

MSSW Elective Courses

SW 615: Mental Health (3)

Required for MH Specialization students; elective for MSSW-non Specialization students. This course is designed to familiarize the student with the body of knowledge and the service delivery system known as "mental health." The factors of human experience, which promote mental health or serve as a barrier to healthy functioning will be examined. The student will be encouraged to seek out the client's story and how it interfaces with the dominant story of institutions and agencies which determine public policy. This course will also explore the distinctive role of the social work professional within the complex web of mental health settings. The student will become familiar with major modes of mental health intervention utilized by social workers today. In the context of social work ethics and advocacy beliefs, the student will be challenged to assess his/her own responsibility to the client and the profession.

SW 625: Children & Families (3)

This course focuses on understanding problems and issues faced by children and families from developmental, cultural, systems and ecological frameworks. The complexity of family social work practice within various human service delivery systems is examined.

SW 627: Military Social Work (3)

This course is designed to develop competence in providing services to active duty, reserve, National Guard, veterans, and their families. It focuses on the wide range of challenges, strengths, and interventions that social workers need to learn and utilize in practice when working with this population. It is recognized that the returning veterans from the Global War on Terrorism and their families in addition to the millions of veterans from previous military service likely will exceed the capacity of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veteran Affairs, consequently, many of these service members will be seeking assistance from social workers in the civilian sector. Thus, services to this population will be provided in both civilian and military agencies/facilities consequently training to be competent to assist this population is of great importance to the profession across all settings. This course seeks to develop the requisite, knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for working with service members and their families.

SW 630: School Social Work: Policy and Practice (3)

Required for SSW Specialization students; elective for MSSW-non Specialization students. This course is designed to help prepare you for social work practice in the public schools. It assumes that you have a foundation of knowledge in social work policy, practice, research, and human behavior in the social environment. It also assumes that you have had or currently have field practice or work experience in a human service setting, preferably a school. Through readings, assignments, presentations, and papers, this course will help you examine a range of practice and policy issues related to the delivery of social work services in school settings. The course also addresses current federal and Kentucky laws as they relate to practice with school-age children and their families. School social work professional standards, program development, and certification receive attention as well. An ecological and risk and resiliency framework for practice will be emphasized throughout the course. Additionally, the practice section is based on empirically supported practices and is consistent with Kent School's curricular focus on the

problem-solving process and critical thinking. Finally, special attention is given to children living in poverty. "School Social Work: Policy and Practice" meets the school social work course requirement for school social work certification in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

SW 633: Social Work and Human Sexuality (3)

This course provides knowledge about physical, behavioral, cognitive, emotional and spiritual aspects of human sexuality. At the micro level, the course explores the cultural context of sexuality including an exploration of values, variables affecting sexual functioning, and effective interventions to prevent problems and to treat clients who have sexual concerns. At the macro level the course examines the sociopolitical context of sexuality, laws and policies that focus on sexuality, group efforts to affect such laws and policies, and how all of these factors affect the day today lives of groups, dyads and individuals.

SW 636: Death & Grief (3)

Death is one universal human experience: its impact affects not only the client but the social worker, both personally and professionally. Social workers, regardless of their specialty area or practice setting, will be interacting with persons experiencing death and grief. The main purpose of this course offering is to prepare master's level social workers for effective practice with persons experiencing terminal illness as patients, family or caregivers and persons coping with grief and loss across the life span. This course focuses on affective, as opposed to cognitive learning. Content and theory will be taught, but student outcomes will be directed towards applying knowledge and skills to a variety of issues in various practice settings. To this end, actual case scenarios, decision cases, and contemporary drama will be used to engage students in problem-based learning activities. It is recommended that students have completed HBSE I and II prior to registering for this course.

SW 642: Psychopathology (3)

Required for MH Specialization students; elective for MSSW-non Specialization students. This course examines concepts of labeling theory, stigma, strengths perspective, and the clinical use of diagnostic classification of psychopathology from a social work perspective. The implications of various definitions of psychopathology and the uses of diagnostic systems to inform practice, policy, and to promote social justice are considered.

SW 647: Psychosocial Practice in Oncology I: Interpersonal Practice (3)

This course focuses on clinical competencies in practice with individuals, couples and small groups. It covers practice throughout the cancer trajectory, including diagnosis, treatment, transition to survivorship, survivorship, palliation, and end of life. It begins with an understanding of psychoneuroimmunology, stress and coping; that is, the study of interactions among behavior, the brain, and the body's immune system and how psychosocial stressors interact with the body's neuro-endocrine, immune and other systems. Theories of interpersonal relationships and cultural psychology will also provide frameworks for students in understanding patients within the context of their social environments. Students will learn to apply evidence-based interventions and evaluate their work with patients and families.

