MSW Program Course Descriptions

Required Courses:

**Advanced Interpersonal Practice with Adults and Elders**
The first segment of this course will explore the aging process and its implications for individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The purpose of this segment is to gain understanding about normative as well as idiosyncratic changes that accompany the aging process. In the second segment, the course will examine and explore the skills required to engage in effective practice with older adults and their families within a variety of clinical and community settings including medical hospitals, long-term care facilities, hospice, home-based care and other residential settings.

**Advanced Interpersonal Practice with Children and Adolescents**
A primary goal for this course is to explore the spectrum of mental disorders that appear across the developmental span from childhood to adolescence. The disorders will be examined within the contexts of current knowledge and research and other factors that function as risks or protective factors that impact the mental health of children and adolescents. Through the lens of labeling and stigmatization, conceptualizations of mental disorders childhood and adolescence will be explored. In addition, the predominant classification system of disorders of childhood and adolescence, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders will be presented. Indications for individual, group, and family treatment modalities will be defined.

**Advanced Topics in Human Behavior**
This special topics course will examine human behavior in the context of an advanced social work practice area, setting, or population. This course will focus upon the analysis, from a social justice perspective, of major theoretical frameworks used to explain development in children, adolescents, adults, and older adults. Each advanced topics course will focus upon specific diverse populations in the context of the social environment such as immigrant populations, LGBT populations, etc.

**The Bridge I: Academic Immersion (Required for Advanced Standing Students Only)**
This intensive academic course is designed to bridge the gap between undergraduate social work curricula and the Advanced Standing graduate-level experience. In order to ensure academic readiness, students will engage in a critical examination of “great cases” in a variety of social work practice areas with diverse client systems to sharpen critical thinking, research, and writing skills.

**The Bridge II: Field Immersion (Required for Advanced Standing Students Only)**
This course will provide an opportunity for students to prepare for the challenges and demands associated with advanced practice. Through service learning and simulated practice exercises, students will sharpen their interpersonal practice and assessment skills in anticipation of advanced field education. Emphasis will also be given to professional preparation and review of key skill areas in generalist social work practice.
**Difference, Discrimination, and Oppression**
This course examines social work’s historical and current commitment to social justice as it relates to oppressed groups in a multicultural society. This course will seek to enhance student understanding of and appreciation for diversity in self and others. Course content will address issues of power, inequality, privilege, and the resulting oppression. Special emphasis will be given to the experience of oppressed groups in order to understand their strengths, needs, and responses. Course material will use a social justice perspective for the study of and practice with oppressed groups at all system levels, including those distinguished by race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, and class. This course will consider the ethical dilemmas faced by social workers in their empowerment and advocacy roles.

**Field Education I**
Field education, the signature pedagogy of the social work profession, is integral to the education and professional socialization of social work students. Through field education, graduate students are provided a structured and supervised environment in a human service organization in which they apply theoretical knowledge, test and refine practice skills, and adopt professional behaviors. Field Education I, the first of two consecutive courses in the foundation year, introduces and allows students to apply the generalist knowledge and skills acquired through academic courses to social work practice with a specific client system.

**Field Education II**
Field education, the signature pedagogy of the social work profession, is integral to the education and professional socialization of social work students, providing a structured and supervised environment in which students will apply theoretical knowledge, test and refine practice skills, and adopt professional behaviors. Field Education II, the second of two consecutive courses, allows students to apply the generalist knowledge and refine interpersonal and organizational skills acquired through academic courses to social work practice with a specific client system in a human service organization.

**Field Education III & Integrative Seminar**
Field education, the signature pedagogy of the social work profession, is integral to the education and professional socialization of social work students, providing a structured and supervised environment in which students will apply and begin to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge, test and refine practice skills, and adopt professional behaviors. This course provides students with an opportunity to expand social work practice to include advanced generalist interventions with clients in a human service organization. Advanced generalist practice emphasizes both clinical and administrative elements of social work practice, preparing students to assume a variety of roles. Students will utilize the seminar component of this course to address appropriate boundary setting and self-care associated with sound practice skills in clinical and administrative contexts.
Field Education IV & Integrative Seminar
Field education is integral to the education and professional socialization of social work students, providing a structured and supervised environment in which students demonstrate mastery of and the capacity to apply theoretical knowledge, test and refine practice skills, and adopt professional behaviors. This course provides students with an opportunity to refine advanced generalist practice skills. Students will utilize the seminar component of this course to address appropriate boundary setting and self-care associated with the development of clinical and administrative skills. The students will also demonstrate that they have matured professionally and are able to effectively utilize supervision, function within complex organizations, form collaborative relationships with clients and colleagues, and are able to articulate the role of a MSW within an organizational setting.

Foundations of Social Work
This foundation course explores the philosophy and practice of contemporary social work from a historical perspective. In addition to examining the historical evolution and context of the profession’s mission, values, ethics, and roles, students will critically analyze controversial policy and practice issues that impact the profession as well as the vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed populations historically served by social workers.

Generalist Practice I & Integrative Seminar
This course provides a foundation in generalist social work knowledge and skills for practice at the micro-level with individuals and families with special emphasis given to oppressed and at-risk populations. Students will develop interpersonal communication, assessment, and service planning skills and learn to identify both micro (individual level) and macro (policy issues) for consideration of advocacy. Students will engage in a process of self-assessment in order to recognize and mitigate the influence of personal values and biases as they relate to ethical social work practice. Strategies for the resolution of ethical dilemmas and culturally competent practice will be introduced and reinforced. Tools for addressing burnout and compassion fatigue will be examined.

