



Fall 2020 - Mini Course

SW 778-001: Social Work with Military Service Members, Veterans and their Families

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Schedule: Thursday's, September 10th through October 8th, 5:00 – 8:00pm

Location: 1636 SSWB & Zoom <https://umich.zoom.us/j/93581944707>

Course Description:

This course was designed to increase the knowledge base and competency level of social workers who plan to work with (or are interested in) military service members, veterans and their families. This will be accomplished by introducing students to basic military background and structure, the common problem-areas experienced by this community, and the diverse sub-groups that exist within this unique population.

The content covered in this course will include subject areas such as military culture, trauma, life after service (transition), problems/issues faced by family members and the study of specific populations within the service such as women, other minorities, and the LGBT population. In addition to improving the cultural competency in the areas listed above, students will also be exposed to the diverse and unique challenges faced by the veterans of different war eras (WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Gulf War and current conflicts). Time will also be spent discussing the kinds of clinical skills that are important for social workers to possess when working with this population. The skills that will be addressed include completing culturally-competent behavioral health diagnostic assessments, motivational interviewing, clinical interventions and working with treatment resistant clients.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate improved cultural competency in the areas of the military, veteran and family populations. Students will also be able to identify specific evidence based interventions for engaging this population in a community-based or clinical setting. The practice area of this course will be identified as Interpersonal Practice and Mental Health.

Course Objectives:

1. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate improved cultural competency in the areas of the military, veteran and family populations (Competency 1: Professional Identity, Competency 2: Critical Thinking, Competency 4: Diversity, Competency 6: Research).
2. Students will be able to assess the unique challenges that exist for military service members, veterans and their family members in the context of identifying available resources, deployment cycles, trauma and readjustment (Competency 7: Human Behavior & the Social Environment, Competency 8: Social Policy, Competency 9: Organizational Context, Competency 10b: Assessment, Competency 10c: Intervention).
3. Students will also be able to identify specific evidence based interventions for engaging the veteran population in a clinical or community-based setting (Competency 6: Research, Competency 9: Organizational Context, Competency 10c: Intervention).
4. Students will be able to identify the specific cultural competencies that are needed when working with the military, veteran and family population (Competency 4: Diversity, Competency 7: Human Behavior in the Social Environment, Competency 9: Context, Competency 10(a-d)).

Requirement for Academic Credit:

Assignment Option #1 (Choose only 1):

Students may read *Redeployment* by Phil Klay. After reading the book, students will be required to write a two-part response paper. The following questions should be addressed:

- On p. 238 the character talks about the “idea of Iraq.” What was your “idea of Iraq” before reading this book, and has it changed or confirmed your views?
- *Redeployment* has been identified as an emotionally challenging and moving book due to Klay’s use of language and method of storytelling. What parts did you find most difficult? What was your favorite story?
- After reading the book, do you feel it will help you in your work with Military Service Members and Veterans? Why or why not?

The second part of your response should highlight the central themes of the book, and how these tie in with the material covered in class. The paper will be at least 2 pages in length, and will demonstrate mastery of the material. Papers with all three questions answered and a Masters-level response will receive a passing mark.

DUE: December 1, 2020 by 12:00 PM

*The assignment will be described in greater detail during the course meetings.

Required Reading:

Klay, Phil (2014). *Redeployment*. NY: Penguin Books.

*Feel free to skip the chapter, titled “OIF” due to its over-use of military acronyms/jargon which may make it difficult to understand.

Or...

Fallon, Siobhan (2012). *You know when the men are gone*. G.P. Putnam’s Sons.

**The *Redeployment* text can be difficult to read due to its use of language and insensitive material at times. Because of this, you have the option to read the Fallon text and answer the updated questions listed in Canvas.

Assignment Option #2 (Choose only 1):

In lieu of Assignment Option #1, students may choose to complete an immersion assignment. Identify a local Veterans Service Organization (VSO) that holds regular meetings. Examples of common VSO’s include Student Veterans of American, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Order of the Purple Heart, etc. Reach out to the organization and ask for permission to attend one of their meetings and interview one of the attendees for this assignment. You have complete autonomy and may conduct the interview as you see appropriate. Some examples of appropriate discussion topics would be, military service history, experience transitioning back to civilian life, experiences with the VA or other veteran benefits, and advice for future clinicians working with this population.

The assignment requires a written report consisting of two parts:

- **Part 1:** Describe your experience as a guest of the meeting. What topics were discussed in the meeting and how do they relate to the issues we discussed in class (if applicable)? What did you learn from the experience? Did anything surprise you about the meeting? What did you notice about the veterans in the room?
- **Part 2:** Describe your interview by identifying the questions you asked and a summary of the Veterans’ responses. After providing the details of your interview, highlight the take-aways from the experience and explain how you may use this information in your future practice.

DUE: December 1, 2020 by 12:00 PM

Attendance and Participation:

Due to the amount of material covered in a brief period of time, attendance is required at all 5 sessions. I understand things may come up within the first few weeks of the semester – so the following attendance policy will be adopted:

Students may miss 1 non-emergency class during this 5-week mini course and still pass. Students will not be given a passing grade if they miss more than 1 class. If you experience an emergency, and are unable to make it to class – please call, text or email to keep me informed.

Due to the ongoing concerns with the COVID-19 pandemic, each class will be live streamed and recorded on Zoom. The Zoom link will be available at the top of this syllabus and on Canvas. If you don't feel comfortable coming on campus and participating in-person, please utilize the Zoom link for the live stream and keep your video ON and your microphone MUTED unless you're speaking.