



**SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN SOCIAL WORK TODAY**

**SW 400, FALL 2018 (3 credit hours)**

**Instructor:** Michael Evangelist (he/him/his)

**Classroom:** B798 School of Social Work

**Office:** B660 School of Social Work

**Time:** Tu/Th 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

**Email:** [kmev@umich.edu](mailto:kmev@umich.edu)

**Office hours:** Friday, 1-2 and by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course offers an introduction to the field of social work and an overview of contemporary social problems from a social work perspective. In the first part of the course, students will learn about the history of social work as a profession and the values and ethical considerations that guide social work practitioners. After developing a shared understanding of what social workers do and how they do it, we will explore a number of contemporary social problems from poverty and inequality to mental health on college campuses. We will discuss ways in which the social work profession addresses social problems within the values of the social work profession.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the various roles, levels of intervention, and fields of service from which social workers practice.
- Describe the various value dilemmas, political controversies, and societal challenges that the profession of social work faces when it approaches selected social problems.
- Explain why diversity, empowerment, and strengths-based perspectives are critical to the way social workers approach social problems.
- Critique the social work profession's response to selected social problems.

**CURRICULAR THEMES**

- Multiculturalism and Diversity issues will be explored as students identify self-knowledge and skills for regularly monitoring their practice within the context of their work. The PODS (Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice) lens will be

applied to practice situations and students will have an opportunity to discuss relevant field issues related to the diversity dimensions (ability, age, culture, economic class, ethnicity, family structure, gender, gender identity and expression, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation).

- Social Justice and Social Change issues will be addressed by helping students to critically assess their commitment to and skills for enacting change towards social justice goals. The role of the social worker will be discussed as reflected by their individual experiences and reflection.
- Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation approaches will be addressed within the context of the student's orientation to practice. Small group discussions will allow the student to discuss, review, compare, and contrast alternative approaches and frameworks while reflecting on their individual work and experiences.
- Behavioral and Social Science research approaches will be addressed within the context of the student's orientation and method. Small group discussions will allow the student to discuss, review, compare, and contrast alternative approaches and frameworks while reflecting on their individual work and experiences.

## **CASC MINOR MISSION STATEMENT**

The CASC minor is for students interested in developing knowledge, skills, and experiences in community action and social change. The multidisciplinary 16 credit minor will prepare students to:

- examine community action and social change using a multidisciplinary framework;
- address community action and social change in multilingual and multicultural communities;
- integrate social justice values into the community action and social change processes; and
- engage in service learning to promote community action and social change.

## **CASC GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The core values of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, competence) frames our interactions with students inside and outside the classroom.

- PODS: Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice are taught to similar degrees in every class.
- We represent Social Work – both the School and the profession – in our interactions with students, including academic and career advice.
- We strive to respond appropriately to student inquiries in a timely and personally engaging manner.

- We structure courses with student participation in mind throughout the term, notably by some conversation about ground rules at the start of the term and some identifiable closure activity at the end.
- We see curricular and co-curricular opportunities as intersecting and complementary. We seek to find more opportunities for high touch, high impact work with students.

## **DISCOURSE**

All of us come to this course with various experiences and values, as well as assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes. Disagreements are expected and in fact welcomed as long as we respect diverse opinions and refrain from attacking one another personally. Remain open to evidence presented, which may conflict with your own viewpoints and perspectives. We seek to develop a culture and climate where people can freely explore and exchange ideas. (Adapted from syllabi of Drs. M. Yoshihama and D. Saunders)

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **1. Attendance** (12.5 pts, 0.5 pts per class)

You will earn 0.5 points each day you attend class and sign-in. If you arrive more than 15 minutes after the start of the class, you will be given half-credit that day. If you forget to sign in, you have 24 hours to e-mail me and have your attendance noted for that day. There are 27 class days during the semester. This means that you can miss two days and still receive full credit. You do not need to provide documentation for these two absences; although, I will appreciate an e-mail to let me know you are not attending. Examples of reasons not needing documentation are brief illness, travel, personal events such as weddings, or mental health days.

