



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

National Catholic School of Social Service

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SSS 490

Coordinating Seminar

Spring 2009

(3 credits)

Instructor: Dr. Lynn Milgram Mayer

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I. COURSE PURPOSE

Senior Comprehensive Assessment: Program and Graduation Requirement: The product of a Liberal Arts education is a person who can engage in critical thinking. Evidence-based social work practice requires that the social worker be able to engage in critical thinking. The purpose of this seminar is to prepare senior social work majors to fulfill the graduation requirement of a comprehensive assessment. In the social work program, this requirement takes the form of a scholarly paper. Students practice critical thinking and its application to social work by addressing a social work issue which presents both as a personal trouble and a public problem. The course and the paper are graded independently. Consistent with University policy, the students earn a letter grade for the course. The comprehensive assessment is graded Pass/Pass with Honors/Fail. A Student who fails to pass the Senior Comprehensive Assessment must repeat the Assessment no earlier than 60 days following the most recent failure, until it is passed. No student may receive an undergraduate degree from the School of Arts and Science until the Senior Comprehensive Assessment is satisfactorily completed with a grade of Pass or Pass with Honors.

Course: Students will write draft sections of their scholarly paper to demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking and to demonstrate comprehensive content-specific knowledge in seven curriculum areas identified by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE): 1) values and ethics; 2) diversity; 3) populations-at-risk and social and economic justice; 4) human behavior and the social environment; 5) social welfare policy and service; 6) social work practice; and 7) research. Students are encouraged to pick a topic that relates to their field education placement in order to incorporate the eighth curriculum area, field education, into the course. During the seminar, students will work with the librarian to engage in a hands-on literature search thereby acquiring a portfolio of 12 to 15 articles relevant to the topic of their paper. Students will be guided, through content reviews as well as through handouts and exercises, in the application of critical thinking skills to their own literature search, its analysis in the content areas, and to their own and each others written section drafts.

Rationale: Liberal Arts and Social Work: Because of their Liberal Arts education (distribution courses), students possess a breadth of content specific knowledge as well as scientific and philosophical reasoning skills which are essential to critical thinking. The profession of Social work requires its practitioners to solve problems and make sound practice decisions by choosing wisely among options. Practitioners must select those options that, compared to others, are most likely to result in specific outcomes. Because social work is a value-based profession, it utilizes critical thinking to arrive at moral imperatives which inform its policies and programs in terms of desired outcomes. When faced with ethical dilemmas, it utilizes value content and critical thinking to arrive at an ethical decision. The danger of thinking uncritically is that time and resources may be wasted-or worse that problems will not be solved and clients will not get the help they need. An absence of critical thinking places clients at-risk of ineffective intervention and helper-induced harm.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. To apply critical thinking skills; i.e. thinking about thinking.
2. To distinguish scientific and philosophical ways of knowing. To know the hallmarks of scientific reasoning.
3. To demonstrate skill in recognizing faulty thinking; fallacies, propaganda, pseudoscience, quackery, and fraud.
4. To demonstrate understanding of the components of an argument: claims, premises and conclusions, warrants and skill in reflecting these components in one's problem statement.
5. To demonstrate knowledge of the criteria for evaluating arguments: relevance, acceptability, sufficient grounds and rebuttal and skill in utilizing these criteria when writing the paper.
6. To demonstrate beginning expertise in a specific area of social work practice based on the student's choice of topic for the scholarly paper.
7. To demonstrate skill in conducting a literature search.
8. To demonstrate the ability to analyze articles according to the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) curriculum areas that constitute the foundation for Generalist Social work practice.
 - Values & Ethics: Apply knowledge of the Code of Ethics and social work values to enhance understanding of the issue under consideration
 - Populations-at-risk & Social and Economic Justice: Apply knowledge of populations-at-risk and theories of social and economic justice to understanding of the issue
 - Diversity: Apply knowledge of diversity to understanding of the issue

