S. W. 697: Social Work Practice with Community and Social Systems

Lorraine Gutiérrez  
Winter 2001  
2778 School of Social Work Building  
1271 East Hall  
Office: 734-936-1450  
lorraing@umich.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1 – 3 PM, 1271 East Hall  
Please sign up for a specific time

Course Description
This course prepares students to engage in integrated practice focused on utilizing community and social systems to support individual, family and community functioning. It builds on practice methods presented in the foundation and the platform methods courses and elaborates how social workers can work in partnership with community and social systems. Special emphasis will be placed on conducting this work in a multicultural context and on enhancing the well-being of vulnerable and oppressed populations and communities.

Course Objectives
On completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Demonstrate an understanding of how community and social systems can play a role in improving the well-being of individuals, families, organizations and communities;
2. Identify the critical primary and secondary structures in communities that can be mobilized for engaging in practice;
3. Describe how the gender, racial, religious, economic or other characteristics of a community affect the needs and assists to be mobilized in practice;
4. Demonstrate skills for engaging community systems and encouraging the participation of community members;
5. Identify how social work ethics and values can guide practice with community and social systems.
**Relationship to Four Curricular Themes**

1. **Multiculturalism and Diversity:** This course will focus on ways in which the characteristics of individuals, families and communities will drive the approach to practice. Therefore, the themes of diversity and multiculturalism will be addressed throughout the course. This will include attention to race, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, economic status, and sexual orientation.

2. **Social Change and Social Justice:** This course will focus on methods for increasing community participation and empowerment. Therefore, the themes of social change on multiple levels toward the goal of social justice are central to this course. Special attention will be paid for developing methods that are democratic, participatory and focused on equity and equality.

3. **Promotion/Prevention/Treatment/Rehabilitation:** This course will consider how community and social systems can be mobilized toward promotion, prevention, treatment or rehabilitation efforts. For example, community and social system involvement can be an integral element of the promotion of mental health, the prevention of mental illness, the treatment of mental distress or the rehabilitation of the mentally disabled. This course will shed light on how these methods can be involved at these different types of practice focus.

4. **Social Science and Social Research:** Community and social systems practice is supported by research that suggests that well being is enhanced by the involvement of social supports and social networks. This course will be based in social research that guides this practice. In addition, social science methods will be introduced as a means for developing and evaluating specific practice methods.

**Course Responsibilities**

**Course Content**

This course will cover practice methods for working with multiple social systems to promote well being through the involvement of community and social systems. The primary focus will be on ways to work in partnership with the primary and secondary mediating structure in communities such as schools, neighborhood associations, self help organizations, community centers and faith based organizations. Emphasis will be placed on ways in which different levels of practice -- including interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy practice -- can be involved in this kind of work.

Specific practice methods to be covered will include techniques for crisis intervention, advocacy and service coordination; conducting community outreach and education; convening and working with community committees, coalitions, and planning boards; organizing and facilitating mutual aid and self help groups; and collaborating with communities to develop local programs and services. Undergirding all of these methods will be a focus on methods for encouraging community participation and empowerment.
Assignments:

Journals. Students in this class will turn in a common journal online for both SW 647 and SW 697. In these journals we will ask you to reflect up and integrate the readings, field experiences, and classroom experiences for that week. Journal entries should be posted every week on the Friday prior to class.

*The journal assignment will make up 20% of your grade.*

Group Assignment:

This assignment relates to both SW 647 and 697. In our third class session you will sign up for a working group presentation that will work on an assessment of a specific dimension of the SW Detroit Neighborhood. This assessment will utilize multiple methods for community assessment. These methods will be covered in SW 697 and the dimensions covered in SW 647. Time will be provided each week for student groups to work on the project and “field work” time will be provided during the February 19 class session. The group will turn in a 8 to 10 page summary of their findings on March 12. Each group will present their findings to the rest of the class during the second half of the semester. These findings will be compiled into a report to be shared with our community partners.

*The presentation and paper will make up 30% of your grade.*

Case analysis
In order to integrate the course content with your field placement experience, the focus of this paper will be on the description and analysis of one “case” you are working on in the field. This case can be an individual, family, group, or community or policy project. These three assignments relate to different aspects of community and social systems practice. Each individual paper should be 6 – 8 pages long and written with full references in APA format.

Paper 1: Provide some background and context for the case. This should include the following:

- A brief description of your organization: where it is, what it does, who it works with, your role within it;
- Why you were assigned this case;
- How you view the central problem, issue, or situation this case presents. Provide a brief review of some literature related to this particular case;
- How you view your role in relation to the case: How involved will you be? Who else will be working on this case and how you will work together.
Paper 2: Provide an assessment of this case. This should include the following:
- A description of the client system;
- How the client system views the situation and how it has been handled in the past;
- The major strengths or resources of this client system;
- How issues of gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation and other identities impact on this case;
- Tentative “goals” or “objectives” for working on this case.

Paper 3: Describe and analyze your work on this case. This should include the following:
- A discussion of your progress on this case: who has been involved? How did you engage the client and other systems?
- What change methods did you use? How effective were they?
- What have your accomplished so far?
- What have you learned from CSS practice from working on this case?

Each part will be worth 10% of your grade. Part 1 will be due February 19. Part 2 will be due March 26. Part 3 will be due April 16.

