposes is distracting to others.

Academic Integrity

We will follow the Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct in the School of Social Work Student Handbook. Web resources on academic integrity developed by the University’s Center for Research on Learning and Teaching can be found at their website.

Disabilities Statement

If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000.

Contacting the Instructor

My e-mail is barrych@umich.edu, my office is 3840 SSWB, and my home telephone is 734.668.0117. I am available through e-mail, telephone, and by appointment. I want to get to know you, and hope that you will arrange a time when we can talk early in the semester.
Assignment

Prepare a briefing paper on how to use community organization to address bullying as a civil rights issue.

Regent Mark Bernstein, former White House staff member and chair of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, has asked us to help establish a Michigan Youth Civil Rights Academy. He wants to prepare the next generation of civil rights leaders, through youth leadership workshops, online learning, school and community participation, teacher professional development, and other methods. He wants to start with bullying as a pilot issue, and is asking for ideas about how to proceed.

Working as an individual or in a group, prepare a 5-7 page briefing paper on how to use community organization to address bullying as a civil rights issue.

“Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose,” according to stopbullying.gov. The Obama Administration has identified bullying as a civil rights violation.

Community organization has various strategies, such as community organizing, community planning, community development, community policy advocacy, community education, and social media campaigns. It can involve efforts in education, health and human services, housing and urban development, arts and culture, and other fields familiar to social workers. For example, can you visualize a paper on how to use community-based arts as a way to address bullying?

The assignment will enable you to utilize community organization concepts of practice, models and methods, and steps in the process. The purpose is to learn about community organization, the assignment uses bullying as an issue, and you are not expected to be an expert on bullying.

A briefing paper provides information and ideas in response to a request from a decision-maker who intends to take action. The document usually includes a statement of the issue, background information, present approaches, alternative courses of action, and recommendations.

The paper is due on February 8, but after discussion in class, you can have an additional week to finalize, if you wish.