### **2. Weekly Reflections** (20 pts, 2 points each)

A short paragraph, approx. 150-200 words, that includes: 1) What you believe to be the most important take-home points from the readings that week and 2) One question you have about the course content that week. Reflections should be thorough (covering the main points from all the readings), specific (identifying particular points of interest within the readings), and thoughtful (not just summarizing, but engaging with the readings). There will be 11 weekly reflections throughout the semester. This means that students may skip one week and still receive full credit or complete all 11 and receive an extra two points. Half credit will be offered for late reflections as long as they are posted prior to the start class.

**Due:** Post on Canvas each Wednesday by 6pm

### **3. Self-Reflection Paper: Social Work and You** (20 pts)

This self-reflection assignment includes two parts. The paper should be between 1000 and 1500 words.

(1) **Define Social Work:** Offer a concise definition of social work. Be sure to note your reference(s) – one reference will suffice but you may use more than one that speaks to you. Identify and define at least three social work roles that you might consider engaging in were you practicing in social work currently.

(2) **Who are you?:** Tell me some things about you that would help me better see why you are in this class. Feel free to address your philosophy of helping; describe how your values and ethical stance support your attitude and beliefs about your notions of Social Work. Perhaps even identify and clarify what you believe to be your top personal qualifications most suitable for a career in Social Work. Have any of these things changed since the beginning of the term, and if so, how?

**Due:** Submit on Canvas by midnight, Thursday, September 20

#### **4. Social Problem Op-Ed** (20 pts, 1st draft (5 pts) + peer review (5 pts) + final draft (10 pts))

Prepare a brief (600-800 words) op-ed related to a social problem we've discussed in class or one that is important to you. Op-eds should be written for a general audience but may relate to campus, local, state, national, and international issues. Be sure to (1) define the problem, (2) explain why it is important and what should be done, and (3) offer a recommendation or call to action. The op-ed assignment includes three graded components: (1) writing a first draft, (2) reading and critiquing a classmate's op-ed, and (3) submitting a final, revised draft. We will discuss this assignment in greater detail during class.

**Due:** (1) submit 1<sup>st</sup> draft on Canvas by midnight, Oct 11, (2) bring peer review comments to class on October 18, (3) submit final draft on Canvas by midnight, October 25

#### **5. Social Worker Interview** (20 pts)

Assignment 2 contains two parts. The written aspect should be between 1000 and 1500 words.

- a. *Interview a social work practitioner.* Arrange an appointment with a practicing, MSW social worker (not an academic or faculty member). Choose a field of practice of social work or a particular social problem that interests you, and locate a practitioner who works in such a setting or with a particular client group. You may select a social work practitioner who performs any number of social work roles – e.g. clinician, organizer, administrator, researcher, etc.
- b. *Format the interview as a paper.* In class we will discuss the format of the paper. During the interview, ask the practitioner to show you around her/his agency and describe the various services offered. Also ask your practitioner how her/his interest in the field developed. Put all of the information that you have gleaned from this interview into this paper, concluding with

a reflection on how this experience might relate to your potential career in social work or other helping profession.

**Due:** Submit interview summary on Canvas by midnight, November 20

## 6. Presentation on Selected Social Problem (20 pts)

In class, we will touch on a limited number of social problems. This is your opportunity to teach the class about a social problem that is important to you. You may choose a topic we did not cover or to take a more in-depth look at an issue we did discuss. This assignment consists of four parts. (1) Your first task is to identify a social problem and come to office hours at least once to discuss the social problem with me. (2) You must select 2-3 resources that will help your classmates and me to understand the social problem. Resources may include newspaper articles, journal articles, blog posts, nonprofit or government reports, video clips, or podcasts. (3) Prepare a one-page summary of the problem to distribute to the class the day of your presentation, and (4) Prepare a 20 minute presentation for the class where you describe the social problem, explain why it is important, highlight any controversies or differences of opinion related to the problem, and identify ways for social workers and/or society to address the problem. You will be graded on the entirety of the project rather than on each individual component. Depending on the class size, you will *likely* have the option of working in pairs or in groups of three. We will discuss this project in greater detail during class.

**Due:** (1) Choose topic and meet with me during office hours by November 1, (2) Class presentations will be December 4 and 6. Turn in one-page summary the day of your presentation.

