Course Description:
This mini-course looks at some of the key ethical issues and challenges faced by social workers who provide services to children. The course will be skill-based and focus on helping students to learn effective approaches to resolving ethical dilemmas. Ethical issues to be examined relate to the tension between goals of protection and empowerment, tension between the rights of children and their parents, confidentiality and privacy, conflicts of interest, and termination of services.

Course Content:
The course content will specifically focus on ethical challenges that arise in the context of practice with children. Core social work principles such as confidentiality, informed consent, and self-determination are more complicated when the rights and options of clients are constrained by age, maturity, law, and the prerogatives of parents/guardians. The course will offer broadly applicable frameworks for ethical decision-making, but case studies and applied exercises will highlight the particular complexity of practice in an array of youth-service settings.

Course Design:
This mini-course will take a “hands-on” approach to exploring the ethical issues, dilemmas, and choices faced by social workers across areas of practice (e.g. child welfare; child protection; family services; mental health; school social work; juvenile justice) and levels of practice (e.g. direct practice with individuals, families, and groups; community practice; management and supervision; policy). The course will begin with an introduction and exploration of ethical principles, concepts, and terms, and several models of ethical decision-making. A case-study approach will then be used to examine common dilemmas encountered in practice from multiple perspectives-- drawing on their own practice experiences as well as case examples provided by the instructor, course participants will practice identifying ethical issues, systematically analyzing the issues, and applying theories of ethics, legal requirements and professional standards regarding ethics to inform ethical decision-making. The course design
will utilize multiple educational strategies to make the course content as accessible as possible to a range of learning styles, including lectures, readings, small and large group discussions, videos, and role-plays. Course assignments will include in-class writing assignments, in-class presentations, and a take home practice paper.

**Course Objectives:**
Upon completion of the course students will be able to:
1. Articulate the meaning of key ethical principles, concepts, and terms.
2. Demonstrate substantial familiarity with the *NASW Code of Ethics* and some familiarity with other related codes of ethics (e.g. National Association of Black Social Workers; Feminist Therapy Code of Ethics; American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy).
3. Assess similarities and differences between their personal values and professional values.
4. Demonstrate their ability to systematically analyze specific case examples from practice with children and articulate the relevant ethical issues, considerations and controversies.
5. Apply frameworks for ethical decision-making and present - both verbally and in writing - a well-reasoned, ethically sound, culturally competent argument for the resolution of ethical dilemmas or issues relevant to practice with children.
6. Analyze how the social identities of decision-makers and those affected by their decisions may affect ethical decision-making.

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:**

*Multiculturalism and Diversity:* Awareness of and attention to multiculturalism and diversity is essential to ethical decision-making. Class participants will reflect on the ways in which diversity dimensions such as gender, race, class, age, ability, sexual orientation, religion, and family structure, influence and are influenced by personal and professional ethics. Class participants will learn to continuously assess their own cultural assumptions as ethical questions and dilemmas arise, and develop capacity for culturally inclusive ethical decision-making.

*Social Justice and Social Change:* This course centers on the *process* of ethical decision-making, acknowledging the reality that social workers frequently confront complex ethical dilemmas that cannot be easily resolved. Social justice is one essential, guiding principle of ethical decision-making. This course will examine how the values of the social work profession, including social justice, should be taken into consideration in the process of ethical decision-making. The course will also examine how ethical decision-making, reciprocally, contributes to the pursuit of social justice.

*Promotion, Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation* Class participants will learn to identify and address ethical issues and dilemmas that affect individual, family, organizational, community and societal well being across the spectrum from promotion to rehabilitation, in a variety of settings and populations, through a diverse set of case studies.
Social and Behavioral Science Research: Course participants will review and apply research from social work and other behavioral science fields in discussion, analysis of case studies, presentations and papers. The course will address the ethical conduct of research, including study of human subjects review boards.

Relationship to Social Work Values and Ethics:
Social work values and ethics are at the heart of this mini-course. The course begins with review and discussion of the NASW Code of Ethics. Class participants will explore social work values and ethics in a variety of contexts through readings, case studies, class discussions and assignments.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:
If you need an accommodation for a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. It is possible that aspects of the course can be modified to better facilitate your learning process. If you disclose a disability to me I will treat that information as private and confidential.

Course Requirements:

Grades for this course will be assigned as pass or fail.

1. Participation and Attendance
To pass this class students must attend the entirety of both classes and actively participate during in-class activities. All electronic devices, including cell phones and computers, should be turned off except by the permission of the instructor. Behaviors such as sleeping, arriving late or leaving early, or doing other coursework are equivalent to non-attendance.

2. Readings
Students must complete all required readings. Completion of readings is demonstrated through active participation in class discussion and by appropriately referencing the readings in the final written assignment.

3. Assignments
Both written assignments must be completed satisfactorily to pass this course.

1. In-class writing assignment: During the first class, students will write a brief (approximately 2 pg) autobiographical reflection on the primary influences on the development of your personal values and ethics, and discussing any perceived conflict in personal vs professional values.

2. A 6-8- page paper in which you demonstrate your ability to analyze a case example from practice with children and articulate the relevant ethical issues, considerations and controversies. You should apply the ethical principles, concepts, codes of ethics, and frameworks for ethical decision-making covered in the course to explain how you would
attempt to resolve the ethical dilemmas that you have identified. Consultation with others often facilitates a more thorough, thoughtful, ethical decision-making process, so students are encouraged to complete this assignment in small groups (of 2-3). This is not required, and you will not be penalized if you choose to work independently. Your case example must center on work with children and must be approved by the instructor. You may choose to base your paper on a case example from your own practice experience or choose a case from a casebook. [Recommended resource: Reamer, F. (2009). The Social Work Ethics Casebook. Washington, DC: NASW Press.] Paper is due by 5 PM on Friday, June 18, and should be submitted via CTools.

Required Readings:

1. **Due by the first class, June 2, 2010:**

   In our first class we will discuss what ethics means and what it means to be ethical. We will define relevant terms and concepts, review the **NASW Code of Ethics** and other related codes of ethics, and introduce a framework for analyzing ethical dilemmas and weighing the options for addressing them. Immediately upon laying the foundation, we will turn to case examples to make the course content more tangible. Recognizing that class participants bring a wide array of experiences and interests - because social work practice with children is a broad area encompassing diverse roles, settings, and activities - we will draw on diverse case examples as we explore ethical issues and practice implementing steps for ethical decision-making.

   a. For the first class, **every student must read the NASW Code of Ethics.** The Code of Ethics is available at [http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp](http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp). Take the time to read thoughtfully and come to class prepared to discuss sections of the code that seem most important or meaningful to you, any questions you may have about the code, or concerns about issues that may not be covered by the code.

   b. For the first class every student must choose two articles from the list below and come to class prepared to present the main points of the articles you selected to your classmates. Students should choose those articles that seem most relevant in light of your individual practice interests. Articles can be obtained in electronic form through Mirlyn (the online catalog available at [http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/](http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/)).


2. Due by the second class, June 9, 2010:
Before the second class, students must read the following four articles/chapters, all of which will be available on the course CTools site.

