

Course Overview of Social Work Major

The social work major prepares students for social work practice and/or entry into graduate school. Students complete roughly 60 credits including an internship of three semesters in an organization doing social work practice. (second semester junior year—80 hours, senior year two semesters—450 total hours). Students graduate having learned the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for work with a variety of populations including but not limited to the elderly, children and families, people with mental illness, substance use disorders and/or other health challenges, people with disabilities, trauma survivors, and those experiencing poverty or homelessness. Students are taught to engage in strengths-based, person-centered, culturally affirming practice with clients.

Course Requirements

In addition to general education requirements, all students are required to take the following prerequisites *outside* the Social Work department:

1. Sociology
2. Developmental Psychology
3. Social Psychology
4. American Government

All students are required to take the following classes *within* the Social Work department:

1. **SW 200. Intro to Social Work:** This course is an overview and introduction to strength-based social work including its history, areas of practice (including mental health and substance use disorders), ethics and values, common professional debates and challenges. This course also includes an introduction to the concepts of individual and institutional discrimination and policies that both address and facilitate aspects of oppression.
2. **SW 306. Biopsychosocial Perspectives for Social Work:** This course includes basic knowledge about the biological base of human behavior. It focuses on bio/psycho/social/spiritual components of individuals across the lifespan and ways in which current biological concepts and brain science can help us interpret behaviors and coping mechanisms. This includes the role of genetics, the brain and physiology in discussing disability, trauma, and behavioral health.
3. **SW 324. Diversity and Oppression I:** Students discover interpersonal and systemic influences on human behavior, especially the impact of oppression on individuals' opportunities and outcomes. The effects of sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, ageism and ableism are examined. Theories about aging, disability, and gender are explored.
4. **SW 325. Diversity and Oppression II:** Students explore systemic inequality and oppression that contribute to social injustice within our political, educational, legal and social institutions. The effects of racism, minority stress, class oppression and immigration status are examined.
5. **SW 326. Generalist Practice with Individuals and Families:** This class is a practice class designed to teach active listening, assessment, and intervention skills. Students explore skills for culturally appropriate practice with individuals and families, addressing issues and areas of practice including children and families, behavioral health, elder care, and more. They develop interviewing and assessment skills, write assessments and treatment plans, and focus on use of self, verbal and nonverbal engagement, assessment and treatment.

6. **SW 327. Generalist Practice with Groups and Communities:** Students gain knowledge, skills and values to work effectively with groups, organizations and communities. They develop group work leadership and facilitation skills for treatment and task-centered groups, learning about group dynamics, development and cohesion. In working on community change, students explore concepts including community organizing, power, privilege and social justice.
7. **SW 301. Policy Analysis and Practice:** Students examine social policies that shape professional practice and client success; they work on strategies that create policy change for vulnerable and marginalized populations.
8. **SW 302 and 303. Research Methods I and II:** Students learn about research methods and evidenced-based practice in social work practice-related research. Students develop a research proposal, develop data collection and analysis skills. Students conduct qualitative (single-subject case study) and quantitative (aggregate) data analyses, and learn strategies for using analytic software.
9. **SW 426. Clinical Practice: Models and Methods:** Students focus on the theoretical basis for therapeutic change and best practice strategies for strengths-based relationships in multiple settings. Focus is on evidence-based practices for engagement, assessment and intervention including motivational interviewing, cognitive-behavioral therapies, psychodynamic models, trauma-informed care, and person-centered approaches.
10. **SW 463 and SW 464. Seminar I and II:** Students discuss issues from field and relate to theory and concepts and build an integrated base of knowledge, values, and skills for entry into the social work profession. Among other topics, content might include development of professional self, mental illness and diagnostics, macro practice and social change, substance use disorders, and trauma.

Elective Offerings:

Conversations about Race and Racism: This course uses visual media to engage students in discussions about racism. Theoretical and personal ideas about racism and racial identity are explored using a critical race theory lens.

Mass Incarceration: This course addresses the ways in which racist policies and systemic oppression affects people of color and low-income people in our criminal justice system. The school to prison pipeline is discussed as well as its impact on individuals and communities.

Myths of Poverty: This course addresses the many ways in which myths about poverty are created and perpetrated within our culture. The ways in which this ideology is then translated into ineffective and victim-blaming policy and social work practice are explored.

SW Practice and Substance Use Disorders: This course is designed to provide an understanding of substance use and co-occurring disorders and the impact on the individual, family, and community. A general overview of addiction includes topics related to the physical and psychological dependency/withdrawal as well as behavioral changes. Theories, interventions, and evidence-based practices will be addressed.

Strengths-based Intervention with High Risk Youth: An interactive course seeking to develop an understanding of the needs of clients aging out of the foster care system and the importance of client-centered practice with them. Students will learn the impact of trauma on this population, understand evidence-informed best practices, & hear testimony from clients being served. The class seeks to illustrate what needs are being met and what can be done to better serve this population, from the standpoint of both practitioners and clients served.

SW Practice: Grief and Loss: This course is separated into three parts: 1) social work with the terminally ill; 2) when a death occurs; and 3) bereavement. Students will examine attitudes and perspectives regarding death, become better prepared to communicate with terminally ill and grieving clients, and learn to accept the dying process as their client's journey.

Mental Health and Illness: This elective is designed to develop a further understanding of social work practice issues in the mental health field. Areas of discussion include theories of causation of mental illness, effective treatment and care for a variety of mental illness, diagnostic criteria, values and ethics, and use and critique of the DSM 5.

Child Welfare: This course explores the knowledge needed for social work practice with clients involved in the child welfare system. A strengths-based and family centered approach to the problem-solving process will be employed. This course deals with the knowledge, values, issues, and skills which are relevant to child welfare practice with special attention to the effects of poverty, oppression, child abuse, substance abuse, and family violence on permanency for children.

Child Sexual Abuse: This class provides an overview of social work practice with adult and child survivors of sexual abuse. This includes an understanding of the context in which perpetrators offend, the dynamics that can be involved in the abuse, and the implications for practice and recovery.

Motivational Interviewing: This class will provide an overview of this collaborative, person-centered form of counseling that seeks to elicit and strengthen motivation for change. Information will include the major tenets of motivational interviewing, stages of change model, and how to practice within this framework.

Working with Anxiety: This class explores the variety of anxiety disorders included in the DSW 5 and offers best practice for coping, reducing, and eliminating their impacts.

In addition, students have the opportunity to take 400-level electives that are cross-listed with our Master's program. This include **Crisis Intervention, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Substance Use Disorders, and Working with the Elderly.**