School of Social Work  
S.W. 531 - Foundation Field Seminar  
Winter Term 2003

Tony Alvarez  
Class: Mondays, 5-7 pm  
Room:  
Office: 2784 SSWB  
Office Phone: 936-4949  
Home Phone: (734) 572-1832  
E-mail: aalvarez@umich.edu  
Office hours: Wednesday morning.; other times by appointment.

Seminar Description

This one credit seminar will meet for two hours on a biweekly basis. This seminar offers an opportunity for students to express field related concerns in a safe, non-threatening milieu. It will expose students to a wider range of practice situations than their individual field experiences and will also provide a mechanism for the integration of foundation course content with the students’ field experiences. Students will have an opportunity to discuss and troubleshoot pragmatic and procedural aspects of field instruction (e.g. educational contracts, evaluation mechanisms, etc.) This seminar, along with other foundation courses in the classroom, will provide students with a forum to begin their socialization to the social work profession.

An experiential approach to teaching will be the primary teaching tool in this section.

Seminar Competencies

Students will:
- understand their responsibilities and those of the other major players in the field instruction process.
- complete a professional plan and a written educational contract with their supervisor(s).
- demonstrate the proactive nature of supervision
- understand the value of an ongoing evaluation of their performance and will attempt it
- assess the relationship between the field setting and oppressed clients in the agency’s catchment area and will explore the reciprocal interaction between the agency and its community
- be able to complete forms and recording procedures as appropriate to their assignment
- be able to recognize and assess the impact of multiculturalism and diversity in their field setting
- understand the value of joining professional associations
- begin to apply and integrate foundation course material to their field experience
Seminar Resources

The following texts will be available in the library for supplementary reading.


Topics from the Field Instruction Manual will also be used for discussion.

Students’ experiences in the field will offer valuable material for class discussion.

Relationship of the Seminar to Four Curricular Themes:

- Multiculturalism and Diversity: Special attention will be given to assessing the agencies represented in the class around their availability and access by all populations, including those populations considered "at risk."
- Social Justice and Social Change. Social Workers strive to promote optimal learning opportunities for all client populations that we serve. The role of the worker as a change agent will be reviewed and discussed in the seminar. Relevant legislation and policies that seek to promote this egalitarian view will be reviewed and discussed.
- Promotion, Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation. This seminar will offer the perspective that intervention can occur with all client systems, namely with the individual, the family, the agency and the community. Approaches will be demonstrated for all levels of practice. System-wide prevention programs will be reviewed and discussed.
- Behavioral and Social Science Research. Relevant theories and findings regarding service accountability, empirical validation of interventions and evaluation of practice will be covered.

Seminar Expectations

As seminar facilitator:
1. I will come to class on time and be prepared to present and discuss course information.
2. I will participate, as best as I can, in the challenges of the class
3. I will strive to develop a safe and caring classroom environment
4. I will reflect on your feedback and, if I am in agreement, do what is necessary to apply it.
5. I will offer learning opportunities to challenge you
6. I will offer feedback

As seminar participants:
1. I expect you to arrive on time for every session, prepared and ready to actively participate in classroom activities
2. I expect you to complete all assignments in a timely fashion.
3. I expect you to help maintain the safe, caring and respectful environment of the classroom
4. I expect you to actively and appropriately give and receive feedback to class members

Seminar Assignments

The satisfactory completion of this seminar will be determined by your attendance, your participation and the completion of the following assignments.
1. **Attendance of all class sessions.** If you expect to miss a session, prior notice is necessary, so that we can discuss consequences to your missing the class. Otherwise an I or U grade is earned at the end of the term.

2. **Reflection papers.** These are two page papers, designed to-
   a) give me feedback about the sessions we are having;
   b) give you opportunity to “converse” with me, privately about placement concerns
   c) offer you the opportunity to expound on topics of interest, and
   d) allow us ongoing dialogue about seminar topics.

   **I expect 4 for the term.** *The topics for these papers are provided under separate cover.*

As incoming students, you are responsible for completing an educational agreement and an evaluation of your field experience. This seminar offers an opportunity for you to receive feedback from the seminar facilitator of your completed forms, should you desire it.

