

Course Syllabus

SW 799 Advanced Topics in Macro Social Work (Section 002);  
Social Work and Law  
Fall 2014  
Saturday Oct 18 and Oct 25 (9:00-5:00)  
Room –SSWB - 2816

Instructor: Karen M. Staller, Ph.D., J.D.  
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**Course Overview:**

This mini course is designed to provide students with an introduction to the law, legal processes, and the legal system as it relates to social work practice. In particular we will consider several major aspects of this intersection: the significance of courts and case law to issues of social justice, the role of social workers as witnesses (lay and expert) in judicial proceedings; the use of class actions to forward social policy agendas, the use (and misuse) of social science by the courts and legal regulations and case law that impact social work practice. In short, it will introduce students to the operation of the legal system and highlight some of the unique ways that social workers interact with it.

**Course Objectives**

- Describe major sources of legal authority including constitutional law, statutory law, common law, administrative law and regulations;
- Describe the various judicial systems (federal, state, special courts such as probate or drug, criminal and civil);
- Describe the intersection of social work and law on issues of significance to social workers such as poverty, health and mental health, domestic violence, family law, juvenile justice, child welfare, immigration, employment etc. (paying particular attention to issues of gender, age, race/ethnicity, health status, mental capacity, sexual orientation, etc.);
- Demonstrate an understanding of the skills necessary to practice forensic social work including the role of expert witnesses, fact witnesses, writing court evaluations and reports;
- Describe and critically analyze the use (or misuse) of social science research in judicial cases relevant to social work practice;
- Explore one legal issue or social justice issue associated with legal system and report on your findings.

**Assignments:**

- Reporting and Work Shop Day (see separate assignment handout).
- CLASS ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY (BOTH DAYS, ON-TIME, FULL DAY)

**Schedule of Classes****October 18 - First Day: Lectures on Context and Skills**

1. Class Introductions
2. Basic Legal Literacy: Introduction to the Court Systems, Sources of Law, Types of Cases
  - a. Federal and State Courts (Specialty Courts – Tribal courts, juvenile, probate, drug, etc.)
  - b. Sources of Law: Constitutions, Statutory Law and Regulations, Case Law
  - c. Types of Cases: Criminal, Civil
  - d. Anatomy of a Case
3. Social Work Practice and Professional Responsibility: Legal Standards
  - a. Liability and Immunity
  - b. Confidentiality and Privilege
4. Social Work Practice and the Law: Interacting with the court, Testimony and Subpoenas
  - a. Witnesses: Expert and Lay witnesses
  - b. Subpoenas
  - c. Depositions
5. Social Work and Advocacy. Using the Courts for Social Justice Agendas
  - a. Intersection of Social Justice agendas and the Legal System
  - b. Legal Advocacy Groups – Special Interest Advocacy
  - c. Class Actions
  - d. Judicial Advocacy and its Dangers
6. Case Example: Putting Today's Theory into Practice
  - a. People v. Stanaway and People v. Caruso
  - b. MCL Public Health Code "Social Workers" §§ 333.18501 et seq.

**October 25 - Second Day: Workshop Day**

Students will each present their homework assignment. Together we will work through the document(s) selected by the student for presentation.

If time permits, the instructor will be prepared to present some additional "intersectionality" material: mental health and prisons; social science statistics and the justice system, etc.