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 of knowledge. 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. 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 National Catholic School of Social Service 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 competency in the practice behaviors mandated by the Council on Social Work Education. 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 in a hands-on literature search to acquire 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 section drafts. Students will also gain the skill of peer review and feedback by reviewing and evaluating each other’s work.

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 that 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)
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

   Students are also 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.

B. Recommended Texts


C. Other Recommended Resources and Media
National Catholic School of Social Service [http://ncsss.cua.edu/](http://ncsss.cua.edu/)

Please refer to this article for a listing of social work journals:

D. Course Assignments

Assignment 1: Portfolio of at least 15 articles  
Week 5

Assignment 2: 10 Section Drafts  
As assigned

Assignment 3: In Class Presentations  
Week 14

E. Grading Policy

Assignment 1: Portfolio of Articles  
25%
Assignment 2: 10 Section Drafts (5% each)  
50%
Assignment 3: In Class Presentation  
5%
Attendance and Participation:  
20%

*** In order for the thesis to be considered for Pass with Honors, you must be in good standing at spring break.

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](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 attend all classes and are expected to participate meaningfully in class discussions. Students are expected to complete all assigned
readings, arrive to class on time, and be fully prepared to actively participate in all class exercises and discussions.

The grade for attendance and participation will be lowered by 5 points for each absence. Arriving to class late or leaving early (30 minutes or more) will be considered an absence. Class participation requires the student to have reviewed the readings in advance, and be fully present and engaged in the material for the entire class meeting. When in class, all electronic devices should be turned off or set to silent operation. Computers or tablets should be used in class to further learning only. If they are used for non-academic purposes during class time, the instructor reserves the right to prohibit their use in class.

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

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A. Scholastic Expectations

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements or 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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
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| **1** | Overview of Thesis Assignment – 1/16/15  
Kevin Rulo & Justin Keena, CUA Writing Center |
|       | APA Chapters 3& 4: Writing Clearly & Concisely & Mechanics of Style |
| **2** | How do I begin? – Writing a Problem Statement - 1/23/15 |
|       | Lester & Lester: Chapter 10: Blending Reference Material Into Your Report |
|       | Lester & Lester: Chapter 2: Discovering Your Topic |
| **3** | Library Session - 1/30/15 |
|       | Meet first in classroom and we will go over to the library as a class |
|       | *How to conduct searches of the scholarly literature – Mary Agnes Thompson* |
|       | Galvin: Writing Literature Reviews |
| **4** | Library Research Consultations – 2/6/15 |
|       | Each student should thoroughly read and bring copies of their articles to class for review and possible return to library to continue literature search in preparation for portfolio of articles assignment |
| **5** | CSWE Content Area: Human Behavior & Social Environment – 2/13/15 |
|       | Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda: Chapter 1 |
| **6** | CSWE Content Area: Practice - 2/20/15 |
|       | Turner: Chapter 1: Theory and Social Work Treatment |
7 CSWE Content Area: Social Welfare Policies & Services – 2/27/15


8 CSWE Content Area: Research – 3/6/15

Brintzenhofe Szoc: Clearing the Research Cobwebs


9 CSWE Content Area: Diversity & Populations at Risk– 3/20/15

Vargas & Koss-Chioino: Chapter 1

10 CSWE Content Area: Values & Ethics, Social & Economic Justice, Catholic Social Teachings – 3/27/15

Reamer: Chapter 1: The Nature of Ethics
Chapter 2: Fundamental Ethical Issues in Social Work

11 Knowledge Building – 4/10/15

Bring in an article on future directions related to your topic

12 Writing Conclusions & Abstracts – 4/17/15

13 Individual Consultations – 4/24/15

14 Presentations – 5/1/15