**Possible discussion topics**

- Creating ideal social work environments...how do I do it? what will it take?
- Record Keeping- what really is confidential and what isn’t?
- Supervision...how do I optimize my learning opportunity?
- How do I learn "the ropes?"
- Who teaches me the practical stuff: dressing, parking, lunch, work space, telephone, insurance
- How do I access clients?
- Is my supervisor a friend or a foe?
- How am I doing so far? How do I know?
- I need help quick. How do I get it?
- Termination...when do I start? Do I have to?
- Here’s the client. Now what? How do I engage?
- What exactly do I do as a social worker?
- But they don’t want to talk to me!! What now?
- Schedules; how much are they really "written in stone?"
- How do I find these things out?
- The Code of Ethics!! Where does my value system fit? What about agency policy?
- So much to do! How do I budget my time?
- Not much to do! How do I spend my time wisely/effectively?
- I feel like I'm doing such x&**#@%^ work! What do I do?
- How do I tell my supervisor that her/his teaching style isn’t working for me?
♦ Are these practices ethical? honest? legal?
♦ What to do about conflicts- of interest, of values, of styles, of direction?
SW 531: Foundation Field Seminar

Session Topics

Note: During these seven sessions, I will have something prepared in the specific topic areas listed below. However, discussion of critical issues from your placement will take priority over this agenda.

Session 1: Creating a class environment conducive to optimal learning

For this seminar to succeed, it will be critical that we, as a unit, work at creating and maintaining an environment that will support optimal learning for all participants. A model will be presented and activities will be provided to begin developing this choice environment. Application to field will follow.

Session 2: Conflict Strategies/ Resolution/ Negotiation

In this session, we will examine conflict and its role in our lives. Application to field work, specifically around negotiating for supervision as well as negotiating through the educational agreement, will follow.

Session 3: The Agency's Tools

In this session, we will examine the tools that the agency offers to facilitate the client's journey. We will also address the tools that you bring with you into the agency. Specific attention will be given to supervision and the educational agreement as essential tools.

Session 4: Point A: My beliefs, values and experiences

In this session, we will explore what you bring to the agency and the profession. Specific attention to our diversity.

Session 5: Point B: My Goals

In this session, we will address how your goals, developed through the educational agreement, are being addressed. Also attention to taking time to re-evaluate those goals.

Session 6: More challenges

In this session, we will examine some case examples pertinent to seminar participants.

Session 7: Now what?: Revisiting the model

In this session, we will revisit the facilitation model and evaluate its usefulness and its application to field experience and field seminar. Specific attention also to ways we can extend our learning through the connections available to us in the profession, in the school and in the field agency.
**Four reflection papers are required.** They should each be approximately two pages in length. Feel free to type them, write them, draw them, or email them. I will read each one, offer comments and return them to you in a timely manner. Below, I have summarized the topics for each of the papers. Please check with me if the descriptions are unclear, or do not seem to fit with the placement that you are having.

1. **Who showed up? (Your Point A) This is required**
   You have arrived; in Michigan, in Ann Arbor, at the School of Social Work. And you have just completed the first session of the seminar. Who is the person who came to the first session of SW531? Tell me about yourself, about your strengths and about the challenges you expect to face. Your experiences? Your beliefs? Your goals and expectations? How will you be a resource for the rest of us in this seminar? What might you need from the seminar (participants, facilitator, content)? Tell me about the "you" that has or will show up at Field Placement? What is your placement? What do you foresee as areas that you will be challenged in? Where do you feel secure?

2. **The environment of the agency that you are placed in**
   You have started at placement. You have had some time to explore, to observe, to assess. What is your take on the agency? Its accessibility for clients? What values/beliefs seem to dominate? Is there a waiting room? Does it evoke comfort? inclusively? caring? Speak about its diversity. Reflect on the agency policies in light of the "ideal environment" that we spoke of in class.

3. **The challenges/interventions used at your agency/placement**
   Going into your sixth week of placement. You have had opportunities to observe interventions being designed, actions being taken, meetings being facilitated. This paper will focus on the tools that are being used by the professional staff at your placement to help clients with their journeys.
   Describe some of those vehicles used by your agency as means to get clients/client systems from their Point A to their Point B. What tools come out of the staff's proverbial "bag of tricks?" (For ex.: A WISC-R is used to assess IQ when the agency does testing; or, the agency offers "Social Skills" groups for those children referred for skill enhancement; or, a community survey is used to determine poverty level at my agency;)
   This paper also should focus on the tools that you bring to the placement. Tools that are available to you to get you to your Point B.

4. **The things you are doing to enhance your learning**
   Two months into the placement and how is it going? Are your goals being attended to? Are you getting supervision? Do you have enough clients? Too many clients? Is the space conducive for optimal learning for you? Are you getting the training you hoped for? What are you doing to optimize your opportunities for having "peak learning experiences?"

5. **Who will show up next term? This is required**
   The first semester is about over. You have had three months in the field. What has this experience done for you? Who are you? What is different about you? What is the same? Has your vision changed? How did you do with achieving some of the goals you set for yourself?