I. COURSE PURPOSE

Homelessness is one of the most tragic and resilient problems of our time. The purpose of this course is to make students aware of the root causes of homelessness; the differences between individual and family homelessness; the critical shortage of low-income housing; federal and local government responses to homeless service provision; and strategies currently advanced by advocates and local governments to end homelessness. Ideally, this course will demonstrate our responsibility and capacity as social workers to reach out and provide services to individuals and families who are homeless, and to advocate for social policies and programs that will best respond to the needs of people who are homeless.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To develop an understanding of individuals and families who experience homelessness.

2. To appreciate that all people have inherent dignity and worth, and that any response to homelessness should promote human dignity and worth.

3. To develop an understanding of social policies and systemic issues that contribute to homelessness.
3. To examine federal and local government services and strategies for addressing and preventing homelessness; and

4. To appraise how societal values are reflected in social welfare policies.

5. To acquire knowledge of the complex network of service needs required to comprehensively address homelessness.

6. To create an awareness about the negative stereotypes about people who are homeless;

7. To deepen the appreciation that the values we hold impact services to people who are homeless;

8. To critically assess the implications of housing millions of men, women, and children in temporary shelter;

9. To recognize how various forms of prejudice continue to contribute to homelessness;

10. To value the importance of working on both macro and micro levels to address the problem of homelessness.

11. To critique federal and local strategies to address homelessness.

12. To formulate strategies that might address homelessness.

13. To demonstrate critical thinking about problems that contribute to homelessness and poverty.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Reading


B. Optional Reading


C. Course Assignments

Assignment 1, Experience with People Who are Homeless: Volunteer at a shelter, health facility, soup kitchen or other facility that provides services to people who are homeless (a minimum of 6 hours).

OR

Go to a park or other location where you might meet someone who is homeless. Introduce yourself and get acquainted with him or her, e.g., engage in a conversation about everyday issues, such as the weather, current events, how long they’ve lived in the city. (Don’t feel like you have to talk incessantly, presence to another person is a powerful way to community dignity and respect for another.) Spend time with this person on at least two occasions.

Assignment 2, Final Paper: Students will write a 7-10 page paper discussing a volunteer experience or an experience getting to know someone who is homeless. In the papers, students should use the concepts covered in class and derived from the readings. If writing
about a volunteer experience, students should briefly describe the agency and program where the volunteer service occurred, the functions performed, and any interactions the student had with the people served. **Volunteer experience cannot be done at field placement sites.** Students should also explore the larger implications of the services observed, and whether or not the student felt the services were addressing the needs of people who were homeless.

If writing about meeting with someone who is homeless, students should describe the context and setting of the meeting, and synopsis of the interaction including how the conversation flowed, any verbal, nonverbal cues received and/or any reactions the individual had to being engaged.

All papers should include a discussion of whether the experience broke down or reinforced a students’ existing stereotypes. Finally, students should discuss their thoughts about whether or not there is a solution to homelessness, and explain why.

Papers are due the last day of class.

D. **Course and Instructor Evaluation**

NCSSS requires written evaluation of this course and the instructor. Forms for this purpose will be distributed at the last meeting of the class. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

E. **Grading Policy**

| Assignment 1 | 20% |
| Assignment 2 | 65% |
| Attendance and Participation | 15% |

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or MSW Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements.

It is expected that students will demonstrate communication skills consistent with the NCSSS graduate education standards. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, site 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.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Class 1  AN OVERVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS: A DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

This session will cover how homelessness is defined and counted, and the major contributing factors to homelessness. It will also cover public attitudes and beliefs about people who are homeless. This session will also briefly explore differences homelessness effecting individuals versus families, and the impact of homelessness on children.

Required Reading


Optional Reading


Class 2  THE CRISIS IN LOW-INCOME HOUSING: A MAJOR CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO HOMELESSNESS

In this session, students will be introduced to factors contributing to the affordable housing crisis. In addition, they will participate in a simulated housing search to raise their awareness about the experience of people
seeking housing.

Required Reading


Optional Reading


Class 3

Housing First, Other Housing Policies and Policies to Prevent Homelessness

In this session students will be introduced to various strategies designed to address the need for affordable housing. Specific attention will be given to the Housing First model for ending homelessness. Students will have an opportunity to discuss and critique this model.

Required Reading


Optional Reading


Class 4

STRATEGIES TO END HOMELESSNESS AND COURSE EVALUATION

This session will include group discussion about the proposed plans to end homelessness in 10 years. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss and critique the readings in small groups and report back to the large group to share critiques and begin to think about a collective strategy to end homelessness. Students will also discuss aspects of the plans to end homelessness as they relate to the content in the book The Soloist.

Required Reading


Optional Reading


PAPERS DUE