Course Syllabus

Course title: Connecting Practice, Services, and Policy: Exploring the case of runaway, homeless, and trafficked youth
Course #: SW 510 Fall 2018
Credit hours: 1
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Teaching philosophy
My courses are designed for students to leave with the following:

- Confidence in their ability to apply course material and concepts in settings outside of the classroom;
- A commitment to and facility with operationalizing social work Core Values in the NASW Code of Ethics;
- Enhanced capacity to confront and explore issues of social justice and how populations that traditionally have been marginalized are disproportionately negatively affected by policies, practices, and interpersonal interactions;
- Build on positive sources of power to envision and work towards social justice; work to reduce disempowerment;
- Build on indigenous knowledge/experiences of individuals, groups and communities in practice and evaluation;
- Demonstrable and recognizable skills and competencies;
- New knowledge of the subject matter, and an understanding of how to access further knowledge and resources commensurate with their professional roles and interests;
- Curiosity and a drive to continue to develop critical thinking, inquiry, and integrity.
Graduate students are adult learners, and as such I prioritize honoring your prior knowledge and experience; your contributions to the class are vital, and I make every effort to create an environment that encourages you to share your perspectives and ideas with each other, disagree with me, and shape the tenor of the course. Additionally, it is incumbent on me to understand the differential pressures and life circumstances that facilitate or constrain your learning and your engagement in the course.

Classroom Climate

True learning involves risk and, therefore, vulnerability. I hope that all students will work with me to create and foster a learning environment that promotes social justice, inclusion and equity. Further, this is an opportunity for all of us to engage in professional socialization, respectfulness, and broadening our mutual development of cultural humility.

Questioning and disagreeing are part of the learning process, and I encourage all of us to engage in these activities with thoughtfulness and respect. I expect the classroom to be safe, but learning and growth is often uncomfortable. There are a few times when I will engineer disagreements to foster learning, so please do not “freeze” your understanding of any of us after one or two interactions. Expect that we all have the capacity to grow and develop. Finally, if you are someone who likes to interact and engage verbally, consider “stepping back” occasionally in order to open the airwaves for others to speak. Similarly, if you are someone who is reticent to speak up in class, consider “stepping up” and taking a risk. Above all, this is a learning laboratory and we all will be testing out different ways of interacting and learning.

An emotionally brave class climate is important for everyone’s learning and growth. Below are a few expectations I have about our interactions in the course. This is not an exhaustive list, and I welcome suggestions for additional expectations:

- Practice “Both - And” thinking and solution seeking
- Be attuned to both Process and Content: “process” is how and when you express yourself, and “content” is what you say.
- Remember that this is a vulnerable space for you, and for others.
- We all have an amazing capacity to screw up. Do not “freeze” anyone in this space.
- Honor confidentiality.
- Be responsible to yourself and to others about what is communicated without blame or shame.
- Limit disruptions and distractions by coming to class on time, avoiding unnecessary use of electronics, and avoiding talking when others are presenting/talking.
- Notice both the intent and the impact of what you do or say. Take responsibility when your intent does not match the impact on someone else. Take notice of peoples’ intent, not just the impact of others’ communication.
- Speak from your own experience, without generalizing.
- Critique ideas, not people.
- Take responsibility for the quality of the discussion.
- Step up if you usually don’t contribute, step back if you often contribute.
- Call each other in to conversations vs. calling someone out.
Inclusive Language
The words we use can make the difference between forging positive connections or creating distance in our personal and professional lives. Particularly in writing, impact is more important than intent. This course provides an opportunity to discuss sensitive concepts that span a variety of disciplines, experiences, cultural communities, and learning styles in education. Increasing the inclusiveness of our language means striving to understand the ways that language often unconsciously makes assumptions about people and unintentionally reinforces dominant norms. I invite you to reflect on issues of privilege and injustice, and to acknowledge issues of ethical engagement when speaking on cultural communities that you do not identify with. As such, I ask that students consider:

- Recognizing individual gender pronoun use;
- Respecting and using contemporary and relevant language around social identities;
- Using language that recognizes varying abilities and is not ableist;
- Using language inclusive of diverse global contexts;
- Providing developmental and educational support of attendees who may be unfamiliar with inclusive language practices.

