

Indiana University
School of Social Work

Fall, 1992

S531
Gustafson

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE I

Purpose of Course

As a core, beginning practice course, the purpose of this course is to offer students the opportunity to begin the development of certain unique aptitudes and capabilities essential to performing basic social work tasks with various sized client systems and within various social systems. The course is constructed to offer students an opportunity to acquire certain knowledge, understandings and skills related to intervention processes and to offer an opportunity for the integration of attitudes, knowledge, and conscious use of self acquired in other courses and experiences that form the base of effective social work practice.

Description of Course

Social work practice skills represent a holistic expression of the practitioner's knowledge, values, understanding and commitment as demonstrated through action. Assuming that we define practice skill as situationally appropriate (what actions by whom are most effective for this system with those specific problems under which set of circumstances) performance competencies, the use of skill in social work practice contains dimensions of knowledge, values, performance and consequences, representing the operational definition of commitment to clients and their goals. Many social work authors have attempted to classify practice skills. This is difficult because of the holistic and interactive nature of such skills, however, for the purposes of this course we have broken down practice skills into the following groups:

1. Communication skills including interviewing, observing, collecting information, recording, and writing;
2. Engagement skills including the ability to develop and use the helping relationship appropriate to the client system with which the worker is involved, appropriate problem definition, goal clarification and empathic responsiveness;
3. Assessment skills which include analyzing, interpreting and integrating information, being able to organize and prioritize a generalized knowledge so it is usable in specific individual situations, using understanding and

knowledge to give meaning to information, ability to make judgments as to the meaning of information and systemic interactions, preparing an appropriate assessment statement;

4. Planning skills which include the ability to generate alternatives, to connect assessment to action, to predict possible costs and outcomes of alternatives;
5. Interventive skills such as providing practical help, advice, information, clarification, referral and linkage, emotional support, negotiating, advocacy, limit setting, etc.;
6. Termination and evaluative skills which include the ability to disengage from the helping process, assess own performance, as well as to assess outcomes of work with clients.

In a classroom setting, there are limits to the student's opportunity to actually practice certain skill development such as use of relationship. It is assumed that certain communication skills, engagement skills, and interventive skills will be taught in the practicum. The classroom experience should help a student gain a cognitive understanding of such skills and to assess such skills as they are seen in case recording or video tape. In addition, this course will concentrate heavily on the understanding and use of process skills: problem identification, assessment skills, planning skills, consideration of interventive actions, and termination/evaluation.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of course requirements the student is expected to:

1. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the purpose and nature of social work practice.
2. Demonstrate a beginning commitment to the disciplined use of self in professional relationships.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of interaction between people and environments as the context of social work practice.
4. Demonstrate a beginning awareness of the relationship between the student's own beliefs and social work values

and ethics and of the implications of social work values and ethics for social work practice.

5. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the importance of relationships and of the variables that impact on the development and use of such relationships in different systems.
6. Demonstrate a beginning understanding of the relevance and use of bio-psycho, socio-behavioral knowledge and practice wisdom as a base for social work practice.
7. Demonstrate a beginning understanding of and sensitivity to ethnic, racial, gender, socio-economic and cultural factors.
8. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the relationships between the professional practitioner and organizations.
9. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the nature and use of the problem-solving process in social work practice, with special emphasis on maximizing client participation.

The student should demonstrate a beginning ability to:

1. Communicate effectively in classroom discussion and in written assignments.
2. Assess the engagement skills of practitioners as represented in case records and video recordings.
3. To develop reasonably complete and accurate assessments of situations as presented through case records and video recordings.
4. To develop a plan of intervention or evaluate the intervention plans and actions of others.
5. To assess the effectiveness of interventive actions.

Required Texts

Beulah R. Compton and Burt Galaway. Social Work Processes. (Fourth Edition) Belmont,, California: Wadsworth, 1989.

Doman Lum. Social Work Practice and People of Color: A Process-Stage Approach. (Second Edition) Pacific Group,

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California: Brodus/Cole Publishing Co., 1992.

Content and Method

The content of the course and its development will generally follow the Table of Contents found in Compton and Galaway. That text provides the basic material for the course and it will be supplemented by the readings found in the other text and the reader.

Learning and teaching in the course will generally be achieved through the use of the discussion method. Much of the discussion will be centered around actual case material. It is anticipated that students will make major contributions to discussions utilizing readings and their own experiences. Case material includes issues related to working with minorities and women.

Assignments

Students are encouraged to keep up with the assigned readings. The amount of reading material is considerable and if neglected becomes enormously difficult to catch up, particularly for examination purposes.

Evaluation

Grades will be determined by an average of the less tangibles, exams and/or papers. It is expected that every student will attend each class session. Less tangibles reflect the following: Each student is expected to attend class, participate fully and expressively and to engage voluntarily in the various learning experiences offered throughout the course. In participating it is expected that the student reflect interest in and respect for the other class members in a manner which is congruent with the values of the social work profession. Papers and exams will be negotiated. Values will be assigned to each and will represent a percent of the total grade.

Assignments/Due Dates

To be negotiated and announced.

Student Evaluation of Course

Near the end of the semester, students will have an opportunity to evaluate the course.

Outline of Course

Unit I. Introduction and Overview of Course--The Nature of Social Work Practice--Knowledge and Value Base

Discussion of course purpose and objectives; the place of the course in the curriculum; social work as a profession; person-situation interaction; knowledge for practice; value and ethical base; the problem solving process; agency as workplace; the ethnic reality discussion of cases from Reader.

Required Reading: Compton and Galaway. Chapters 1-5.
Lum. Chapters 1-2

Unit II. Consideration of Development and Use of the Helping Relationship

Exploration of client/worker relationship in terms of purpose, development, and evaluation; ethnic, racial, age, gender, variables; discussion of cases from Reader.

Required Reading: Compton and Galaway. Chapter 6
Lum. Chapter 3

Unit III. Communication and Interviewing

Barriers. Workers responsibilities. Written and verbal.

Required Reading: Compton and Galaway. Chapter 6
Lum. Chapter 4

Unit IV. Problem Solving: Initial Contact Through Assessment.

Consideration of the situations that bring the potential client system and the worker together; the meaning of the giving and taking of help; problem definition; assumption of the client role; how clients' impressions and perceptions help to shape the process and outcome of client-worker engagement; data gathering; goal-setting; practitioner responsibility; micro/macro practice; ethnic-sensitive practice; discussion of cases from Reader.

Required Reading: Compton and Galaway. Chapters
8 and 9.
Lum. Chapter 5

Unit V. Contract Phase and Planning Intervention

A look at the importance and purpose of assessment;
at the use of data in a relevant, salient and
individualized way; at the connection between
assessment and treatment planning; at client
involvement and work responsibility; discussion
of cases from Reader.

Required Reading: Compton and Galaway. Chapters
10, 11, and 12.
Lum. Chapters 6 and 7.

Unit VI. Termination and Evaluation

Consideration of termination and evaluation of the
work done; the meaning of termination to worker
and client system.

Required Reading: Compton and Galaway. Chapters
14 and 15.
Lum. Chapter 8

Unit VII. An Organizational Perspective

Consideration and discussion of selected administra-
tive roles in social work practice; consideration
of the worker's responsibility and use of self in the
workplace; implications of the organizational service
delivery setting.

Required Reading: Compton and Galaway. Chapters
13 and 16.
Lum. Chapter 9