- Human Behavior: Apply knowledge of bio-psycho-social-spiritual development and theoretical frameworks of human behavior to analyze the issue
 - Social Welfare Policy & Services: Apply knowledge of social welfare policy to analyze an existing social policy (either a federal, state, local, and agency policy) and a program, in the context of American social welfare history and contemporary society
 - Social Work Practice: Apply knowledge of generalist practice to recommending a course of action to be utilized for addressing this issue; course of action should be a theoretical approach supported by empirical evidence
 - Research: Apply knowledge of research to evaluate research studies in the literature and to formulate a bivariate research proposal.
9. To demonstrate self-knowledge as a key component of critical thinking; to recognize personal values, client values, agency values and competing values.
 10. To develop skill in writing a scholarly paper; acquiring the habits of critique, rewrites, editing, conforming to standardized publication requirements (APA).
 11. To demonstrate the use of scholarly research to guide decision-making and future directions in social work to affect change and to improve service delivery.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts

There is no specific text required for this course. Students are expected to use texts, lecture notes, assignments, handouts, exams, etc. acquired over the course of their studies as well as experiential learning acquired through their field education placement.

Students are expected to find and analyze a minimum of 15 journal articles from scholarly journals (primarily from social work journals) that are relevant to the paper topic. For Pass with Honors consideration, the majority of the articles must be from social work journals.

Handouts will be provided on critical thinking from:

Gibbs, L., & Gambrill, E. (1999). *Critical thinking for social workers (Revised edition)*. CA: Pine Forge Press.

B. Recommended Texts

APA Manual

Anderson, C.E., Carrell, A.T., & Widdifield, J.L. (2004). *APA and MLA writing Formats: Revised printing*. Boston: Pearson.

Lester, J.D., & Lester, J.D. (2006). *Writing research papers in the social sciences*. NY: Pearson.

Reamer, F.G. (1990). *Ethical dilemmas in social service: A guide for social workers* (2nd ed.). NY: Columbia University Press.

Ritzer, G. (2000). *Sociological theory*. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Robbins, S.P., Chatterjee, P., & Canda, E.R. (2006). *Contemporary human behavior theory: A critical perspective for social work* (2nd ed). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Szuchman, L.T., & Thomlison, B. (2000). *Writing with style: APA style for social work*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Turner, F. (1996). *Social work treatment: Interlocking theoretical approaches* (4th ed.). NY: The Free Press.

Vargas, L.A., & Koss-Chioino, J.D. (1992). *Working with culture: Psychotherapeutic interventions with ethnic minority children and adolescents*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

C. Other Recommended Resources and Media

National Catholic School of Social Service <http://ncsss.cua.edu/>

Please refer to this article for a listing of social work journals. Thyer, B.A. (2005). A note from the editor: A comprehensive listing of social work journals. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 15(4), 310-311.

D. Course Assignments

Assignment 1: Portfolio of at least 15 articles **Week 4 – 2/4/09**

Assignment 2: 10 Section Drafts **As assigned**

Assignment 3: In Class Presentations **Week 14 – 4/29/09**

E. Grading Policy

Assignment 1: Portfolio of Articles 20%

Assignment 2: 10 Section Drafts (5% each) 50%

Assignment 3: In Class Presentations 10%

Attendance and Participation: 20%

*** In order for the thesis to be considered for Pass with Honors, the following sections of the thesis MUST be submitted by April 1: problem statement, causality, intervention, social welfare policy & service, diversity, and research.

F. Course and Instructor Evaluation

NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at <http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations> using your CUA username and password. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

G. Attendance and Participation

Students are required to classes and are expected to participate meaningfully in class discussions. The grade for attendance and participation will be lowered by 5 points unless the student notifies the instructor and requests an excused absence before the class.

