S. W. 697: Social Work Practice with Community and Social Systems  
Winter 2002

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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.

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**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 social systems 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 -- can be involved in this kind of work. Undergirding all of these levels is a focus on methods for encouraging community participation and empowerment.

**Assignments:**

**Journals**: Students in this class will turn in a common journal onto CourseTools for both SW 647 and SW 697 every other week. In these journals we will ask you to reflect upon and integrate the readings, field experiences, and classroom experiences for that week. The class will be divided into two groups with each group alternating the weeks in which they turn in a journal. Journal entries should be posted every week on the Friday prior to class. The group that does not turn in journals will read these journals and comment on them in CourseTools. The journal assignment will make up 20% of your grade.

**Group Assignment**: This assignment relates to both SW 647 and 697. In our second 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 that will be covered in the first section of the class. Time will be provided each week for student groups to work on the project and “field work” time will be provided during one or more class sessions. The
Each group will turn in a 8 to 10 page summary of their findings on March 11. 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 assignment” 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. Each part will be worth 10% of your grade. **Part 1 will be due February 18. Part 2 will be due March 25. Part 3 will be due April 15.**

**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;
- A brief description of this case assignment and why you were assigned to it;
- 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 you accomplished so far?
- What have you learned from CSS practice from working on this case?

**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 at the end of this course outline.
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>
<th>Numerical Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-96</td>
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<tr>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B-</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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<td>(no credit)</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 and a map of Detroit 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. The course pack is available at Excel at 1117 S. University.

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Session 1: January 7, Introduction and Overview**

**Activities**
Group and individual introductions
Overview of course and requirements
Introduction to South West Detroit -- Lunch with community partners
Defining community and social systems practice

Session 2: January 14, Principles of Community and Social Systems Practice Methods

Activities
Form assignment groups

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

Week 3, January 21, 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 http://www.mlksymposium.org/. Select at least two of these events to attend and discuss them in your journal. We will also discuss these events in class on January 28.

Readings
Pages 1 – 66 in Detroit Lives.

Week 4, January 28: Entering and Engaging with Communities and Social Systems

Readings
Adams & Nelson: Chapter 11
Delgado, Chapter 10
Gutierrez: Chapter 6

Session 5: February 4, Scanning and mapping methods for community and social systems: Assets and needs

Activities:
Participant Observation/Community Treasure Hunt

Readings
Delgado, chapters 8 & 9
Gutierrez, Chapter 11
Adams & Nelson: Chapter 12

Session 6: February 11, Scanning and mapping methods for community and social systems: GIS systems

Readings
Delgado, Section II
Gutierrez, Chapter 7

Session 7: February 18, Assessing community conditions

Activities
Working session on group assignments

Readings:
Adams & Nelson: Chapters 4 & 5, 13

Case Analysis – Part 1 due

Practice Methods with Community and Social Systems

Session 8: March 4, Practice in Dimension One: Developing critical consciousness

Readings:
Gutierrez, Chapters 2 & 4

Session 9: March 11, Practice in Dimension Two: Group facilitation skills

Readings:
Gutierrez, Chapter 3
Community toolbox (http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/) – Part E, Chapter 16: Group Facilitation and Problem Solving

*Community Assessment report due*

**Session 10: March 18, Practice in Dimension Two: Education, Skill Development and Self Help**

**Readings:**
Adams & Nelson: Chapters 9 & 10  
Gutierrez, Chapters 5 & 8  

**Session 11: March 25, Practice in Dimension Three: Identifying and Securing Resources**

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

*Case analysis: Part 2 due*

**Session 12: April 1, Practice in Dimension Four: Changing community conditions through coalition building**

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

**Session 13: April 8, Evaluating community and social systems practice**

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

**Session 14: April 15, 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 ____