Generalist Practice II & Integrative Seminar
This course provides a foundation in generalist social work knowledge and skills for ethical and culturally competent practice at the mezzo level. Students will have the opportunity to learn about theories of group intervention, the stages and dynamics of group development, and strategies and techniques for conducting and evaluating the effectiveness of a variety of groups, such as education, socialization, and support groups. Special emphasis will be given to the identification of macro policy issues as they relate to the groups they work with. Students will learn to effectively utilize policy practice to address these macro issues. Students will continue to engage in a process of self-assessment in order to recognize and mitigate the influence of personal values and biases as they relate to practice at the mezzo level. Strategies for the resolution of ethical dilemmas and culturally competent practice will be reinforced. Tools for addressing burnout and compassion fatigue will be reinforced.
**Human Behavior and the Social Environment**

This course examines foundational theories, and perspectives that are critical to professional social work practice across the lifespan. Theoretical frameworks will be used to illuminate the impact of environmental factors that influence individual health, development, and psychosocial-spiritual functioning. Biopsychosocial challenges and strategies for responding to or confronting the challenges will be explored.

**Methods of Social Work Research**

This course examines quantitative and qualitative research methods in an effort to equip students with the knowledge, ethics, and skills to utilize research to inform social work practice. Research literature will be considered to distinguish and critique the utility of research design, sampling, and measurement strategies to evaluate social work services. Emphasis will be placed upon scientific and analytic approaches to building knowledge and skills, including: the role of concepts and theory, hypothesis formulation, operationalization, research design, data collection, data processing, statistical analysis, computer skills, and report writing.

**Practice and Program Evaluation**

In this course students will learn how to utilize qualitative and quantitative research methods to enhance and evaluate their direct practice with diverse client systems as well the efficacy of service delivery programs. Special attention will be paid to the design and implementation of evaluation strategies as well as to the practical and ethical dilemmas inherent in practice and program evaluation. Students will complete this course with an understanding of how to plan and conduct an evaluation and utilize findings to improve social work practice and service delivery.

**Social Work Practice with Organizations and Communities**

In this course, students will learn about the nature of organizations, government, and communities, and how these systems function and change. This course examines how organizational level policies inform social work practice and how practice informs policies, and reviews principles for evaluating and conducting research on organizations and their programs. The course will focus upon the process for policy development, including agenda building, analyzing problems, determining options, writing proposals, implementing policy, and evaluating practice.

**U.S. Social Welfare Policies and Institutions**

This course analyzes social welfare policy as it relates to social values, social problems, social structures, and social justice. In particular, students will consider the economic, political and ideological factors and processes that affect social welfare legislation, financing, implementation, and evaluation and examine frameworks for policy analysis and program evaluation, with applications to contemporary social service and income maintenance policies and delivery systems.
Elective Courses:

**Advanced Seminar in Clinical Practice (Restricted Elective in Social Work Practice)**
This course will introduce advanced clinical/therapeutic techniques such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Motivational Interviewing and other evidence-based interventions. Special emphasis will be placed on linking theoretical framework to psychotherapeutic practice and skill development.

**Child Welfare and Social Work Practice (Restricted Elective in Social Work Practice)**
This course will examine the role of social work practice in the child welfare system. Special influence will be placed on the etiology of child maltreatment as well as an analysis of interactive systems. Students will develop skills and knowledge associated with effective practice in the prevention of child maltreatment as well effective practice intervention in cases of abuse and/or neglect. Students will engage in consultation of the research associated with child welfare policy and procedure.

**Hospice and Palliative Care (Restricted Elective in Social Work Practice)**
This course will focus on Social Worker roles in hospice and palliative care. Academic content will include: psychodynamic and developmental theories in death and dying, bereavement, spirituality, legal and ethical issues, pain and symptom management, hospice and palliative care with marginalized populations, care of LGBTQ persons who are dying, and hospice and palliative care at a mezzo and macro level. The course will train Social Workers to conduct comprehensive biopsychosocial spiritual assessments, coordination of care within family systems, and work within interdisciplinary teams. The course will also equip Social Workers with an understanding the impact of chronic life limiting illnesses and the impact of trauma on the death and dying process.

**Psychopathology (Restricted Elective in Social Work Practice)**
In this course students will learn to apply a biopsychosocial model to the assessment and diagnosis of mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders classified in the most current edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)*. In addition to learning how to use the *DSM* in social work practice, students will engage in critical analyses of the *DSM*, exploring the impact of oppression and bias on the classification, diagnosis, and treatment of disorders as well as the social construction of “mental illness.”

**Social Work Practice with the Military, Veterans, and their Families (Restricted Elective in Social Work Practice)**
This course will provide an introduction to social work practice with military service members, veterans, and family members. This course will explore military culture and its systemic influence on human functioning and social relationships. Special emphasis will be given to the specific needs of military families and the role of the social worker in addressing those needs. Course content will emphasize proven interventions and resources for working with military families.
Social Work in Health Care Settings (Restricted Elective in Social Work Practice)
The primary focus of this course is the development of knowledge and understanding of social work practice methods in health care settings. The course is presented in three segments: 1) conducting biopsychosocial-spiritual assessments; 2) engaging in comprehensive and coordinated patient and family centered care strategies via the medical home model; and 3) understanding the implications for social work as a result of the passing of the Affordable Care Act. Throughout the course, students will discuss ethical issues, management of interdisciplinary challenges, diversity issues, and issues related to specific health conditions and disabilities.