Social Work Practice 204A is the first required practice course in the graduate social work curriculum. Employing a Generalist Practice Perspective, this course introduces students to social work values, knowledge, and skills essential for beginning social work practice with diverse populations. The course will provide students with a general framework for practice with different size systems: individuals, families, small groups, organizations, community, and society. (Note: Group, Organizational, and Community approaches will be covered in greater detail in SW204B; this course primarily focuses on the skills related to work with individuals and, as appropriate, the family.) There will also be a basic introduction to organizational assessment and work with groups. Fieldwork (and students’ prior) experiences, in conjunction with the reading materials, will form the basis of many course discussions. The shifting, increasingly restrictive economic and political environment in which current practice is being carried out will not be neglected. Certain societal level problems (like the ongoing conflict in Iraq) and national/State/local economic issues may be specifically addressed as they influence (or might influence) practice. In this context, selected Fall political campaigns may be given special attention.

The ecological model and systems perspective, which provide the basic theoretical framework for the course, are oriented toward problem-solving in context and understanding the application of multiple levels of intervention. Other theoretical frameworks integrated into the course include empowerment, resilience, and strength approaches to social work practice. Assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, termination, and follow-up are part of this process. Multi-level assessment and intervention will be emphasized with particular attention to mastering interviewing, counseling, and system advocacy skills and practice with vulnerable and oppressed populations. Specific practical integration of the course content with the field practicum is achieved through tasks and activities, where field instructors and students collaboratively focus attention on using the skills addressed in the classroom, the readings, and special assignments (including those noted in the Field Manual or required of IV-E students).
Content in this course is designed to build on content taught in human behavior, social policy, and diversity courses. Theories of human behavior, social policy, and diversity are integrated with key practice theories and concepts in order to provide strength based services across the spectrum of client systems. The impact of social policy on human behavior and the delivery of services are examined as they arise in course content areas. The importance of professional self-awareness and effective use of self are explored throughout the course. Required readings for this course have been selected, in part, based on the degree to which they are supported by sound empirical exploration of variables found to impact social work practice with individuals and families in diverse situations.

Theoretical Framework

Social work practice is a dynamic, interactive, multi-level process focused on social justice and working toward social change. The process is guided by the sociopolitical world view that shapes each worker's philosophy and operating principles, including but not limited to boundaries, and use of self and relationship in the helping process. Students are expected to apply their liberal arts training to areas of critical thinking regarding society at-large, people and their problems, and about the complex manifestations of culture. The course explores and seeks to increase the student's understanding of issues in the areas of ethics, cultural anthropology, sociology, economics, political science, and psychology. In addition, students are expected to expand upon their liberal arts preparation in the area of multicultural theory by developing a greater understanding of, and sensitivity to, issues of racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, and ablebodiedism, as well as social and economic stratification.

Course Objectives

Knowledge Objectives

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the generalist perspective and the ecosystem (ecological system) perspective in analyzing clients’ strengths and challenges as demonstrated through written assignments and class discussions.

2. Acquire the knowledge of the social work process that ranges from assessment and intervention with individuals and families to the evaluation of services delivered as demonstrated through class assignments.
3. Display an understanding of various roles, boundaries, and principles of professional practice, i.e. NASW Code of Ethics, professional use of self, professional functions, and empowerment as demonstrated through class discussions, exercises, and assignments.

4. Understand the basic elements of families, such as roles, boundaries, and power structure, as well as the interaction of these family dynamics within various cultural contexts as demonstrated through class exercises and assignments.

Skill Objectives

1) Articulate social justice and advocacy issues as they relate to vulnerable, diverse, at-risk, or oppressed populations as demonstrated through class discussion, written assignments, and field experiences.

2) Master the principles of engagement, interviewing, assessment, intervention, evaluation and termination with individuals (and to some degree) families as demonstrated through class discussion, field experience, and written assignments.

3) Assess individuals and families through the use of various established assessment tools, including ecomaps, genograms, and bio-psycho-social assessments as demonstrated through course assignments (and field experience, as appropriate).

4) Integrate specific classroom content with field practicum experiences as evidenced through classroom exercises, field assignments, and course assignments.

5) Describe and explore a sense of self through a description of ethnicity, religious philosophy, personality traits, and personal values as demonstrated through class exercises and course assignments.

6) Apply the principles of confidentiality, professional boundaries, and use of self in the helping process as evidenced through class assignments and field assignments.

