I. Course Description

The Issues and Practice in Schools sequence is designed to introduce you to the social, institutional, and legal context of school-based practice and to prepare you to successfully navigate and intervene on various levels impacting student success.

Throughout the two semesters, the following themes will be addressed: (1) the ecological perspective as it applies to the school social worker’s role as well as the worker’s approach to assessment and intervention; (2) the legal and political environment affecting issues as diverse as student attendance, expulsion and suspension, special education, harassment, protection for foster children/homeless children, student performance, and charter schools; (3) assessment and intervention regarding school climate issues; (4) particular biopsychosocial dynamics and challenges affecting California K-12 children; (5) culturally competent counseling, case management, and advocacy interventions with children, youth, and families; (6) collaboration with teachers and other team players; (7) group work (particularly with adolescents); (8) assessment and intervention skills in the school-community environment; (9) use of self in maintaining personal mental health and stability as well as effectiveness with the wide array of school-based actors. Because of our need to pursue an integrated, multi-level approach and our need to be responsive to field-based issues as they arise, these themes will be woven throughout the two semesters.

Throughout the 238A-B sequence, we will challenge ourselves to think critically and to pursue a path of practice that is culturally competent and ethical. Our commitments toward the following will serve as a foundation to our development and growth: (a) to learn from others, (b) to be self-aware, (c) to admit either to being uncomfortable, to thinking or feeling differently than what we perceive
II. Course Objectives

By the end of the two semesters, it is expected that you will accomplish the following and, thus, enhance your capacity for autonomous, multi-level practice as a Pupil Personnel Services Credential Social Worker:

1) Understand and apply an ecological framework to school based practice. Be capable of distinguishing this framework from other K-12 professional orientations. Examine the dynamics of poverty and race/ethnicity on student indicators.

2) Appreciate how school social work practice exists within legal and social policy parameters and identify important legal and policy issues that help define the nature of our work and affect such elements as: special education, expulsion and attendance, protection for vulnerable groups, and student and parent rights.

3) Understand the social work role and develop multi-level intervention skills with students who are seen as vulnerable or having “barriers to learning.”

4) Understand particular biopsychosocial dynamics and challenges affecting California public school children and be capable of developing culturally competent counseling interventions to address their dilemmas and strengths.

5) Develop clinical skills and utilize theory salient to particular children/youth needs presented at public school settings.

6) Develop skills regarding group work, particularly with children considered “hard to reach.”

7) Be capable of empathizing with, engaging, advocating for, and intervening with parents/guardians. Understand the functions and potential social work role at multidisciplinary meetings (e.g., SST, IEP, SARB).
8) Be capable of collaboration and effective advocacy with teachers, other team players, and school administrators, and community members.

9) Develop assessment and intervention skills related to the school-community environment and be able to develop interventions related to alternative/community oriented programming, increased parental involvement, parent/student organizing.

10) Understand the notion and the potential effects of school climate and culture as well as ways the social worker may intervene to enhance school climate.

11) Identify the importance and school-based nuances of use of self skills in maintaining personal mental health and stability as well as effectiveness with the wide array of school-based clients and school system actors.

III. Course Format and Philosophy

"This is what I want every child to understand: Your life matters. You can't live through a day without making an impact on the world."

Jane Goodall

Many times we approach learning experiences with expectations about what we will get from them. The model in the academic setting translates to the professor’s giving information and papers/tests and the student’s getting knowledge and grades. I hope that in this class the linear giving and getting gives way to a fluid process of giving to each other. I believe that in order for this process to occur, we will have to: (1) frame our work together as giving to, receiving from, and growing with each other as well as with our communities and clients; (2) open ourselves to be vulnerable and authentic; (3) explore parts of ourselves that are often hidden and make us feel uncomfortable; (4) move toward full acceptance of ourselves and the people whom we serve; (5) maintain our commitment to be self-aware of our intentions, to be aware of our thoughts and feelings, and to cultivate a positive, effective presence.
IV. Class Norms:

1. Students feel as if they have a voice.
2. Students feel that when they speak, people listen with open minds, open hearts and open ears.
3. Everyone - students and faculty - expects to learn from each other and change in the process.
4. Students realize that each has partial knowledge and therefore needs one another to develop a fuller understanding.
5. Students feel as if who they are is recognized, understood, and assumed to be a critical part of their capacity to learn.
6. Everyone assumes that dissent, debate, and disagreement are part of how we learn.
7. Everyone realizes that the class is one forum to express one's ignorance, misinformation, incomplete knowledge, and that voicing such ideas is one way of expanding learning.
8. Everyone recognizes the importance of the personal and the experiential as one source of knowledge in combination with other sources.

A note from the Course Instructor: For classroom learning to take place, there must be lively class discussion and tolerance for our differences. This must take place in a “safe” environment, where there is empathy and understanding for the personal pain that could exist for many individuals who may have experienced/or are experiencing one or more of the critical issues discussed this semester. The primary responsibility for creating this safe space lies with the course instructor. However, all participants in this course will share this burden, through the respect and courtesy they demonstrate during every discussion.

Special Conditions:

- Attendance is essential. Three absences or the equivalent (arriving late/leaving early) will adversely impact your grade; more than three absences jeopardizes your receiving a passing grade.
- This class offers an opportunity to practice promptness and accountability – qualities that are particularly important to the children, parents, teachers, principals and other administrators in school settings. Additionally, being on time is important in terms of this class’ developing a container of enhanced trust, stability, and risk-taking. These standards relating to promptness will be applied:
One time 10-20 minutes tardy = completely excused
One time 20-30 minutes = ½ absence
Two times 10+ minutes tardy = one absence
Three times 10+ minutes tardy = two absences
Four times 10+ minutes tardy = three absences …..etc.