## GRADING

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Due date</u>	<u>Points</u>
Attendance	Each class	12.5
Weekly Responses	Wednesdays by 6 pm (Canvas)	20.0
Self-Reflection	September 20, midnight (Canvas)	20.0
Op-ed draft (part 1)	October 11, midnight (Canvas)	5.0
Op-ed Peer critique (part 2)	October 18 (hardcopy in class)	5.0
Op-ed final (part 3)	October 25 (Canvas)	10.0
Social Worker Interview	Midnight, November 20 (Canvas)	20.0
<u>Final Class Presentation</u>	<u>December 4 &amp; 6 (in class)</u>	<u>20.0</u>
<b>Total</b>		<b>112.5</b>

Course grades will be calculated based on the following percentages (note these are percentages not points). The percentage is calculated by dividing your total number of points by 112.5:

A- 90-93	A 94-100	
B- 80-83	B 84-86	B+ 87-89
C- 70-73	C 74-76	C+ 77-79
D- 60-63	D 64-66	D+ 67-69

## **TECHNOLOGY**

This is not a course in which you will often be asked to take notes or to access materials online. Out of courtesy to me and other students, please do not use laptops, cellphones, iPads, etc. during class, except when instructed. Students who frequently use technology during class will be given one warning, and then will receive significant reductions in their participation grade. Any student who requires the use of technology for health or other reasons should contact the instructor at the beginning of class.

## **INCOMPLETES**

The Student Guide, Vol. 1, Sec. 8.01 states that an “I” grade is used when illness or other compelling reasons prevent completion of work, and there is a definite plan and date for completion of course work approved by the instructor. The student must formally request an incomplete from the instructor prior to the final week of classes.

## **STUDENTS IN NEED OF ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you have a documented disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific 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. Also, if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments, please notify the instructor so we can discuss appropriate arrangements.

## **STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is in need of support you may contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 or University Health Service (UHS) at (734) 764-8320. For alcohol or drug concerns, see <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources>.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1**      **Social Work History**

9/4              Course introduction. No Reading

9/6              Marx et al. (2011). *Social Work & Social Welfare*. **Chapter 6**, History of Social Work and Social Welfare.

**Guest:** Susan Crabb, Field Placement Office

### **Week 2**      **Social Work Profession and Theoretical Frameworks**

9/11             DuBois, B. & Miley, K.K. (2008). *Social Work: An Empowering Profession*. **Chapter 1**, Social Work: A Helping Profession

Specht, H. & Courtney, M.E., (1994). *Unfaithful Angels: How Social Work has Abandoned Its Mission*. **Chapter 5**, The Movement of Social Work Into Private Practice and Away from the Poor

**Guest:** Erin Zimmer, Associate Director of Student Services

9/13             Marx, J.D. et al. (2011). *Social Work & Social Welfare*. **Chapter 2**, Theoretical & Conceptual Models of Social Work.

Gamble, D.N. & Weil, M. (2010). *Community Practice Skills*. **Chapter 2**, Conceptual Frameworks and Models for Community Practice.

### **Week 3**      **Social Work Values and Ethics**

9/18             Marsiglia, F.F. & Kulis, S. (2016). *Diversity, Oppression, & Change*. **Chapter 2**, Cultural Diversity, Oppression, and Action and **Chapter 3**, The Intersectionality of Race and Ethnicity with Other Factors

Spencer, M. S. (2008). A Social Worker's Reflections on Power, Privilege, and Oppression. *Social Work*, 53(2), 99-101.

Tatum, B. D. (2000). The complexity of identity: Who am I? *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*.

Video: Spencer on Privilege: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WV6osirQsjI>

**Guest:** Lauren Davis, DEI Office

9/20 Reamer, F.G. (2006). Social Work Values and Ethics. **Chapter 1**, Social Work Values and Ethics and **Chapter 2**, Social Work Values

NASW Code of Ethics (2008). (will review in class)

**Assignment: Self-reflection due by midnight (Canvas)**

**Week 4** **What is Poverty?**

9/25 Desmond, M., & Western, B. (2018). Poverty in America: New Directions and Debates. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 44, 305-318.

Wimer, C., Fox, L., Garfinkel, I., Kaushal, N., & Waldfogel, J. (2016). Progress on Poverty? New Estimates of Historical Trends Using an Anchored Supplemental Poverty Measure. *Demography*, 53(4), 1207-1218.

