Organizational, Community, and Societal Structures and Processes

Course Description

This theory and research based course is designed to support the foundation practice method courses which are taken concurrently in the first semesters. The general focus of this course is to present the various processes, connections and consequences that institutional structures and arrangements have on the various communities and at-risk-populations that are served by the social work profession. Students will develop an understanding of key professional and theoretical foundations for practicing social work. This course will also introduce students to the curricular themes and PODS concepts (i.e. Privilege, Oppression, Diversity, and Social Justice) that are infused in the advanced practice areas.

Course Objectives

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

1) Identify, describe, and critique selected theoretical perspectives on organizational, community, and societal structures and processes.

2) Describe and analyze the impact that organizational structures and processes have on practice settings and how community and societal structures and processes impact the client groups served by social agencies.

3) Describe how privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice are manifested in the structures and processes of society, communities, and complex organizations.

4) Analyze how the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation impact their own life experiences, their relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and their relationships with agency clientele and community groups.

5) Identify major processes and contemporary manifestations of oppression, discrimination, prejudice, power and privilege as they impact on populations-at-risk and vulnerable and oppressed groups by:
   a) describing barriers to organizational and community competence;
   b) identifying sources of intragroup and intergroup conflict stemming from cultural group membership;
   c) identifying the role of risk and protective social factors in relation to social problems and social/economic justice.
6) Apply professional values and ethics by:
   a) distinguishing differences among culturally sensitive, culturally competent, multicultural, and ethnoconscious frameworks in social work;
   b) critically evaluating organizations, community, and societal structures and processes that seek to promote social and economic justice.

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

_Multiculturalism and Diversity_ will be addressed through presentation of theory and research about oppressed and at-risk populations, and the impact that community, organizational and societal functioning has on the well-being of these groups.

_Social Justice and Social Change_ will be covered in the empirical and theoretical literature that document socially just organizational, community, and societal structures and processes. Social change theories and strategies will be presented that demonstrate how we move toward a more socially just society.

_Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation_ will be addressed through discussion of programs and systemic interventions to prevent stress and oppression of individuals, families, and groups and enhance their quality of life and well-being. The role of risk, resiliency, and preventive social factors will be discussed in relations to social problems.

_Behavioral and Social Sciences Research_ will be reflected in the organizational, community, and societal theories that are presented in order to analyze the impact that the social environment has on individuals, families and groups.

Required Readings

The following books are required texts for this course. They are available for purchase at Shaman Drum bookstore on State Street and are on reserve in the School of Social Work library. Used copies are also available online at Amazon.com.

- A coursepack of articles and book chapters is available for purchase from Excel located on South University (between East University and Church).

Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading

_A ttendance and participation_: Attendance and active participation are very important components of this class and count for 20% of your overall grade. Active participation includes asking and answering questions, participating in group exercises, and doing the reading before class. As part of your participation grade, you may be asked to submit discussion questions prior to class some weeks or to take primary responsibility for certain readings. Other weeks we may have short in-class writing assignments or other activities. While these activities won’t be assigned a letter
grade, they will contribute to your overall participation grade. If you know in advance that you will need to miss a class, please talk to me at least two weeks in advance to arrange a makeup assignment.

**Self-assessment paper:** This assignment will be submitted in two parts and will constitute 20% of your grade.

- **Part I** is due at the beginning of the semester (due October 3) and is a 3-5 page paper in which you will examine 1) yourself, your background, and group identities in relation to the major constructs in this course—community, organizational, and social structures and processes—and 2) how these structures and processes have shaped your perception of social work and its mission.
- **In Part II, due December 5,** you will review your work throughout the semester and write another 2-4 pages discussing what you have learned and what you would or would not change in your assessment. More details will be given in class.

**Memos:**

For these assignments you will choose a social work issue/social problem in which you are interested. Imagine that you are working in a human service organization that addresses this issue. Your agency is undergoing a full scale review of its work and the director has asked you to provide an analysis of the macro-level structures and processes that impact and are impacted by this problem. To this end, you have been requested to write two memos to the director. More details for each memo will be provided in class.

The purposes of these assignments are: 1) to practice skills in analyzing problems within different macro contexts, 2) to practice skills in assessing the utility of various theoretical models to understand those problems and develop a plan to address them, and 3) to practice writing in a clear, concise, and professional manner.