Participation includes full participation in the Library sessions, including completion of the literature search assignment. Participation also includes full involvement in buddy writing and individual rewriting sessions in class.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A. Scholastic Expectations

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

B. Academic Honesty

Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and appropriate Program Handbooks.

C. Accommodations

Students with physical, learning, psychological or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.

Class Schedule

Class	Topics and Readings
1	Orientation to Course & Library – Library – 1/14/09 <i>How to conduct searches of the scholarly literature – Mary Agnes Thompson</i> Lester & Lester: Chapter 2: Discovering Your Topic
2	Overview of Syllabus and Thesis Assignment – 1/21/09 Writing & Critical Thinking Thyer, B.A. (2005). A note from the editor: A comprehensive listing of social work journals. <i>Research on Social Work Practice, 15</i> (4), 310-311. Lester & Lester: Chapter 10: Blending Reference Material Into Your Report Szuchman & Thomlison: Chapter 2: Ethics & Writing Chapter 3: General Writing Techniques Chapter 12: Grammar & Punctuation Matters Gibbs, L., & Gambrill, E. (1999). Chapter 1: Critical thinking: What it is and why it is important (pp 1-25). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Anderson, Carrell, & Widdifield: pp 12 -14: The Basics: APA Rules In class – Exercise 2: Reviewing your beliefs about knowledge In class – Exercise 19: Analyzing Arguments
3	Individual Consultations on Topics – Library – 1/28/09 <i>How to conduct searches of the scholarly literature related to your topic – Mary Agnes Thompson</i>
4	Writing a Problem Statement & Presentation on Articles 2/4/09 **Portfolio of Articles Due** **Present to the class what you've learned about your topic** Szuchman & Thomlison: Chapter 4: Writing an Introduction Chapter 5: Writing the Literature Review In class – Exercise 19: Analyzing arguments
5	CSWE Content Area: Human Behavior & Social Environment – 2/11/09 ** Problem Statement Due** Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda: Chapter 1
6	CSWE Content Area: Practice - 2/18/09 **Human Behavior & Social Environment Due** Turner: Chapter 1: Theory and Social Work Treatment
	No Class – 2/25/09 – Administrative Monday
	No Class – 3/4/09 – Spring Break

- 7 CSWE Content Area: Social Welfare Policies & Services – 3/11/09**
****Intervention Due****
 Chambers, D.E., & Wedel, K.R. (2005). Chapter 1: Analyzing the social problem background of social policies and social programs. *Social policy and social programs: A method for the practical policy analyst.* (pp7-30). Boston: Pearson Ed. Inc.
 Chambers, D.E., & Wedel, K.R. (2005). Chapter 3: An overview of a style of policy analysis. *Social policy and social programs: A method for the practical policy analyst.* (pp49-61). Boston: Pearson Ed. Inc.
- 8 CSWE Content Area: Diversity & Populations at Risk – 3/18/09**
****Social Welfare Policy and Services Due****
 Vargas & Koss-Chioino: Chapter 1
- 9 CSWE Content Area: Research – 3/25/09**
****Diversity Due****
 Gibbs, L., & Gambrill, E. (1999). Ex 24: Critical thinking: What it is and why it is important (pp 235-244). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
 Jenson, J.M. (2006). Research and the public good. *Social Work Research, 30*, 195-197.
- 10 CSWE Content Area: Values & Ethics, Social & Economic Justice, Catholic Social Teachings – 4/1/09**
****Research Due****
 Reamer: Chapter 1: The Nature of Ethics
 Chapter 2: Fundamental Ethical Issues in Social Work
 USCCB (2005). Themes of Catholic Social Teaching.
- 11 Knowledge Building – 4/8/09**
****Values & Ethics Due****
 Bring in an article on future directions related to your topic
- 12 Writing a Conclusion & an Abstract – 4/15/09**
****Knowledge Building Due****
- 13 Self-Awareness – 4/22/09**
****Conclusion & Abstract Due****
- 14 Presentations – 4/29/09**
****Thesis Due****