Course Description:

This course will examine practice theory and techniques relevant to social work in a rural setting. There are many definitions of what might be considered a rural community. For the purposes of this course, we will define communities as rural that have a population size of 2,500 to 20,000 with no major metropolitan area within an hour of the community. Rural communities are often plagued with similar problems as vast metropolitan areas such as high poverty rates, inadequate housing, and inadequate access to health care. However, the scarcity of resources and professionals including medical providers, socio economic underdevelopment, and physical distance from services and lack of public transportation are frequently identified as compounding factors of living in a rural community. The impact of differences in the key diversity dimensions such as ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression) marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation will be examined, within the context of practicing in a rural community. This course will also emphasize issues of ethical practice as defined by the social worker code of ethics within a rural community.

Course Content:

NASW has identified the need for social workers to be educated on the specialized needs of practicing in rural settings. Rates of poverty and access to services in rural areas create a dilemma in practice where a "specialized practitioner," has to become a jack-of-all-trades in order to meet the needs of the population they serve. A rural social work practitioner not only needs to be able to practice within the diverse population present in rural settings but also act as a community organizer. Micro, mezzo, and macro intervention skills are needed in practice within a rural community. This practice is oftentimes further complicated by dual relationships and other ethical issues that affect practice in a small town setting. This course will address the issues that are relevant to practice in rural communities.
Course Objectives:

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

1. To analyze and assess social and health services provision and the organization of human services in the context of rural America; as well as the customs, traditions, and heritage of rural and small community life and institutions.

2. To recognize and demonstrate understanding of the ethical challenges that may surface during the course of planning and delivering social work services in rural communities.

3. To demonstrate an understanding of the range of social work roles and functions performed when delivering social work services in rural communities.

Assignment Due (July 15th):

A five-page, double-spaced, paper reflecting on what you learned in this class and how you anticipate integrating this learning into your perspectives and practice as a social worker. Focus on a particular problem or population in rural communities where services are impacted. What course content had the most impact on your learning and why? What would you like to know more about? Incorporate at least three required readings or those from the list of recommended readings into the reflection, referencing specific quotes, and include a list of sources at the end. This will need to be submitted on CANVAS by 11:59pm on July 15th.

Available Readings on CANVAS:


http://www.marshall.edu/jrcp/E6one_Portman.htm


Books:


