Social Work 697: Social Work Practice with Community and Social Systems (Sec 003)  
Winter, 2003

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Appointment times are listed on the door of 3736. Others are available if you request.

Note: This course is one of those designated by the Governing Faculty to Intensively Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice. Attention to these four dimensions is to occur across the three courses within each Practice Area Concentration and the Program Evaluation course. Note that these IF dimensions are related to the themes that are mandated to be included through all courses, but they are to be foregrounded even more in the Practice Area Concentration courses. This course is the Practice Methods course within the Community and Social Systems Concentration, so our emphasis will be on the development of skills for practice and the application of knowledge and theory to various areas and stages of practice in community settings.

We will be emphasizing how the four dimensions are relevant in all approaches to practice. For instance, social justice as a desired goal of all work within community and social systems; diversity/multicultural competence and humility as necessary for social justice and for effective practice; and oppression and unearned privilege as barriers to social justice. This includes articulating what social justice is, forces for and against social justice goals, and factors that must be incorporated for practice that furthers social justice. Factors necessary to examine will include 1) forces that create and perpetuate unearned privilege and oppression and discrimination related to group memberships; 2) dimensions of diversity and how they interact/intersect with each other; 3) power, various ways of understanding power, and how power is relevant in all of the above; and 4) conflict at different systems levels (individual, family, group, within and between organizations, and between and across groups) and its importance in negotiating across power differences and different types of boundaries.

What follows is the course description approved by the faculty several years ago. This course description has not yet been revised to include language and goals that emphasize the Intensive Focus (IF) goals. We are working on changing the courses simultaneously with rewriting the course descriptions, so will be working on the language in this course description during this year. The revised course descriptions will be submitted to the governing faculty for their approval in winter, 2004.

The School is also conducting an evaluation of the IF change process in order to provide us information to inform our on-going planning. This year we are identifying and working on ways to measure desired outcomes—for student learning overall and within particular courses, for each course, for each set of courses, for the curriculum as a whole, and the School as an organization. It is likely that we will be asked to participate in evaluation-related activities over the course of the term, but we don’t know yet exactly what these might be. We are very interested in your advice.
about relevant language and goals for this course in relation to the IF initiative. This term, we will be developing a “course portfolio” for 697. One component of this will be to collect examples of student assignments and methods of evaluation, so I will be asking permission from some of you to include examples of your work within the eventual portfolio.

**Course Description**

This course will prepare students to engage in integrated practice focused on utilizing community and social systems to support and empower individuals, families, and communities [and organizations within communities]. This will include skills for entering, assessing, and working collaboratively with client systems and their social networks. this course will build on practice methods presented in the foundation and platform methods courses and give special attention to partnership, strengths based, and empowering models of practice. Special emphasis will be placed on conducting this work in a multicultural context with vulnerable and oppressed populations and communities.

**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 emphasis will be on ways to work in partnership with the primary and secondary mediating structures in communities, such as schools, neighborhood associations, self help associations, 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 type of work. The focus on this practice will be on systems ranging in size from individuals to communities and national or international organizations.

Specific practice methods will include feminist, multicultural, structural, and community social work models of practice. These models 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. Topical issues will include: enhancing individual, family, and community safety and security; the mediation of community conflicts; the social integration of newcomers and returnees to communities, promoting positive intergroup relations; and the promotion and protection of human rights and environmental justice.

**Course Objectives**

Upon 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 assets 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 of the Course to the Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed throughout this course through a focus on the ways in which the characteristics of individuals, families, [groups] and communities drive the approach to practice. This will include attention to race, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, economic status, and sexual orientation.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be central to this course on multiple levels. Methods for increasing community participation and empowerment will be reviewed, and special attention will be given to developing methods that are democratic, participatory, and focused on equity and equality.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be covered by considering how community and social systems can be mobilized toward promotion, prevention, treatment, and 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, and the rehabilitation of the mentally disabled. This course will shed light on how these methods can be involved at these different types of practice and foci.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** will form the basis of this course and will guide practice in working with community and social systems. For example, 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. In addition, social science methods will be introduced as a means for developing and evaluating specific practice methods.

Relationship of this Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

This course will address how social work ethics and values can guide practice with community and social systems. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to inform practice in this area. Special emphasis will be placed on the social worker’s responsibility to promote the general welfare of society by preventing and eliminating discrimination, ensuring equal access to resources, expanding choices and opportunities for all persons, encouraging respect for diversity, advocating for changes in social policies, and encouraging informed participation by the public. In addition, ethical issues related to working with various client systems will be reviewed, such as confidentiality, privacy, rights and perogatives of clients, the client’s best interest, proper and improper relationships will clients, interruption of services, and termination. Also, please see objective 5 and the relationships to themes one and two above.

Course Design

In-class activities will include discussions, case presentations, and practice simulations. Videos and guest speakers will be utilized to provide examples of current and past practice. Students may also participate in field visits to community-based organizations. Course assignments will include readings, papers, group projects, and action projects that involve these methods.

Above is the end of the “official” course description. The exact mix of the activities listed in the Course Design section will be negotiated as a class during the first weeks of the course.
An additional classroom process objective is to

Engage in empowering and critical dialogue and practices within the classroom, in order to deepen critical consciousness, to learn from each other, and to practice skills in collaborative learning and practice.

We will spend the first component of the course a) reviewing what you have learned so far and its implications for this course, b) creating some knowledge of what each of us brings to the classroom, and c) developing a classroom climate that facilitates exchange among class members, who should represent the multiple practice method concentrations within the School. Within this, each student will explore their own interests and background and identify key learning and change goals. A large component of the class will be focused on case studies—working with case studies in the classroom and developing a case study within the context of one’s own practice. We will collaborate with class members on planning, analyzing, implementing and evaluating integrated practice (both horizontal and vertical) within community and social systems. We will confront questions of power, conflict, and working across and building on differences, and explore strategies to addressing these. Empowering approaches and alliance building will be especially emphasized.

This is a practice methods course and thus focuses on the development of skills for practice. The course will be highly participatory, and we will practice relevant skills (e.g., planning, assessment, analysis, group facilitation) within the classroom. Thus attendance and class participation are important criteria and elements within the course.

Since a major strength of a practitioner is to know oneself well, and to be able to adapt theory, tactics, and skills to fit one’s strengths, and to find ways to compensate for areas in which we are less strong, we will work in class and through assignments to identify who and where each of us is in each area. We will also be scrutinizing ourselves, our assumptions, and the readings for ways in which particular assumptions, goals, strategies, etc. may or may not be sensitive to ethnicity, gender and other aspects of the people and communities of concern. Additional responsibilities include doing the reading, completing assignments and activities—both in class and out of class—and struggling with the issues and challenges raised by the goals and objectives of the course.

I am open to considering assignments other than those I specify, but expect that any modifications or assumptions will be consistent with the goals of the course, spelled out in advance, and negotiated with me. I would love to collaborate with you in the design and implementation of the course, but do not react well if I feel you are avoiding major components of the course, or being evasive.

I teach based on principles of adult learning, and hopefully in ways that can lead to skill-based learning within the classroom setting, by using the class itself as an arena to practice and learn to observe and evaluate particular types of skills and tactics. I rarely review/lecture about assigned readings unless I know something is hard to grasp, or someone asks me to clarify something. Thus, I expect you to take responsibility for letting me know what assistance you may want, or what you would like to discuss, challenge, etc. in class, from the readings. In class, we will mostly spend time doing things together—to practice skills, consult with each other about projects, etc. I may also add some things not in the readings or to help you apply the readings, or work to help you integrate disparate materials.
Resource materials


- Course pack.

**Recommended:** (I also ordered some copies of the books below, since they are practical resources for practice in community and social systems and I thought you might want them for your library)


Course Requirements and Assignments

20% of your grade is allocated to class attendance and participation. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings and other projects and activities.

My preference is for students to engage in team projects, since that is how organizing occurs, but I want to discuss the feasibility of this in the first classes, given students’ interests and logistics. The major practice components will center around a multi-stage case study, emphasizing the particular level of practice methods in which you are concentrating (IP—in individual/group/family, community, organization, policy) but within a community and social systems context that emphasizes integrated practice across community systems and methods of practice. Students will share elements of their case study at intervals with the class as a whole, so that each of you will have an in-depth experience with one type of case that emphasizes a particular level of practice, but be able to learn from other types of cases as well.
First assignment is a self assessment—of assumptions, knowledge, skills, and relevant experiences—to identify strengths, questions, areas that need development and attention. We will work on this 5 page paper over the first several weeks of class. I will ask you to reflect on this again at the end of class, emphasizing growth over the term and goals for future work.