7) Critically analyze and apply theory-based intervention strategies as demonstrated through course assignments and field activities.
Values Objectives

1. Display a sensitivity to social and economic justice as it relates to issues of age, race, ethnicity, and culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability as demonstrated by course discussions, assignments (class and field), and class exercises.

2. Begin to internalize the philosophy, values, and ethics of the profession as demonstrated by in-class small group discussions and assignments (both classroom and field).

3. Begin to internalize the principles of self-determination, respect for human dignity, and client individuality as demonstrated by class participation and sharing field-related experiences.

4. Display an understanding of a continuum of traditional to acculturated values, norms, beliefs, and behaviors of varies ethnic groups within the region as demonstrated through course assignments, field experiences, and class discussions.

Course Format

This course is conducted on a lecture-discussion-laboratory basis. Students are expected to have read all assigned readings prior to class sessions. Student preparation and participation are integral parts of this learning process. Students will lead and participate in exercises and group discussions about practice and practice issues. This will provide a special opportunity to integrate the field experience with classroom learning. Small group discussions, one-to-one exercises, and case presentations from field sites may be utilized. Students presenting field material should safeguard client confidentiality. Students are asked to share this course outline with their field instructors in order to provide additional opportunities to explore integration for both field instructors and students during the field experience. Please be sure to speak with your instructor in class or during office hours if you do not believe that your learning needs are being met.

Course Expectations

This course needs your active participation. In order to enhance feelings of safety and to create a positive learning environment the following is important:

- You attend class.
- You are prompt.
- You have read the assigned material.
• You get your needs met by interacting with classmates and by raising your perspectives, concerns, and criticism with the instructor.
• You do all your work.
• You do not ridicule or belittle others.
• You own expressions of bias or bigotry.
• You are committed to personal/professional growth and self-exploration.
• You respect those with whom you disagree.

• Written work must be mechanically and stylistically acceptable.
• Serious deficiencies in areas such as spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and coherent organization will result in lower grades.

• All written assignments are graded based on the following criteria as appropriate:

Effective use of knowledge: the integration of concepts, theories, and information from readings, lectures, field experiences, and class discussions; the inclusion of personal points of view along with rationale and logic;
Organization: general perspective in introduction, smooth relationship between ideas and between paragraphs, overall structure, and integrative concluding section; clarity; understandability, effective style and form;
Proper syntax, grammar, and spelling: references in appropriate form (use of APA format, newest Manual).

(Please remember to always retain a duplicate copy of all your written assignments prior to submitting them for grading in the event of accidental loss or destruction.)

Your interest, time, and commitment to the course as well as personal and professional development are highly valued. Attending all scheduled class sessions and being prepared for class discussion and activities is required. As a matter of fairness and equity, anyone missing three (3) scheduled class sessions will lose a minimum of a letter grade on the final course grade. There is no substitute or make-up for attendance and participation. However, unusual situations that may result in a prolonged absence should be discussed with the instructor at the earliest possible time. Missing more than five (5) scheduled class sessions will result in a “drop” from the course and will require the student to make arrangements to complete the course in a fashion acceptable to the Graduate Program Director and Division of Social Work.

Students are expected to complete all the work for the course on time and without exception when they are due, and where special circumstances arise and permission for a late submission granted, by the agreed upon date. If you need help or have questions, do not hesitate to contact the instructor. Incompletes are not given automatically. A grade of Incomplete may be assigned only in cases
of illness, accident, or other occurrences clearly beyond the student's control. It is the student's responsibility to fulfill the University's and/or Division's policies and procedures for obtaining an Incomplete for a course grade.

All students are expected to obtain an e-mail account and to check their e-mail regularly. Some class communications may be through e-mail. You may apply for a student account through the University (if you have not already done so).

**Course Assignments and Grading**

Each student's final grade will be calculated by adding together all the points obtained from all the required assignments.

Brief Writing Assignment (5 points)  
Attendance and Participation (10)  
Take Home Exam (20)  
Practice Presentation (25)  
Bio-psycho-social-cultural Assessment & Interventions (40)

**Take Home Exam (20% of final grade)**

A take home exam will be distributed at class meeting #7, and will be based on reading and class material through Week 7. You will be asked to apply your knowledge and skills through the use of illustrative examples (from field, prior human service experiences, this and other classes etc.)

**Practice Presentation (25% of final grade)**

Class Meetings 4 through 14

At the second class meeting, each student will be given an opportunity to select (and sign up for) a presentation topic of her choice. Topics are to be selected from those listed for Weeks 4 through 14, and an effort will be made to cover all (or as many as possible) of the topics listed. Your assistance will be needed in this effort.

It is the primary intention of this assignment to give each student an opportunity to explore a key practice area in illustrative detail (from your field placement, prior work or internship experiences, unusual life experiences etc.). At the same time, while the theoretical should not be avoided, the main focus should be on “live” illustration of the topic being addressed. Practical “how to” sharing is preferred (that is, for example in relation to Contracting, a discussion of the use of an actual “contract” rather than a discussion of what should or could be included in a
contract). A part of a topic explored in rich detail is preferred over a superficial summary of the entire topic.

Where appropriate, questions of professional values and ethics, relationship building, engagement, assessment, and intervention should be addressed.

The instructor needs to know in advance what your emphasis will be so that he may be guided accordingly in what he will try to address (and not “steal your thunder”).

Bio-psycho-social-cultural Assessment & Intervention Summary
(40% points) Due at the last meeting of class

This assignment is an effort to bring together many of the essential areas addressed in the course with your field placement experience. Clearly assessment is a vital skill for beginning social workers.

A summary of the requirements for this paper will be found at the end of the course outline. Any concerns you have about finding an appropriate client (or client system) to complete this assignment should be shared with the instructor as soon as those concerns arise (for example, if you have a primarily macro placement).

Required Texts


Note: By mutual agreement, another required text may be added.

Other Texts of Special Interest


**Course Outline**

**SPECIAL NOTE:** The number of assigned readings (and length of readings) has been reduced to allow more time for thoughtful review, mini-assignments, and integration of class and field.

**Week 1: Course Introduction  9/11**
Course overview
Review of assignments.
Helpful (hopefully) hints for writing papers.
An overview of the ecological approach to social work practice.

**Weeks 2 & 3: The Value Base of Professional Practice  9/18-25**
- Overview of the ethics, values, and mission underlying social work practice.
- Overview of social work interventions with different size systems.
- Overview of social work practice with vulnerable populations.
- Overview of social work roles.
Exercise: value clarification

Required reading:

**Week 2**
Shulman, Chap. I, and Code of Ethics (handout)

(Also – Brief writing assignment due)

Other readings (optional/interest):
Gitterman, Chapter 1-Overview: *The Ecological Perspective, The Life Model of Social Work*
Hepworth (2006). Chapter I & 2 (Challenges & Domain)
Week 3
An Enhanced Generalist Perspective: Exercise

Week 4: Relationship-Building  10/2

Communication skills
Social worker’s use of self
Cross-cultural relationship issues
Social work values and ethics as they may emerge in direct practice

Required reading:
Shulman, Chap. 2, The Preliminary Phase of Work
Lukas, The How and The Who of this Book: An Introduction

Others:
Gitterman, Part 2-The Helping Process in Life-Modeled Practice; Initial Phase
Hepworth, Chap. 3 (Overview of Helping Process):

Week 5: Engagement/Contracting Skills (Initial Phase) 10/9

Interviewing as basis of all levels of practice
Dynamics of new relationships
Culturally diverse practice
Client-worker’s development of rapport
Resistant clients
Risk Assessment

Required readings:
Lukas, Chapter 1-How to Conduct the First Interview with an Adult, Chapter 2-
Looking, Listening, and Feeling: the Mental Status Examination, Chapter 3-How
to Think About Your Client’s Health: The Medical History

Shulman, Chapter 3-Beginnings and the Contracting Skills

Others:
Gitterman, PART II, Initial Phase: Beginnings, Modalities, Methods
Hepworth, Chap. 5 (Building Blocks of Communication)
Week 6: Multi-level Assessment (Continuation) 10/16

How to write an assessment
Ecological approach
Bio-psycho-social assessment
Ecomap
The genogram
Emphasizing strengths in assessments
Diversity issues

Required readings:
Lukas, Chapter 5-How to Conduct the First Interview with a Child, Chapter 6-How to Take a Developmental History, and Chapter 13-How to Write an Assessment

Others:
Samantrai, Chapter 2 (pp. 40 - 80)
Gitterman, Part II, “Ongoing Phase”

Week 7: Intervention (Middle Phase) 10/23
(DISTRIBUTION OF TAKE HOME EXAM)

Tuning in to the client’s sense of urgency
Empathic skills
Holding Focus
Task-centered social work
Person-centered approach

Required Readings:
Shulman, Chap. 4, “Skills in the Work Phase”

