SSS 913
INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE
FOR SOCIAL WORK

Susanne Bennett, PhD

(3 credits)
Fall, 2012

I. COURSE PURPOSE

This advanced integrative seminar is designed to encourage students to move beyond the theories they have studied and critiqued in their NCSSS doctoral work. The course purpose is two-fold: (1) to integrate previous doctoral course content and (2) to develop knowledge based on the student’s particular focus and area of study. Drawing on this integration, expanding upon professional experience, and building on social work and related literature, students will develop a unique, theoretically framed set of questions that can be empirically examined. All questions will be aimed at the examination, prevention, or remediation of an issue or problem appropriate for intervention by a social worker. This course will enable students to think deeply, critically, and creatively about the complexity of professional social work. Course format consists of seminar discussions.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. Deepen knowledge of the scope of an issue or problem that is appropriate for the practice of social work with a specific target of social work intervention (e.g., individual, couple, family, or small group client system; organizational system, community, national, or international arena).

2. Increase understanding of the differential needs of groups of varying cultures, ethnicities, races, ages, genders, and sexual orientations pertaining to the target population.
3. Expand understanding of the existing theoretical literature explaining the issue or problem.

4. Increase knowledge of the empirical literature on the state of intervention into, or understanding of, the issue or problem.

5. Appreciate how state or federal policy affects or informs the issue or problem.

6. Develop an understanding of the state of social work model development and the components of creating unique models to address the issue or problem.

7. Integrate knowledge of existing theoretical and empirical literature regarding the explanation of the issue or problem.

8. Increase appreciation of the transactional nature of social work’s person-in-environment or organization-in-environment perspective as it pertains to the problem or issue.

9. Propose empirical research questions that examine theories and research pertinent to the issue or problem.

10. Examine and critique the philosophical perspectives and values underlying the proposed questions.

11. Develop, present, and defend the proposed questions and model in a clear, concise, logical, scholarly fashion in writing and in formal presentation to peers.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. **Required Texts**

All required readings are on the course blackboard or in the following texts:


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B. Course Assignments

The assignments for this course consist of active class participation, formal presentations to peers, and a scholarly paper. The paper will be written and submitted in 5 parts, as outlined below in Section C. Feedback will be given by the professor on each of the first 4 submitted parts of the paper, and this feedback should be incorporated into the final version of the paper. See attached outline for details of the scholarly paper assignment.

C. Grading Policy

Grades for the course are based on the University grading system. The grade is based on content (substance, attention to assignment, attention to page limit), style (scholarly writing style, APA edition 6, format), and timely submission (assignments submitted later than the assigned or agreed upon date will be downgraded). See directions in course assignment above and in scholarly expectations below for further clarification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment #1</th>
<th>Section 1 of scholarly paper outline</th>
<th>Due class #3 Revision due class #5</th>
<th>10%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
<td>Sections 2 &amp; 3 of paper outline</td>
<td>Due class #7</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #3</td>
<td>Write 2 Sections from 4, 5, or 6 of paper outline</td>
<td>Due class #10</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #4</td>
<td>Section 7 of paper outline</td>
<td>Due class #12</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #5</td>
<td>Final version of sections 1-7 of paper outline</td>
<td>Due class #14</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #6</td>
<td>Class participation &amp; formal presentation</td>
<td>Presentations: classes #13-14</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</table>

D. Course and Instructor Evaluation

The NCSSS doctoral program requires evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, an evaluation form will be distributed in class. Results will not be given to the instructor until grades are submitted. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A. Scholastic Expectations

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook (available on the NCSSS web page) 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 (v. 6) format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading. It is expected that all assignments will be submitted on the due date. **Failure to submit work on time will result in a lowered grade, unless there has been an alternative arrangement with the professor prior to the due date of the assignment.**

**Additional Behavioral Requirements:**
- Students are expected to maintain accepted standards of professional conduct and personal integrity in the classroom. Students should:
  - Attend all classes and contribute constructively to the classroom culture
  - Recognize and avoid behavior that jeopardizes the learning/teaching environment of other students or the instructor
  - Demonstrate competence in planning academic activities and in following through on those plans
  - Reasonably respond to and respect others’ reactions to one’s comments or actions in the classroom
  - Use an appropriate level of class time and instructor’s time and attention in and out of class
  - Behave in a manner that is consistent with the ethical principles of the social work profession.

**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 1  Introduction and Overview of Course


Class 2  Identifying an Issue or Problem within its Environment


Class 3  Model Development and Logic Modeling


Assignment #1a: Section 1 of paper due
Class 4  Critiques of Existing Literature and Empirical Research


Drisko, J., & Grady, M. (2012). *Evidence-based practice in clinical social work.* New York: Springer. Chapter 3; Appendix B.


Class 5  Policies Influencing Issue, Problem, or Population


**Assignment 1b:** Revision of assignment 1 due

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Class 6  Explanatory Theoretical Models


Class 7  Sociological and Social Justice Theories


**Assignment 2: Sections 2-3 due class 7**

Class 8  Organizational Theories


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Class 9  Psychological Theories


Class 10  Macro Change Models: Focus on Communities and Organizations


Assignment #3 due: 2 sections from 4, 5, or 6 of paper outline due class 10
Class 11  **Micro Change Models: Focus on Individuals and Relationships**


Class 12  **Relevant Research Questions**


**Assignment 4:** Section 7 due class 12

Class 13-14  **PowerPoint Presentation of Papers, including Macro or Micro Model**

**Assignment 5:** Final revised paper, sections 1-7, due class 14

**Assignment 6:** Class presentations, classes 13 and 14

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Assignment for SSS 913

The scholarly paper for this course is designed to assess the student’s ability to integrate and apply knowledge from previous NCSSS doctoral courses. The student is expected to critically review pertinent published literature and apply this knowledge to an issue or problem appropriate for social work intervention. The issue or problem must be of significance to a specific population of individuals, couples, families, small groups, organizations, or communities; or the focus may be on social work supervision, management, consultation, or education directed at an issue or problem identified within such a population. It is anticipated that the completion of this paper will initiate the process of students studying for comprehensive exams.

