Social Work 4189: Undergraduate Field Practicum

Course Title: Field Practicum
Level of Instruction and Credit Hours: Undergraduate (5)
Prerequisites: Senior Standing; must be enrolled in field seminar concurrently

Course Description

At the core of social work field practice in the BSSW program is the integration of social work practice theory into student practice. In particular, the student is provided active opportunity to engage in generalist social work practice and, thus, to observe and participate in both direct and indirect service. Field education, as the signature pedagogy of the social work profession, is the mechanism by which students put learning into practice.

In addition to specific learning assignments coordinated and supervised by the field instructor in the practice setting, other student learning takes place through such opportunities as individual and group supervisor conferences, board and staff meetings, professional institutes and workshops and further experiences available either in the setting or in the larger practice community. Moreover, periodic Field Education seminars are conducted on campus for all students by field liaison faculty of the college.

Social work practice is the action of the practitioner directed to a purpose and guided by values, knowledge and intervention techniques (skills) which are collectively unique, acknowledged by and identified with the social work profession.

Professional social work practice consists of a wide range of value-guided, knowledge-based, change-oriented actions which help people to alleviate distress, accomplish life tasks and achieve individual and collective aspirations. In focusing on transactions between people and their environments, social work practice has several interrelated purposes. Key among these purposes is to help people at various levels of human systems--individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities--to raise life to its highest value, to use their capacities and abilities as well as resources in the environment in pursuit of progressive and full realization of their potential while helping create an environment conducive for others to do the same.

Generalist social work practice entails a comprehensive and integrated approach to human needs that relies on practitioner competence in making a wide-ranging variety of assessments of social situations based on a holistic conception of persons-in-environment. Primarily informed by an ecological systems perspective, generalist practice is not limited to work with any one preferred level of human system--individual, family, group, organization or community--or any one given practice method or mode of change strategy. While in some instances the generalist practitioner may possess the necessary competence not only to assess the wide variety of social situations encountered by social workers, but
also to intervene independently as a change agent, in other instances the generalist will call upon practitioners with special skills. In any event, an important contribution of the generalist practitioner is the ability to make sound assessments (not pre-determined in scope or focus by specialty) and to know when to intervene autonomously, when to become involved as a member of a team and when to defer or refer to a more specialized practitioner.

In the field practicum, in particular, movement toward achieving social work competencies should be viewed on a continuum going from satisfactory accomplishment of simple to more complex analytical and interactional tasks within a social work practice frame of reference. The minimum level of competence expected of the student in the field by the end of the year includes: the ability to gather and organize data, to form appropriate judgments, to understand and uphold the values and ethics of the profession of social work, to implement intervention modes differentially on a beginning level, and to evaluate the results.

Upon completion of undergraduate Field Education, the student should possess foundation competence demonstrated through knowledge, skills and values sufficient to make him/her immediately employable or eligible for further professional education.

In the context of “Embrace Difference, Seek Justice, Be the Change” as stated in the College Mission Statement, students are expected to master the following competencies and practice behaviors:

**Course Competencies and Practice Behaviors**

The field practicum is the one setting where students will engage in all foundation practice behaviors and work toward competence in all core competency areas. The learning agreement is individualized to student and agency to create activities that reflect these practice behaviors and competencies.

**UNDERGRADUATE COMPETENCIES IN FIELD EDUCATION:**

1. **Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.**
   Social workers serve as representatives of the profession, its mission, and its core values. They know the profession’s history. Social workers commit themselves to the profession’s enhancement and to their own professional conduct and growth. Social workers:
   
   a. advocate for client access to the services of social work;
   b. practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development;
   c. attend to professional roles and boundaries;
   d. demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication;
   e. engage in career-long learning; and
   f. use supervision and consultation.

2. **Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.**
   Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and relevant law. Social workers:
   
   a. recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice;
   b. make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics2 and, as applicable, of the International Federation of Social Workers/International Association of Schools of Social Work Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles
c. tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts; and
d. apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions.

3. **Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.**

Social workers are knowledgeable about the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information. Social workers

a. distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom;
b. analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation; and
c. demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues.

4. **Engage diversity and difference in practice.**

Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers:

a. recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power;
b. gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups;
c. recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences; and
d. view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants.

5. **Advance human rights and social and economic justice.**

Each person, regardless of position in society, has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights. Social work incorporates social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice. Social workers:

a. understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination;
b. advocate for human rights and social and economic justice; and
c. engage in practices that advance social and economic justice.
6. **Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.**
Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers:

a. use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry and
b. use research evidence to inform practice.

7. **Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.**
Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development. Social workers:

a. utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation; and
b. critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

8. **Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.**
Social work practitioners understand that policy affects service delivery, and they actively engage in policy practice. Social workers know the history and current structures of social policies and services; the role of policy in service delivery; and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers:

a. analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being; and
b. collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action.

9. **Respond to contexts that shape practice.**
Social workers are informed, resourceful, and proactive in responding to evolving organizational, community, and societal contexts at all levels of practice. Social workers recognize that the context of practice is dynamic, and use knowledge and skill to respond proactively. Social workers:

a. continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services; and
b. provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services.

10.a-d **Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.**
Professional practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes
identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analyzing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice.

10(a)—Engagement

Social workers:

i. substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities;
ii. use empathy and other interpersonal skills; and
iii. develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes.

10(b)—Assessment

Social workers:

i. collect, organize, and interpret client data;
ii. assess client strengths and limitations;
iii. develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives; and
iv. select appropriate intervention strategies.

10(c)—Intervention

Social workers:

i. initiate actions to achieve organizational goals;
ii. implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities;
iii. help clients resolve problems;
iv. negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients; and
v. facilitate transitions and endings.