**Institutional Review Board Issues for Student Research**

When you get a chance, please go through the requirements for student research and the training module at the following websites: [https://cgi.www.umich.edu/~drda/index.html](https://cgi.www.umich.edu/~drda/index.html)

[http://www.irb.research.umich.edu](http://www.irb.research.umich.edu)
Coursepack I = * All coursepacks are at Excel 1117 South University (upstairs)
Coursepack II = @ 734-996-1500
Those who bought Gutierrez et al should not buy CP II

Syllabus

January 7: Introduction to the course and to each other. ID where we’ve been.

January 14: Overview of Community and Social Systems. What is this concentration?


January 21: Key elements of community and social systems: Introduction to frameworks

- Fisher et al (text): Chapter 1—understanding conflict, 3-15

- Adams & Nelson (text): Introduction, chapters 1-2 (neighborhood based services; economic context…), pp 1-58

- Delgado (text): Chapters 1-3 (introduction, urban communities; caring and helping), pp 1-46.

complete IRB review, w brief written discussion of its implications/ethics for the case study you will do, and for CSS practice

- Delgado (text) Chapter 4—principles and strategies, pp 47-66.
- Adams & Nelson (text) Chapter 3 (integrating community and individual practice), 59-86
- Fisher et al (text), Chapter 2: tools for conflict analysis, 17-36
- Lewis et al, Chapter 2—Preventive Education, 57-93.

February 4: Enhancing individual, family and community interaction. Professor Edith Lewis, guest instructor

—self-reflection due. Turn it in to Edie Lewis (or to Roxanne in the Faculty and Staff support office on second floor). It will be mailed to me

- Delgado text: Chapter 7: Framework for Practice
- Fisher et al, Chapter 3: Critical issues
- ben Asher, Moshe (2002) Writing daily macro practice notes: A primer for community organizers and developers [the strategy of keeping field notes is a valuable practice tool, whatever the level or setting in which you work]. Can be found at http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers2002/benashernotes.htm. This is also a valuable site for many other useful tools for integrated practice.

February 11: Entry, engagement, assessment, beginning planning. Using evaluation models to help conceptualize components of the project.

- Fisher et al, Chapter 4—Building Strategies…, Chapter 5—Influencing Policy , and Chapter 9—Evaluation (also review also chapter 2)
• Gutierrez et al, chapter 12--Evaluation

February 18: Examples of empowerment practice with populations, and the patch approach. First part of case study due Coursepack starts here.

• Chapters from Gutierrez on application of empowerment to populations—women, poor people of color, lesbians and gays, and those with disabilities. We will jigsaw these, with everyone getting one chapter.

• Adams and Nelson (Text): Chapter 4: The patch approach

February 25: mid-term break

March 4: Strengthening “social fabric”, enhancing collaborations and partnerships.  
Jay Connor, guest presenter

• Fisher et al (text)—Chapter 8—Working on the Social Fabric.

• website: www.comnet.org/collaboratorycs. Read materials about collaboration in preparation for guest speaker


• Adams & Nelson (text) , Chapter 7. School-based comprehensive services: An example of interagency collaboration

March 11: Intervention designs and implementations

• Delgado, Chapter 11—Delivery of Services

• Adams & Nelson (text), Chapters 5 (family preservation) and 6 (job training and employment), & 8 (linking schools with family and community-centered services)

• Gutierrez et al, Chapters 6 through 9 (empowerment in fields). We will jigsaw these


March 18: Other community systems and populations. More about empowerment and consciousness-raising. Second part of case study due

• Adams & Nelson (text)—Chapters 9 (community policing) and 10 (youth as resources)


**March 25:** Intervening and addressing the consequences of conflict. Practice that includes families and communities

• Fisher et al, (text) Chapters 6 (intervening directly) and 7 (addressing the consequences…)

• Adams & Nelson (text): Chapters 11, 12, & 13.

**April 1:** The context for practice grounded in empowerment, participation, and partnerships

• @ Gutierrez et al. Chapters 10 (administrator’s role) and 11 (research as an empowerment strategy)


• * Several chapters from Estrella, M (Ed) (14-17) *Learning from Change*—participatory monitoring and evaluation.

**April 8:** Social policy contexts and arenas for change—links with theory. Third part of case study due

• Adams & Nelson (text)—Chapter 14—Social policy/professional issues


**April 15:** Integrating, reflecting, summarizing, evaluating.

Delgado (text): Chapter 13—Reflections on Collaborative Practice

Adams & Nelson (text), Chapter 14—Strengthening partnerships between families and service providers

**4/19-22**—final reflection, final revisions and discussion of case study/learnings/skills