Meyer, B.D., & Sullivan, J.X. (2018). Hardly Anyone Wants to Admit America Is Beating Poverty. *Wall Street Journal*.

**Guest:** Michelle Woods, MSW Student Career Services Director

9/27 Atkinson, A.B. (2016). Inequality: what can be done? Chapter 1 (9-44)

Cassidy, J. (2014). Piketty's Inequality Story in Six Charts. *The New Yorker*.

Porter E. (2016). Inequality in America: The Data are Sobering. *New York Times*.

Badger E., et al. (2018). Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/19/upshot/race-class-white-and-black-men.html> (view using link)

**Week 5** **Poverty and Inequality: Conservative and Liberal Views on Causes**

10/2 Haskins, R. & Mead, L.M., (2011). Restoring Work by Poor Fathers. *Brookings Institution*.

French, D. (2017). The Myth of the Virtuous Poor. *National Review*.

Patterson, O. (2006). A Poverty of the Mind. *New York Times*.

10/4 Oliver, M.L., & Shapiro, T.M. (1997). Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality. In Grusky, & Szelenyi, *The Inequality Reader*. **Chapter 33**

Pager, D. (2003). Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration. In Grusky, & Szelenyi, *The Inequality Reader*. **Chapter 29**



Wilson, W.J. (1999). Jobless Poverty, a New Form of Social Dislocation in the Inner-City Ghetto. In Grusky, & Szelenyi, *The Inequality Reader*. **Chapter 32**

**Week 6**      **Poverty and Inequality: Lived Experience and Solutions**

10/9

We will divide these so nobody has more than three readings...

Pattillo-McCoy, M. (1999). *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class*. **Chapter 4** – Neighborhood Networks and Crime

Seefeldt, K.S. (2016). *Abandoned Families: Social Isolation in the Twenty-First Century*. **Chapter 2** – Abandoned Detroit

Hochschild, A.R. (2016). *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. **Chapter 9** – The Deep Story

Vance, J.D. (2016). *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. **Chapter 4**

Edin, K.J., & Shaefer, H.L. (2015). *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. **Chapter 2** – Perilous Work

Ehrenreich, B. (2011). *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. **Chapter 1** – Serving in Florida

Desmond, M. (2016). *Forced Out: For Many Poor Americans, Eviction Never Ends*. *The New Yorker*.

Venkatesh, S.A., & Wilson, W.J. (2000). *American Project*. **Chapter 1** – A Place Called Home

10/11

Moffitt, R. (2018). Trends in the Distribution of Social Safety Net Support After the Great Recession. Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality.

Heller, N. (2018). Who Really Stands to Win from Universal Basic Income. *The New Yorker*.

Paul, M., Darity, W., & Hamilton, D. (2017). Why We Need a Federal Job Guarantee. *Jacobin*.

**Assignment: First Draft of op-ed due by midnight (Canvas)**

**Week 7**      **Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism**

10/16

Fall Break - No Class

- 10/18 Newkirk, V.R. (2016). Fighting Environmental Racism in North Carolina. *The New Yorker*.
- Pierre-Louis, K. (2018). A Leader in the War on Poverty Opens a New Front: Pollution. *New York Times*.
- Sengupta, S. (2018). In India, Summer Heat May Soon Be Literally Unbearable. *New York Times*.
- Video: Newkirk on environmental racism: <https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/529137/environmental-racism-is-the-new-jim-crow/>

**Assignment: Peer Review of op-ed due in class (bring comments to class)**

**Week 8**      **Immigration and Refugees**

- 10/23 Felter, C., & Renwick, D. (2018). The U.S. Immigration Debate. Council on Foreign Relations.

Sanneh, K. (2016). Untangling the Immigration Debate. *The New Yorker*.

Furman, R., Ackerman, A. R., Loya, M., Jones, S., & Egi, N. (2012). The criminalization of immigration: Value conflicts for the social work profession. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 39(1), 169.