- There are many students with one form of disability or another that may interfere with their learning experience in this class. Please let me know as soon as possible of particular needs that you may have. You are entitled to special accommodations and services if you have been officially identified as needing this assistance. If you have not done so already, please contact the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities @ 916-278-6955 for further information.

Required Texts


*Culturally Competent Practice with Immigrant and Refugee Children and Families, Edited by Fong, Rowena (2004).* New York, New York; The Guilford Press.


* (Relevant Education and Penal Codes are also available on-line at: http://www.leginfo.ca.gov. DO NOT DOWNLOAD THE ENTIRE CONTENTS!)

Optional Recommended Practice Materials


V. Course Organization

September 6, 2006
Special Presentation: Crash
Special Welcome: Dr. Dale Russell

I. The Institution of Public School – an Overview.
(September 13, 2006)
Readings – Allen: chap. 1-2; Fong – chap. 2
(pay special attention: Allen: pgs. 3/31 & 41/42)

II. The Interconnection between Social Services and Schools - Conceptual Framework.
(September 20, 2006)
Readings - Allen: chap. 2, page 41; chap. 3

II. The Role of the School Social Worker – The Bridge Between Multiple Systems --- The Ecological Perspective.
(September 27, 2006)
Readings – Allen: chaps. 4-5

IV. Overview of Collaborative Structures Affecting School Social Work Practice
(October 11, 2006)
- California Policy Academy (Human Services Re-design Movement)
- Healthy Start
- Comprehensive Student Support (SB 65)
- School-Based Mental Health Initiative (Addressing Barriers to Learning - The National Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA
- Wraparound

Readings – Allen: Chap. 10
Guest Speakers: EMQ
V. Childrens’ Issues
(October 18, 2006)
- Exploring the nexus/impact of RACE, CLASS, CULTURE, LANGUAGE and Poverty, and their relationship to student achievement.
- School Accountability (National Leave No Child Behind Act or NCLB)
- Developmental Assets (at-risk populations)
- Student Study Teams (SST), Individual Education Plan (IEP), School Attendance Review Board (SARB), and Expulsion Hearings.
- Empowerment: Student Council and School Site Council
- Special Populations: Special Education (IDEA)
  - Emotionally Disturbed
  - English Language Learners

Readings – Allen: Chap. 7-8

Guest Speakers: Northwood Elementary School (NSSD)
Renee Scott-Femenella (MSW), Principal
Diana Martinez (MFCC), Outreach Coordinator

VI. Clinical Issues of Children and Families
(November 8, 2006)
- Depression
- Post Traumatic Stress
- Anxiety
- Pre-birth drug exposure (“Pos. Tox.”)
- Somatic issues and complaints
- Aggression/Bullying
- Issues of Gender Identification and Sexual Preferences
- Child Abuse/Juvenile Sex Offenders
- *The Race to Medicate*: Good for us or them?
Readings – Allen: Chap. 6 and 9  
Guest Speakers: Carla Trocino, MFT/ Kate Craig, LCSW

VI. Class Assignments:

Field Reaction Paper – Due: Week 6 (October 11, 2006)  
*Note:* see special handout for the requirements of this assignment. 25 points

School Multi-level Intervention Papers/Presentation – Due: Week 14 (November 29, 2006)  
**Individual/group Presentations – November 29 thru December 6, 2006**  
*Note:* see special handout for the requirements of this assignment. 50 points

Course Wrap Up and Preview of SWRK 238B: December 13, 2006

Please Note:

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.

Plagiarism (claiming the work of someone else as your own) will result in a grade of FAIL for the course.

Where appropriate, the following criteria are used to evaluate assignments:

- Effective use of knowledge: the integration of concepts, theories, models, and information from readings, lectures, and class discussions is used in a way that demonstrates internalization.
- The inclusion of personal points of view along with rationale, logic, and examples: generalization of ideas, observations, concepts, and experiences are carefully supported with empirical data, conceptual work generated by authors, practitioners, or researchers, and/or original thoughts. Use refereed journal articles.
- Organization: thesis in introduction, smooth relationship between ideas and between paragraphs, clear overall structure, including an
integrative concluding section. Careful planning is evident in the organization.

Clarity: syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Sentences and paragraphs are clear, unified, and coherent.

- References in appropriate format (use of APA format).

(Students are reminded to retain a duplicate copy of all their written assignments prior to submitting them for grading in the event of accidental loss or destruction.)

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 they are granted permission, by the last regularly scheduled class meeting.

Any accepted late assignments will be penalized in the grade. If students need help or have questions, they are encouraged to contact me. 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. Students who fail this policy will automatically be assigned a grade of FAIL for this course.

Course Grading:
A = 95 + POINTS
A-= 90 – 94 POINTS
B+= 87 – 89 POINTS
B = 84-86 POINTS
B- = 80-83 POINTS
C+ = 77-79 POINTS
C = 74 – 76 POINTS
C- = 70-73 POINTS

BELOW 70 POINTS: SEE INSTRUCTOR
ATTENDANCE = 10 POINTS
CLASS PARTICIPATION = 5 POINTS
SITE REACTION PAPER = 30 POINTS
MULTI-LEVEL INTERVENTION PAPER = 55 POINTS