Land Acknowledgment
The University of Michigan was established on the traditional land of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodewadimi tribes. Today, this land is still the home to many Indigenous people. I am grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Course Description
Overall, this course will focus on the history of the runaway and homeless youth shelter as a particular service model. It will link this model of service both historically and currently to local social work agencies, relate these models to federal policy (which shapes the services and provides funding) and look at the recent failure to extend federal legislation to expand coverage to trafficking (due to an abortion provision in the bill). The course will be based on existing policy, evidence-based practice, and current hot topics in the media.

This mini course will offer a brief introduction to virtually all the foundation courses through the specific applied practice-policy case example of “runaway” youth. Our hope is to inspire you to understand why each foundation course will be important to your education as professional social workers. It will expose you, through the in-class simulations, to life through the lens of some of your future clients.

Course Content
This mini course will introduce you to a local agency with a long history in the community. Ozone House, first founded in 1969, offers an excellent introductory case example for linking social problems, direct practice, social service design, and policy (local, state, federal). We will examine how:

- social problems are constructed and change over time;
- services are designed and delivered;
agency efforts are facilitated and constrained by policies;

service providers negotiate community resources; and

marginalized populations are disproportionately impacted.

The goal is for you to see the connective threads between micro, mezzo, and macro practice. Utilizing a simulation called “Walk in their shoes,” students will encounter real-life decisions facing homeless youth. This experiential group activity will introduce content but also begin to build community through participation and discussion. From here we will use these individual case vignettes to explore the practice and policy implications, focusing particularly on marginalized populations (historically LGBTQ+ youth and youth of color are disproportionately represented).

The course examines how social policy affects—and in many cases *disproportionally* affects—the diverse and intersecting identities (such as ability, age, socioeconomic status, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender identity and gender expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation) of individuals and groups. We will critically examine specific policies from multicultural and historical perspectives, including evolving narratives about intersecting identities. We will also examine the differential impact of policies and programs on those experiencing poverty and those who traditionally have been marginalized. We will discuss how these individuals and groups participate—or are prevented from participating—in the political process. Finally, issues of equity and social justice must be top of mind for social workers; student discussions and assignments must be examined through a lens of equity and social justice.

This course will be highly interactive and dynamic. Students must be willing to respectfully engage in a series of small and large group activities and discussions and explore complex, troubling content. We anticipate students may confront values different from their own. This course may be an opportunity to explore differences between personal values and professional values, as well as the benefits of bringing diverse perspectives to bear on seemingly intractable problems. During the course, we will be exploring specific case examples and content; much of it can evoke unexpected personal reactions. Almost all youth who experience homelessness or trafficking have experienced abuse, neglect, violence, sexual exploitation, and many other traumas. The instructors want to alert students who may have experienced trauma themselves that the content of this mini course will contain many references to trauma, particularly in case studies. We will make space for students’ reactions and we may examine whether this kind of work is right for everyone.

Course Objectives

1. Describe the link between the experiences of marginalized youth and social services, systems, and policies;
2. Advocate on behalf of a “client” at several intervention levels including individual practice, agency practice and policy practice;
3. Develop foundation-level intervention, engagement, and advocacy skills.

Please review the [Policy on Class Attendance](#) found in the MSW Student Guide.
Additional Course Information and Resources

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources. They include:

- Safety and emergency preparedness
- Mental health and well-being
- Teaching evaluations
- Proper use of names and pronouns
- Accommodations for students with disabilities
- Religious/spiritual observances
- Military deployment

Course Assignments

1. Before the First Class
   a. Read required reading (Found on Canvas)
   b. Briefly explore these websites:
      - Mid-Atlantic Network for Youth Anti-Trafficking Campaign - http://www.manynet.org/upworthy/
      - Ozone House - www.ozonehouse.org
      - Alternatives for Girls - www.alternativesforgirls.org
      - Ruth Ellis Center - www.ruthelliscenter.org
      - National Network for Youth - www.nn4youth.org

2. In Class:
   a. Actively participate in activities
   b. Participate in action project

3. In between Classes
   a. Review readings on canvas
   b. Web research on resources for the client

Grading:

In order to receive credit for this 1-credit mini course students must:

1. Attend all class sessions from start to finish; and
2. Actively participate in all activities and in-class assignments.