- 10/25 Miliband, D. (2017). *Rescue: Refugees and the Political Crisis of Our Time*.  
**Chapter 1 and 2**

Gonzalez-Benson, G.O. Refugee Resettlement, the Nonprofit Sector and Refugee Community Organizations. Hubert Project. <https://hubertproject.org/hubert-material/406/> (access through link only)

**Guest:** Dr. Gonzalez-Benson, Assistant Professor of Social Work

**Assignment: Final draft of op-ed due by midnight (Canvas)**

**Week 9**      **Our Aging Society**

- 10/30 von Humboldt, S. (2016). Demographic Change: An Aging World. In S. von Humboldt (Ed.), *Conceptual and Methodological Issues on the Adjustment to Aging: Perspectives on Aging Well* (pp. 1-19).

Nelson, T. D. (2011). Ageism: The Strange Case of Prejudice Against the Older You. In R. L. Wiener & S. L. Willborn (Eds.), *Disability and Aging Discrimination: Perspectives in Law and Psychology* (pp. 37-47).

Bulterijs, S., Hull, R. S., Björk, V. C. E., & Roy, A. G. (2015). It is time to classify biological aging as a disease. *Frontiers in Genetics*, 6(205).

11/1 Kleinman, A. (2010) On Caregiving. *Harvard Magazine*.

Porter, E. (2017). How Care for Elders, Not Children, Denies Women a Paycheck. *New York Times*.

Arana, G. (2013). When I'm Old and Gay. *The American Prospect*.

**Guest: TBD**

**Assignment: Last day to meet with me to discuss topic for your presentation**

**Week 10    Anxiety and Depression among Teens and College Students**

11/6 Schrobsdorff S. (2016). Teen Depression and Anxiety: Why the Kids Are Not Alright. *Time Magazine*.

Bichell R.E. (2016). Suicide Rates Climb in U.S. Especially Among Adolescent Girls. *National Public Radio*. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/04/22/474888854/suicide-rates-climbin-u-s-especially-among-adolescent-girls> (Listen to or read interview, access through link only)

Denizet-Lewis B. (2017). Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering From Severe Anxiety? *The New York Times Magazine*.

Video: Are Smartphones Making a Generation Unhappy?  
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/smartphones-making-generation-unhappy>

11/8 Kwai, I. (2016). The Most Popular Office on Campus. *The Atlantic*.

Thorne G. (2018). We Need to Address the Mental Health Care Imbalance for Students of Color. *The Nation*.

Thielking M. (2017). Semester-Long Program Aims to Help College Students with Mental Health Conditions. *Scientific American*.

**Guest: Emily Klueh, Athletes Connected Program Coordinator**

**Week 11    Criminalization of Minority Youth**

- 11/13 Morris, W.M. (2016). Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools.  
**Chapter 1 – Struggling to Survive.**
- Rios, V.M. (2011). Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys.  
**Chapter 1 – Dreams Deferred (access Ebook through library)**
- 11/15 In Effort To Curb Violence In Chicago, A Professor Mines Social Media, National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/09/09/493319076/in-effort-to-curb-violence-in-chicago-a-professor-mines-social-media> (listen to or read interview, access through link only)
- Podcast: Social Media and Gang Violence – Interview with Desmond Patton, PhD  
<https://socialworkpodcast.blogspot.com/2018/01/patton.html>

**Guest: TBD**

**Week 12    TBD**

11/20 **Assignment: Interview with social worker due by midnight (Canvas)**

11/22 Thanksgiving - No Class

**Week 13    Opioid Crisis: Addiction and Recovery**

11/27 Keefe, P.R. (2017). The Family That Built an Empire of Pain. *The New Yorker*.

Groopman, J. (2017). What’s Missing from the National Discussion About the Opioid Epidemic. *The New Yorker*.

Saint Louis, C. (2017). A Tide of Opioid-Dependent Newborns Forces Doctors to Rethink Treatment. *New York Times*.

Newkirk, V. (2017). What the 'Crack Baby' Panic Reveals About The Opioid Epidemic. *The Atlantic*.

11/29 Greville, L. (2016). Addictions Advisor: Substance Use and Intervention at Colleges and Universities. *Social Work Today*.

White, W. L., Boyle, M., & Loveland, D. (2002). Alcoholism/addiction as a chronic disease: From rhetoric to clinical reality. *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 20(3-4), 107-129.

**Guest: Matt Statman, LMSW, Program Manager, Collegiate Recovery Program**

**Week 14    Class Presentations**

12/4 **Class Presentations**

12/6      **Class Presentations**

**Week 15**    **Celebration and Final Reflection**

12/11