SW 648: Psychosocial Practice in Oncology II: Organizations and Communities (3)

This course covers skills that are needed to make changes on organizational and community levels to provide quality psychosocial care to all patients and families. To this end, the competencies will include 1) developing initiatives that address unmet health/mental health needs and service gaps of diverse patient groups; 2) writing grant proposals to obtain resources and funding to facilitate the provision of psychosocial services to diverse patients; 3) using databases and information technology to evaluate population needs, service provisions and/or organizational effectiveness; 4) using a community-based participatory perspective to advocate for policies that address disparate health needs for patients; 5) working with legislative staff or coalitions on policy issues related to cancer and 6) developing evaluation criteria to monitor the implementation process, cost and outcome of a psychosocial program for cancer patients.

SW 651: Foundations of Family Therapy (3)

This course is designed to give students a comprehensive and substantive understanding of the family life cycle, family dynamics, systemic thinking, and interactional theories. Systemic concepts that describe intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions and dynamics and their relationship to family development and interaction will be presented as they pertain to the field of marriage and family therapy. Major concepts are related to actual case material. Foundational concepts will be viewed through the lenses of smaller social (family) systems, language systems, and larger social cultural systems. Students will also be introduced to the role of the marital and family therapist in terms of relationship to clients, a relational approach to understanding clients, and the self of the therapist.

SW 657: Group Methods (3)

Required for MH Specialization students; elective for MSSW-non Specialization students. The values, principles, and skills of group work are analyzed and applied. All major aspects of group life are explored and there is an emphasis on the purposes, content, and forms of various group experiences. The social worker's role in facilitating the group process is detailed, and there is a special emphasis placed on the beginning processes associated with group methods.

SW 659: Introduction to Couple and Family Therapy Practice (3)

This course emphasizes understanding assessment, case planning, and intervention in couple and family therapy. The student will be introduced to the major assessment and intervention ideas/skills associated with the major schools of marital family therapy. Skill development will encompass systemic assessment, consensus building, case planning and the tools necessary to conduct an initial interview.

SW 660: Motivation and Change (3)

Required for ADCS Specialization students; elective for MSSW-non Specialization students. The course focus is on theory and evidence based practice methods aimed at engaging resistant people in the process of change: Motivational interviewing (MI) is a client-centered, yet directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation for change. The prescribed methods are focused on exploring and resolving ambivalence and were developed by William R. Miller & Stephen Rollnick in a seminal book that was published in 1991. The MI methods and principles were developed relying on an impressive body of research and it continues to receive enormous research and clinical attention. The second edition of this book (copyright 2002) is recognized as the authoritative source of theory and technique and is suitable for learning and guiding practice; this book will serve as the primary text for this class. Developed as an effective and

brief method to engage clients in change processes surrounding addiction problems, more recent research has demonstrated MI as a meta change counseling style that can be adapted to engage clients in change processes for a wide variety of healthy, yet resistant behaviors (e.g. diet, exercise, safer-sex practices, medication compliance, treatment adherence, chemical addiction, gambling, shopping, and other addictive behaviors). MI can be used as 1) a standalone intervention (e.g. engage the client in a customized weight loss program), 2) a method of increasing client adherence and dose related to some other intervention approach (e.g. engage clients in sticking with some proven weight loss method), or 3) a general counseling / interviewing approach underlying all client interactions. Given the wide variety of application, this class is appropriate for those who are interested in substance abuse practice or in adapting these methods and theory to guide counseling for other behaviors and populations.

SW 661: Special Issues in Alcohol and Drug Counseling (3)

Required for ADCS Specialization students; elective for MSSW-non Specialization students. The course prepares students for practice in specialized alcohol and other drug treatment settings. The efficacy of addiction treatment practices taught in the course is well documented in research.

SW 662: Substance Abuse (3)

Required for ADCS Specialization students; elective for MSSW-non Specialization students. Substance abuse disorders are a highly prevalent issue among most social work practice populations. This is a survey class designed to provide students with basic and fundamental knowledge about substance abuse, and to orient students for social work practice positions including entry-level substance abuse micro or macro practice positions. In addition to the direct effects of substance abuse on the victim—family and community systems are negatively impacted. Hence, the direct and indirect effects of substance abuse are pervasive and commonly impact social work practice outcomes. Substance abuse disorders are complex adversely affecting most domains of human functioning, yet there is much research knowledge available to inform practice. Given the above, a course in substance abuse is an invaluable component of social work education. Given the prevalence of substance abuse among social work populations, a basic understanding of substance abuse is fundamental to social work micro practice. Macro students will also benefit given the abundance of legislative initiatives directed at preventing and reducing the impact of substance abuse on contemporary society.

SW 664: Social Work & Law (3)

This course is designed to (1) familiarize social work students with the legal system and the various roles of social workers within the legal arena, (2) increase the social work student's understanding of the impact of the legal system on social work clients and client groups, (3) increase the social work student's understanding of the interface of law with professional social work practice, and (4) develop and enhance the skills needed by the professional social worker in situations where social work and the law interface.