10(d)—Evaluation

i. Social workers critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions.

Course Evaluation by Students:
Students will evaluate the course using the “evaluation of field practicum” survey.

Statement on Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct:
The College of Social Work supports fully the University standards on Academic Misconduct. Students are responsible for following University rules detailed in the Student Code of Conduct (3335-23-04 Prohibited conduct) in all academic work. These rules can be found on The Ohio State University website, http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf. This includes, but is not limited to: following course rules, no use of unauthorized information or assistance, no plagiarizing, no falsification, no fabrication or dishonesty in reporting research, and no alteration of grades or University forms. Course instructors are strictly bound to report suspected cases of Academic Misconduct.
College Incomplete Policy

"I" (Incomplete) course grades will be considered only in relation to emergency and hardship situations and a request for such a grade option must be discussed with the instructor prior to the final week of the course. A time for completion of the incomplete work will be established in consultation between the instructor and student; this may not be the maximum time permitted by University policies governing grades of "Incomplete" but will depend on situational circumstances. University policies governing the circumstances under which "I" grades are given and deadlines for completion will be adhered to.

Students should note that when an "I" grade with an alternate grade of "E" is assigned in a course which is a prerequisite to a required course which the student must take the next semester, all course requirements for the "I" must be completed before the end of the second week of the next semester.

Method of Instruction: Field Practicum; student will spend 15 hours a week in a designated field agency, under the supervision of a qualified field instructor.

Course Expectations and Specific course requirements and assignments
Students in undergraduate field practicum are expected to be competent in all core competencies and practice behaviors by the end of their senior year. The assignments will be developed through the learning agreement with the specific student and agency in mind.

The field practicum is evaluated by the field instructor, based on the activities of the learning agreement. Students will receive an “S” for demonstrating movement towards competence (EC-emerging competency), Competence (C), or Advanced Competence (AC). Students who receive a UP-unacceptable progress, or IP, insufficient progress, will have, at a minimum, a meeting with the field instructor and a representative from the Office of Field Education to determine grade and planning for improvement. See below section entitled, “The Student Who is Experiencing Difficulties or is Not Meeting Performance Expectations”.

The number and diversity of agency settings utilized for student placements highlight the importance of common guidelines for evaluation of student performance. The guidelines are not a substitute for the judgment of the individual instructor in assessing the student's performance, but rather they serve to provide a focus for all instructors so that common areas are evaluated. The overall grade for a student will be determined as either:

S = Consistently acceptable performance or above
U = Below acceptable performance

Evaluation of the student's field practicum learning and performance is the overall responsibility of the field instructor and is an ongoing process. Both the instructor and the student have an integral part in the evaluation process. Each has a particular level of responsibility in making it a mutually educative part of the field practicum course. Communication between the field instructor and the student assure that both are aware of the level of performance of the student which is being achieved at a given point in time. Ongoing and regularly scheduled meetings or conferences between students and instructor are necessary for this goal to be achieved.
To enable instructors to relate evaluation of student performance in the field to the commonly identified areas of expectation and to provide for uniformity in the recording of specific evaluative data, please use the form entitled "Field Learning Agreement and Evaluation." Formal evaluations using the prescribed form and format with a supporting narrative must be submitted to the College at the end of each semester. The student should have the opportunity to read and sign the evaluative materials before they are submitted to the College. The student's signature does not mean that the student and the instructor are necessarily in agreement about its content but rather that the student has had an opportunity to read and discuss the evaluation with the instructor. The student has the right to submit a written addendum to the evaluation. Both the instructor and student must sign the addendum. The signature of the instructor only acknowledges reading the addendum. It does not imply agreement.

The evaluation and recommended grade for each quarter should be submitted to the Office of Field Education by the deadline dates specified in the field practicum calendar for the academic year. The faculty field liaison is responsible for assigning the grade based on the recommendation of the field instructor. Faculty field liaisons are available to field instructors on a consultation basis in relation to evaluative and grading processes.

The Student Who is Experiencing Difficulties or is Not Meeting Performance Expectations

Even though students admitted to the College are viewed as having the potential capacities for completing the program, this may not always be true for numerous reasons which are revealed as he or she progresses into the program. In all fairness to the student who is investing energy and financial resources in his or her educational program, a student should not remain in the program if there is evidence he or she is unsuited or will not be able to perform in a professional capacity. Should a student experience difficulties in the areas of field practice or not meet expectations at any point in time, the following process is available to students and field instructors for resolution of problems:

Step 1  Conference between student and field instructor is the first avenue for problem resolution.

Step 2  Conference between student and faculty field liaison or field instructor and the liaison for support and advice in carrying out Step 1.

Step 3  Triad conference between student, field instructor and faculty field liaison. This is a joint approach to problem identification, and an exploration of alternatives. If the problem is not resolved, the liaison refers the matter to the coordinator.

Step 4  Conference with the Director of Field Education. It is the responsibility of the Director to see to it that problem resolution has followed the appropriate channels which may include the advisor, the curriculum area chair and the respective program directors.

At any time in the process, the student, faculty advisor, field instructor, or field liaison may request a performance review to bring the resources of the college to bear in problem solving (see the Undergraduate Handbook for details about performance reviews).

Course Schedule and Content (session by session)
This course is a field practicum, occurring in a community agency. Students will spend 15 hours per week in the field, and will work toward competency in all areas and practice behaviors over the course of
two semesters. The learning activities are developed by the student and field instructor, tailored to the agency and the student. Therefore, each week’s activities are unique to the student and the agency.

**Students with Disabilities**
Textbooks, handouts and other materials are available in alternative format. Please contact Office of Disability Services: 614-292-3307, 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210; www.ods.ohio-state.edu