As outlined below, the paper has several sections that should be completed separately throughout the course of the semester. Each section will be graded separately. Students should note the comments made by the instructor, and future versions of each section should incorporate suggested changes. All sections must be integrated into a coherent whole for submission at the end of the semester. The paper should conclude with the creation of a micro or macro model of change and two proposed questions relevant to the issue or problem discussed in the paper. The final questions should be aimed at the prevention or remediation of an issue or problem appropriate for intervention by a social worker and feasible for quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research. Questions also should reflect the transactional nature of the person-in-environment or organization-in-environment and the mission and values of the social work profession. Ethical and diversity issues should be considered in the critiques and addressed throughout the paper.

This paper will be evaluated based on the student’s ability to conceptualize an area of interest to social work, to analyze literature pertinent to this issue, and to integrate this knowledge while thinking critically regarding future research in this area of study. In addition, the student should demonstrate the significance of this area of study for social work practice and theory development. These ideas should be communicated clearly and concisely through academic writing that follows the APA (v. 6) style of formatting.

DUE CLASS #3 (10%):

1) Introduce the biopsychosocial-spiritual issue or problem, OR the organizational, community, or societal issue under study, including justification of the topic’s importance to social work (3 pages maximum). Include answers to the following questions:
   o Why is this specific issue or problem important to society in general?
   o What specific population does this issue or problem affect?
   o What specific target of intervention (individual, couple, family, group, organization, community, or society) is being considered within this issue or problem?
   o What makes this issue or problem of special significance to the practice of social work?

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DUE CLASS #7 (15%):

2) Review the prevalence and incidence of this problem and critique the most current empirical research on this issue or problem (5 pages maximum).
   o What is the extent of empirical research describing this population or exploring this issue or problem?
   o What type of research has been undertaken (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method; experimental, comparative, descriptive, longitudinal, cross-sectional, etc.)?
   o What are the strengths and limitations of this research?
   o How well has this issue taken into account diverse populations?
   o How generalizable are the findings?

3) Identify a federal or state policy that pertains to delivery of services to the population under discussion, or explain how the policy has influenced this issue or problem (4 pages maximum)
   o What are the details of the policy under discussion?
   o How does this policy relate to the specific population or issue or problem under discussion?
   o How would you assess this policy in terms of social justice, ethical considerations, attention to diversity, and its fairness or equitability?
   o How would you recommend that this policy be changed (or not) for the benefit of the specific population you are addressing?

DUE CLASS #10 (20%): (Select from #4, 5, or 6, for a total of two theories)

4) Apply sociological or sociocultural theory most appropriate for assessing the issue or explaining how change occurs (7 pages maximum). Include answers to the following questions:
   o Which sociocultural-sociological theory you have studied is applicable to addressing the issue or problem under discussion (e.g., conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, social exchange theory, systems theories, theories of social justice, etc.)?
   o What larger social forces affect the issue or problem under discussion?
   o Why do you believe the sociological theory you have selected is the most pertinent for understanding your issue or problem?

5) Apply an organizational theory to the organizations that serve the population or address the problem you have identified. Include answers to the following questions (7 pages maximum):
   o Which organization theory (e.g., grouping of theories under rational, natural, and open systems of theories) is applicable to addressing the problem or issue?
   o What organizational challenges affect the issue or problem under discussion?
Why do you believe the organizational theory you selected is the most pertinent for understanding your issue or problem?

6) Apply psychological theory appropriate for assessing the issue and explaining how change occurs (7 pages maximum). Include answers to the following questions:
   o Which psychological theory you have studied is applicable to addressing the issue or problem under discussion (e.g., systems theory, cognitive theory, behavioral theory, psychodynamic theories, transpersonal theory, etc.)?
   o What internal and/or external forces affect the issue or problem discussed?
   o Why do you believe the psychological theory you have selected is the most pertinent for understanding your issue or problem?

DUE CLASS 12 (20%):

7) Describe and critique an existing model of change, or a model you create, in order to address the issue or problem. The micro or macro model should be based on the previous theories you discuss in this paper. State whether your model is one that has been previously created and published or whether you have created or tailored this model to address your specific issue or problem (11 pages maximum). Include answers to the following questions:
   o What is the name of the model and the specific problem definition included in the model?
   o What is the unit of attention of the model (e.g., individual, family, group, organization, community, or nation)?
   o What is the definition of change in this model?
   o What are the ideological biases & values inherent in the model (e.g., how does this model address and uphold the values and ethics of social work and how is it attentive to issues regarding diversity?)
   o How does the policy you discussed above inform the model?
   o How do the theories discussed in earlier sections support the model?
   o What intervention(s) does the model propose to address the problem or issue?
   o How has the model’s effectiveness been measured? Has there been empirical research to support the desired outcomes of the model? If not, what measures of effectiveness would you propose?
   o Create a logic model that details the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes (proximal and distal) for the model.

DUE CLASS 14 (25%):

8) Based on sections 1-7, provide an integrative discussion and conclude with TWO feasible and appropriate research questions for your problem or issue (6 pages maximum). For each question proposed:
   o What is the philosophical issue and paradigm of inquiry?
   o Briefly and generally, what research design might be appropriate for this question?
   o How feasible is this question and/or design for empirical measurement?
o In summary, what are the strengths and limitations of each question for future empirical research?