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. 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 Objectives:

Upon completion of the 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 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, 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 focus.

• **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.

**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 and community support structures in communities, such as schools, CSOs, 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. The focus of this practice will be on systems ranging in size from individuals to communities and/or national organizations.

Specific practice methods to be covered will include techniques for conflict resolution, change management, aspiration, 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.

**Course Format**
This course will use a seminar format to facilitate maximum participation. Specific reading assignments will be drawn from the reading list (textbook, course pack or Web), and students will be expected to discuss these in class. Guest speakers will be invited to bring experiential underpinnings to the subjects at hand. There will be an independent
reflection essay, a “take home” exam, a group “best practices” project/presentation and discussion team assignments.

Course Assignments

I. Due January 9, 2004 at noon. This personal reflection essay should be a vision of how you see applying the skills and values you have learned here at the School of Social Work in your career in community. A specific source should be used to frame this reflection: from your Course Pack, Ryan, et al, “Aligning Education and Practice…” No more than 3 double-spaced pages.

II. Due at end of class January 13, 2004, eleven, 3+ person teams will be identified to lead in-class discussions beginning January 27 thru April 20.


IV. Due April 9, 2004, at 5:00 PM. This “take home” exam will cover all of the assigned readings, lectures and class discussions, to date.

V. Group project/presentation. Spread across the last third of the course will be six group project/presentations on “best practices” in community systems. Format, research methods, samples and suggested community systems will be discussed in depth at the January 20, 2004 class meeting. On the day of assigned presentation, each group will: a) submit a 20-30 page paper, double-spaced, excluding bibliography and appendix, paper should be submitted in paper and CD-ROM formats; b) on the assigned date, present your findings and lead a class discussion for 60 minutes with presentation submitted on CD-ROM; and c) on the assigned date, each team member will submit, in confidence, their “participation” rating of all other team members.

Grading Criteria

A 100-point system will be used. At the end of the term, the numerical grades earned for each assignment plus class participation will be added and translated into letter grades using the following formula:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score 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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<td>C-</td>
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The points will be distributed on the following criteria:

- Class Participation 25 points (midway grade announced 2/17/04)
- Reflection Essay 10 points
- “Take Home” Exam 25 points
- Group Paper 25 points
- Group Presentation 15 points

Group Project/Presentation

Drawing upon concepts discussed in class, your group paper and presentation will analyze in depth “best practices” for specific community service delivery system. Your analysis should be based upon assigned class readings and additional literature related to your topic. You are encouraged to make personal contact with persons engaged with the
service delivery system and to use the resources of the Internet to obtain current material. Format, research methods, samples and suggested community systems will be discussed in depth at the January 20, 2004 class meeting. Summarize descriptive information so that you can focus on analysis; lengthy descriptive material should be included in an appendix. Give special attention to those questions pertaining to administration, coordination, and accountability. Possible topics and dates are as follows:

- Homelessness System
- Job / Economic Development System
- Health System Access and Utilization
- Domestic and Sexual Violence System
- Teen Pregnancy System
- Senior Services System
- Child and Family Services System

Class Participation

The Class Participation will be determined in the following manner:

1. On-Time Presence at each Class Session
2. Quality Participation in Class Discussion
3. Discussion Leader Performance
4. Group Project Peer Review
5. Attendance at all Group Project Presentations