Social Work 531: Foundation Field Seminar
Winter 2004

Michelle Ventour, MSW
Day and Time: Mondays 5-7pm (January 12 and 26, February 9, March 1 and 15 and 29, April 12)
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Office Hours: Before class and after class by appointment

Course Description:

This one credit seminar that occurs concurrently with the first field placement meets for two hours bi-weekly. It is designed to provide support and information to students as they begin their personal integration into the social work profession. This seminar will explore how to use this experience as a beginning step in the building of a career as a social worker. It will expose students to practice dilemmas and provide an opportunity to discuss concerns in a safe, non-threatening environment. It will be a forum to review and problem solve some of the procedural aspects of the field experience such as the educational agreements (contracts).

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand their responsibilities and the responsibilities of the other major players (i.e., supervisor, liaison, advisor, and field placement office) in the field instruction process.

2. Complete a written educational agreement with their supervisors.

3. Demonstrate the proactive nature of supervision (e.g., coming prepared to supervisory sessions; bringing questions to supervisors regarding practice issues; sharing strengths and weakness regarding their performance in the field placement; actively raising problems and issues of concern and/or clarification with supervisors).
4. Engage in ongoing assessment of their performance and complete the requisite evaluations for the field.

5. Assess the relationship between their field setting and oppressed clients in the agency’s catchment area and explore the reciprocal interaction between the agency and its community.

6. Complete all required agency forms and recording procedures as appropriate to their field assignments.

7. Recognize and assess the impact of multiculturalism and diversity in their field setting.

8. Begin to apply and integrate foundation course material with their field experience.

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:**

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity* issues will be part of the field instruction experience, and the field seminar will offer a context for the further discussion of these issues. Discussion will focus on demographic barriers between students, supervisors, other agency personnel, and agency clients and how to work with these differences. 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* issues will be addressed by helping students to critically assess agency policy manuals and procedures and the impact of social forces on the setting and its clients. Social workers strive to promote optimal learning opportunities for all client populations that we serve. The role of worker as a change agent will be reviewed and discussed. The field seminar will offer a forum for the discussion of these issues and related ethical dilemmas.

- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* approaches will be addressed within the context of the field assignments and through supervision in the field. The field seminar will offer opportunities to discuss and compare alternative strategies.

- *Behavioral and Social Science Research* will provide the knowledge base and theory for the application of interventions and analytic methods being employed in the field.
Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

Social Work ethics and values will be addressed within the seminar as they pertain to the delivery of services and the formulation of agency policies and procedures. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to inform students about the social worker’s conduct and comportment as a social worker and the social worker’s ethical responsibility to clients, colleagues, employers, employing organizations, and society. In particular, the seminar will focus on client issues such as the primacy of clients’ interests, rights and prerogatives of clients, confidentiality, and privacy. Students will also be given an opportunity to discuss ethical and value dilemmas they are experiencing in their placements.

Seminar Course Resources:

There is no required reading for this class. Texts will be available in the library for supplementary reading:


Topics from the Field Instruction Manual will also be used for discussion. Students’ and instructor’s experiences in the field will be the primary resources.

Seminar Expectations:

- Be open to personal and professional growth.
- Student and instructor will attend all classes and be on time for class.
- Participate by speaking up and allowing others to also speak.
- Complete all assignments by due dates.
- Work together to create a respectful, positive learning environment where conflict can be managed, emotional risks taken and positive learning outcomes realized.
- Take responsibility to turn criticism into constructive opportunities for change.

Assignments and Grades:

This seminar course will be graded on a pass/fail basis (S,M,U). The grade will be based on your attendance in class, participation in discussions (both of which are mandatory) and completion of assignments. Notice must be given to the instructor if there are
extenuating circumstances that prevent your attendance at any of the seminar classes and arrangements will be made to discuss consequences for missing class.


Assignment 2: Kiersey-Bates Sorter paper (2 pages), March 1 due.


Assignment 4: Practice Principles paper (2 pages), April 12 due.

Seminar Topics:

January 12: Introduction to the course, to each other. Expectations/Assignments Discussed. Understanding Roles and Supervision, Professional Identity, 7 Practice Principles, Beginnings, Educational Agreement explained and Learning Goals explained. Time Management, Stress Management.

January 26: Meet and Greet with Liaisons 6:00-7:00pm. Educational Agreement Due.


March 29: Understanding Community Resources and Policies, Who is served and who is left out?, Agency Presentations, Practice Principles – Confidentiality, Self-Determination. Termination discussed.


Other possible topic areas include record keeping, client interventions, termination issues, and other issues that are raised by students.