Class Participation:

Each week we will engage in group activities and discussion, therefore attendance is very important. Students are expected to attend every class session and participate in discussions and group exercises. Class participation will be graded based on the self assessment form that is attached.

Class Participation makes up 20% of your grade.

Grading

A 100 point system is used. At the end of the term, the numerical grades earned for each written assignment will be averaged and translated into letter grades using the following formula:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
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<td>91-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>81-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>&lt;69</td>
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Grades in the B range reflect satisfactory completion of course requirements (competent performance). C grades reflect less than satisfactory work. A D indicates deficient performance and is not acceptable at the graduate level. A grades are given for exceptional individual performance. Assignments turned in on time can be revised if students desire.
Readings

Readings for this course have been selected very carefully to reflect community and social system practice. Students should come to class having read the material and prepared to discuss and work with what has been covered. Some classroom exercises have been developed to synthesize and apply the readings to practice.

Books:
These books are available at Ulrichs on the corner of S. University and E. University. All books and the coursepack will also be placed on reserve at the Social Work Library.

Required:

Recommended:

The prologue and Part I of this book are in the coursepack. This book has been ordered and will be on reserve for those who would like to read more.

Reader:
A course pack of additional readings is available at Excel at 1117 S. University.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session 1: January 8, Introduction and Overview

Activities
Group and individual introductions
Overview of course and requirements
Introduction to South West Detroit
Defining community and social systems practice
Session 2: January 15, MLK Events

A number of lectures, exhibits, videos, performances and other presentations will be held on campus from January 7 to January 31 in recognition of Martin Luther King Day. A complete listing of these events is on the Web at [link]. Select at least two of these events to attend and discuss them in your journal.

Readings
Coursepack: Pages 1 – 66 in Detroit Lives

Session 3, January 22, Principles of Community and Social Systems Practice Methods

Activities
Case conference groups meet

Readings
Adams & Nelson: Part One
Delgado: Section One
Gutierrez: Chapter 1

Session 4, January 29: Entering and Engaging with Communities and Social Systems

Readings
Adams & Nelson: Chapter 11
Gutierrez: Chapters 6 & 8
Delgado, Chapters 5 & 10
Coursepack: Naples

Session 5: February 5, Scanning and mapping methods for community and social systems: Assets and needs

Readings
Delgado, chapters 6, 7 & 8
Gutierrez, Chapter 11
Adams & Nelson: Chapter 12

Session 6: February 12, Scanning and mapping methods for community and social systems: GIS systems

Readings
Adams & Nelson: Chapters 4 & 5
Delgado, Chapter 9
Gutierrez, Chapter 7
Session 7: February 19, Creating a comprehensive community assessment

Activities
Working session on group assignments

Case Analysis – Part 1 due

Practice Methods with Community and Social Systems

Session 8: March 5, Practice in Dimension One: Developing critical consciousness

Readings:
Adams & Nelson, Chapter 13
Gutierrez, Chapters 2 & 4


Session 9: March 12, Practice in Dimension Two: Group facilitation skills

Readings:
Community toolbox (http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/) – Part E, Chapter 16: Group Facilitation and Problem Solving


Community Assessment report due

Session 10: March 19, Practice in Dimension Two: Education, Skill Development and Self Help

Readings:
Adams & Nelson: Chapters 9 & 10
Gutierrez, Chapters 3 & 5
Session 11: March 26, Practice in Dimension Three: Identifying and Securing Resources

Readings:
Adams & Nelson, 6
Gutierrez, Chapters 9 & 10

Case analysis: Part 2 due

Session 12: April 2, Practice in Dimension Four: Changing community conditions through coalition building

Readings
Adams & Nelson: Chapters 7, 8, & 14
Delgado, Chapter 11

Session 13: April 9, Evaluating community and social systems practice

Readings:
Delgado: 12 & 13
Gutierrez: 12 & 13

Session 13: April 16, Assessing our own learning
Case Analysis, Part 3 due
Guidelines for Evaluating Your Own In-Class Participation

Successful social planning at the community level is almost always a collaborative activity. Participants in a planning process are often volunteers who may be new to the planning process and who learn “on the job,” often from others they work with. Much of what you learn in this class is also likely to derive from your own participation and your interaction with other students. You will contribute to your own learning and to theirs by the questions and comments you make in class, the way in which you make formal presentations, the leadership you undertake in your design teams, and the ways you contribute to others in class groups.

You may use the following criteria to evaluate your own in-class participation. Alternatively, you may prefer to write a brief, one-page essay (400 words or less) that indicates how you would grade your own participation and why.

Your Name________________________________ Score Yourself 1-10

1. I read the assignments in advance of class, thought about them and came ready to ask questions or to integrate new info. ______

2. I took initiative for raising issues in class that I think benefited others, brought in news clippings or other useful materials to share. ______

3. I played a leadership, facilitative or otherwise active role during in-class exercises and small group activities. ______

4. I did my share and more as a member of my assignment team. ______

5. I played a constructive role and assumed my share of responsibility and more as a member of the class. ______

6. I attended all class sessions. ______

7. Other (describe) _____________________________________________

______________________________ ______

Pick the five highest scores, and multiply by 2. Your total score _____