You may rewrite Memo 1 if you receive a B or lower and are not satisfied with your grade. Rewrites are due no later than one week after the paper is returned to you and should include the original marked up copy.

- **Memo 1 (due November 7): Community analysis** (5-7 pages; 25% of grade)
  For this memo, you will analyze the social issue/problem you have chosen using two or more theoretical perspectives on community change from the course.
- **Memo 2 (due Friday, December 12): Recommendations for intervention** (8-10 pages; 30% of grade)
  For this memo, you will integrate the knowledge from the course in order to address how you can create macro-level change.

**Late assignment policy**

Students are expected to turn in all assignments on time.

- ✔ Please turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of the class period during which it is due.
- ✔ **Late assignments are accepted only with a penalty.** The grade for a late assignment will be dropped 5% for each day it is late. Assignments cannot be turned in more than one week late. If an assignment is more than one week late, 0 points will be given.
In the case of emergency (e.g., severe illness, family emergency), an extension may be given if you inform me of the situation 24 hours before the due date. Computer problems (e.g., printing problems, internet connection), heavy workload in other classes, and field placement commitments will not be accepted as a legitimate excuse for late submission.

If you know in advance that you will not be attending class on the day an assignment is due it is your responsibility to make sure I receive the assignment ahead of time.

**Grading**

Grades will be determined as follows:

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
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<td>Self-assessment assignment (Part I and II)</td>
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<td>Memo 1</td>
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<td>Memo 2</td>
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Course Schedule

CP means the reading is in the coursepack.

Week 1, September 12
Introductions

Privilege, Oppression, Diversity, and Social Justice

Week 2, September 19
What do “privilege”, “oppression”, “diversity”, and “social justice” mean?

Readings:
- Johnson, Chapters 2, 3, 4, 7
- Mullaly, Chapter 8
- Payne Chapter 13

Week 3, September 20
How do different groups experience privilege and oppression?

Readings:
- CP: Anderson, Margaret L. and Patricia Hill Collins (eds). Race, Class, and Gender. Introduction (pp. 1-9) and Conceptualizing race, class, and gender (pp. 75-97).
- CP: Langston, Donna. Tired of playing Monopoly? Pp. 140-149 in Race, Class, and Gender
- CP: Zinn, Maxine Baca et al. Gender through the prism of difference. Pp. 166-173 in Race, Class, and Gender.
Introduction to “theory”

Week 4, October 3
What are theories and why should we care?

Readings:
- CP: Finn, Janet. (2003). *Just Practice* Chapter 4: Just Thinking: Theoretical Perspectives on Social Justice-Oriented Practice
- Payne, Chapters 1, 2, 3
- Mullaly, Chapter 7

SELF-ASSESSMENT ASSIGNMENT PART I DUE

Community processes

Week 5, October 10
What are communities?

Readings:
- Payne Chapter 7 Systems and Ecological Perspectives

Week 6, October 17—FALL BREAK

Week 7, October 24
How do we make change happen?

Readings:
- Payne Chapter 10 Social and Community Development
- Gellman Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7

Week 8, October 31
Issues to consider when working with communities.

Readings:

Organizational processes

Week 9, November 7
What are organizations and how do they work?
• CP: Bolman, Lee G. & Terrence E. Deal. (2003). Chapter 3, Getting Organized (pp. 43-67); Chapter 6, People and Organizations (pp. 113-132); Chapter 9, Power, Conflict, and Coalition (pp. 183-201); Chapter 12, Organizational Culture and Symbols (pp. 241-269); Chapter 17, Reframing Leadership (pp. 334-366) in Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership.

MEMO 1 DUE

Week 10, November 14
Issues in human service organizations.
• Payne, Chapter 14, Empowerment and Advocacy
• Mullaly, Chapter 9
Social structures and processes

Week 11, November 21
What are social paradigms?
- Mullaly, Chapters 1-6
- Payne, Chapter 12

Week 12, November 28
Social structures and social work
- Mullaly, Chapter 10

Week 13, December 5
TBD
SELF-ASSESSMENT PART II DUE

Week 14, December 12
Catch up and wrap up
MEMO 2 DUE