SW 667: Negotiation, Mediation and Conflict Transformation (3)

Social workers often find themselves party to or facilitators of difficult conversations. Our roles include creating a space for people to communicate with one another, brokering agreements and resources, mediating disagreements, and advocating on behalf of disenfranchised and

vulnerable persons. At times, our skills in negotiation are called upon in our own conversations with clients, colleagues, employers or community members. Mediation and problem resolution are activities we all engage in across the life span and in all of our roles. However, many of us have not consciously examined the theories and process of negotiation that serve as the underpinning for our personal approach to managing conflict, nor have we critically reflected upon and received feedback about our skills as negotiators. In this course, we will study the theory and process of negotiation and mediation, understand the fundamentals of how they work, explore a variety of contexts and problems that create a need for conflict resolution, and learn and practice the related skills. In particular, we will look at how communicating in conflict interacts with gender and diversity issues, and we will examine our own and others' assumptions about what is at stake in resolving conflicts. Using a combination of lectures, group discussions, simulations, small-group feedback, conceptual exercises and journal writing, you will explore your strengths and weaknesses as a negotiator, and improve your skills in transforming conflict from destructive to constructive.

SW 681: Social Gerontology (3)

Required for GER Specialization students; elective for MSSW-non Specialization students. This course is designed to enable the student to understand the complexity of the aging process from the perspective of the individual, the family, and society. The course will explore physical, emotional, psychological, social, spiritual, environmental, economic, and demographic aspects of aging. Special attention will be paid to (1) society's attitudes toward global aging, current models of aging; and to (2) the student's attitude towards her/his own aging. New and creative ways of being old in this society will be explored.

SW 682: Social Work Practice with Older Persons (3)

Required for GER Specialization students; elective for MSSW-non Specialization students. Specific knowledge, skills, and values associated with social work intervention with older persons are the emphasis of this course. There is an emphasis on the heterogeneity of the population of older Americans and issues associated with diversity. Taught from a strengths perspective using a narrative collaboration, this course will provide the learner with pragmatic skills needed to work with diverse populations of older adults.

SW 684: Spirituality and Social Work (3)

This course provides an in-depth examination of the meaning of spirituality for social work practice. The students will be able to broaden their knowledge of basic spiritual and religious doctrines and principles, their application to social work, and to apply this knowledge within a variety of social work settings. Spirituality is discussed in a very broad perspective with its impact on healing of the mind and body. This course guides students in examining their own spiritual perspectives and possible conflicts with differing perspectives of clients. Students further consider spirituality as a possible vehicle to facilitate client's growth and change.

SW 685: Planning & Community Development (3)

Using theories from the behavioral and social sciences, this course will provide students with a basic theoretical, methodological, value, and skill base in social planning within a context of community development, organization and advocacy. Methods of helping population groups develop and gain meaningful participation in community decision-making processes will be explored. Processes of planning and community development will be analyzed with particular

emphasis on the role and influence of the political economic process on social priority determination, and policy and resource development. The course will stress the importance of ethical social work approaches, social and economic justice considerations, and values as central features of social planning and development.

SW 697: Special Topic Classes

International Social Work Elective (3): Academic credit may be earned through these student exchanges. Students receive lectures on social welfare programs, and interact with students and faculty both formally and informally from the host university. Visits to social welfare agencies range from programs for the elderly to community centers, homeless programs, hospitals, and substance abuse programs. Time is provided for students to experience the culture of the host country as well. Typically, the study abroad is for 2 weeks with preparatory sessions prior to departing for the host country. Students interested should contact Dr. Tom Lawson for more information about the next scheduled International Trip.

Comparative International Social Policy (3): This course seeks to provide students with knowledge and information about social policy and programs in selected countries and to compare it to the United States. Students will recognize the influence of the contextual influences of history and culture on the development of social policy within the context of international comparisons. Differences and similarities of policy and programs will be examined between and among countries with a goal of recognizing strengths, weaknesses and gaps.

Health Care Delivery in Developing Countries (3): This course examines healthcare issues and practice within the context of a developing country. Particular focus will be given to chronic, life-threatening diseases such as cancer and HIV/AIDS. The course emphasizes the use of interdisciplinary teams of social workers, nurses, and physicians to care for patients and families along the illness continuum from detection and screening to end-of-life. Students will learn how to indigenize healthcare practice, taking into account limited resources and cultural factors such as stigma, gender, religion, and the caste system. A 3-week service-learning trip to India, Nepal, or other developing country is included as part of the course.

SW 699: Independent Study (3)

Prerequisites: Successful completion of the foundation content and permission of the instructor. The student is required to submit a proposal for investigating some area or problem in social work not ordinarily offered in the social work program. The report of the student's study will be presented in a written report.

Elective Courses Taken in Other Units

Graduate social work students may take graduate courses (level 500 and above) in other academic units of the University of Louisville to fulfill elective requirements provided such courses have relevance to social work education and are approved by the student's faculty advisor and the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. A maximum of 6 credit hours is allowed. Students currently enrolled in the Kent School should seek prior approval from their advisor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs before registering for these classes.