Others:
Hepworth, Chaps. 6, 7
Gitterman, Part 2-Ongoing Phase, Helping Individuals, Families, Groups with Environmental Stressors
Week 8: Preliminary Organizational Assessment 10/30
(TAKE HOME EXAM IS DUE)

Exploration of key organizational components
Influences on day-to-day human service practice

Required reading:
Mini Assignment: Organizational Structure and Morale

Other:

Weeks 9 & 10: Working with Groups 11/6-11/13

Why Groups?
Initiation and Beginning Phase
Group Development and Middle Phases

Required reading:
Shulman, Chaps. 8-10, pp. 265-359; Chaps. 11-13, pp. 360-469
  Optional: Chap. 14, pp. 470-493 (“Variations in Group Practice”)

Others:
Hepworth: Chap. 16, “Intervening in Social Work Groups"
Germain, Chap. 7, “Helping with Dysfunctional Group Processes,” pp. 241-278

Week 11: Key Approaches in the Middle Phase 11/20

Empowerment approach
Ecological and system approaches
Constructivism & Narrative approaches

Required reading:
Shulman, Chap. 6, pp. 212-242 (family practice context)
Others:
Gitterman, Part 2, *Helping with Dysfunctional Family Processes; Reducing Interpersonal Stress Between Worker and Client*

**Week 12: Intervention -- Central Issues for the Later Middle Phase  11/28**

Enhancing clients' problem solving/social skills
Modifying environment
Developing new resources
Special issues

Required Reading:
Lukas, Chapter 8-*How to Determine Whether a Client Might Hurt Somebody—Including You*, Chapter 9-*How to Determine When a Client Might Hurt Herself*, Chapter 10-*How to Determine When a Client is a Substance Abuse*, and Chapter 11-*How to Assess Children for Neglect, Abuse and Sexual Abuse*

Other:
Hepworth, Chap. 17 (Addictive Empathy, Interpretation, Confrontation)

**Week 13: Endings and Termination (Final Phase)  12/4**

Dynamics and skills of ending
Different reasons for ending services
Grief and loss issues
Transitions
On-going Growth (client & worker)

Required readings:
Shulman, Chap. 5, “Endings and Transitions”

Others:
Hepworth, Chap. 19, (Evaluation and Termination)
Gitterman, Part 2-*Ending Phase: Auspice, Modalities, Methods and Skills*
Week 14: Working with Families: A Perspective  12/11
(FINAL PAPER DUE)

Family Strengths
Families in diverse cultural contexts

Required reading:
Shulman, Chap 7, “Problem-Centered Family Practice

Other:
Hepworth, Chap. 15, “Enhancing Family Relationships”

FINAL PRACTICE PAPER DUE WEEK 14
APA Format: 12-20 pages (Last Meeting)

This paper involves an analysis and critique of a case (client or client system) from your field practice. The paper must be typed and double-spaced. It should utilize extensive reference to the practice literature to support your work (including a bibliography with a minimum of five sources, and a minimum of 10 specific citations throughout the paper).

YOUR PAPER SHOULD COVER THE FOLLOWING:

1. Identify your agency and the referring source.
2. Describe the client (or client system)
3. Describe the presenting problem or need.
4. Discuss significant relevant background information, both historical and current, utilizing a psychosocial assessment profile developed by Dr. Krishna Samantrai (distributed in class).
5. Evaluate available information/data and indicate gaps in the information/data including any changes that occurred in the problem definition.
6. Discuss how you engaged the client/system in the helping relationship, including how you employed specific helping skills. Illustrate in clear interactive ("she said," "I said") detail.

7. Explore any issues of discrimination or oppression which needed to be addressed. If none, explain why.

8. Clearly describe the process used to contract with the client/system and the specific contract used (even if only oral or implied).

9. Explore Human Behavior Theory that relates to and/or illuminates the problem as it has been defined.

10. Explain the process by which empirically sound (that is, measurable) interventions were selected.

11. Describe the interventions employed, including those with multiple client systems and multiple (integrated) levels of practice (if any). ILLUSTRATE CLEARLY AND IN DETAIL. If multiple levels of intervention were not involved, indicate clearly and specifically how one (or more) other level(s) might have been engaged.

12. Discuss any ethical, legal, or policy dilemmas that you encountered (or considered).

13. What was the termination experience? If termination has not occurred, what issues or problems do you anticipate in the termination process?

14. How a research design was used (OR MIGHT HAVE BEEN USED) to evaluate the intervention, the outcome, and the process.