Social Work Responses to Trauma: Intersections of Policy, Community, and Clinical Practice

Eileen A. Dombo, PhD, LICSW

Summer 2016

(3 credits)

I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course is designed to provide social work students with information on experiences of trauma and the current social work interventions on micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Course content covers the range of theoretical, policy and practice issues involving a wide range of traumatic experiences such as war, sexual violence, child abuse and neglect, intimate partner violence, and elder abuse. The course is taught using Trauma Theory, Empowerment Theory, Feminist Theory, Social Constructionism, and the Strengths Perspective.

A survey of trauma across the lifespan will be integrated to allow students to gain a greater understanding of the cumulative and overlapping effects of traumatic experiences. Students will use a value-critical approach for analyzing policies and programs designed to address the phenomena that contribute to trauma. In addition to exploring evidence-based treatments for trauma, the course will address vicarious trauma (VT), or the effects on the work on the social worker, as well as methods for addressing VT in social work practice. The course takes a social justice approach with an emphasis on human rights to dignity and safety; the protection of those who are vulnerable and oppressed; and the use of practice interventions that create change within individuals, communities, and society.
II. COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

Practice behaviors that are covered this class are indicated by **bold**. Practice behaviors that are not covered in this class are indicated by **grey**.

1. Professional Identity:
*Identify as a professional social worker & conduct oneself accordingly.*

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<tr>
<td>1.1 Social workers demonstrate professional use of self across all practice settings.</td>
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<td>1.2 Develop, manage, and maintain therapeutic relationships with clients within the person-in-environment and strengths perspectives.</td>
<td>1.2 Develop, manage, and maintain therapeutic and professional relationships with clients within the person-in-environment and strengths perspectives.</td>
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2. Ethical Practice
*Apply social work ethical principles to guide advanced practice.*

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<td>2.1 Social workers recognize and manage personal biases in practice settings.</td>
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<td>2.2 Social workers recognize and negotiate the complexities that can arise when organizational policies/procedures interact with</td>
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competing professional standards for ethical social work practice.

2.3 Social workers apply ethical principles through the use of an ethical decision making model that helps in the resolution of an ethical dilemma.

standards for ethical social work practice.

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### 3. Critical Thinking
*Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.*

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<td>3.1 Social workers engage in reflective practice.</td>
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<td>3.2 Social workers evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to client situations.</td>
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### 4. Diversity in Practice
*Engage diversity and demonstrate awareness of the complexities regarding identity differences and how they impact practice.*

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<td>4.1 Social workers use their self-awareness to understand the influence of their personal biases and values in working with others.</td>
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4.2 Social workers practice within the context of difference in shaping the life experiences of clients, themselves, and the working alliance.

5. Human Rights & Justice

*Advance human rights through understanding how social and economic justice factors impact practice*

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<td>5.1 Social workers practice with the understanding that societal structures and values may oppress, marginalize, and alienate, or create, enhance, and privilege different cultural groups within a society.</td>
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<td>5.2 Social workers advocate at multiple levels for the human rights of marginalized populations.</td>
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6. Research Based Practice

*Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research*

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<td>6.1 Social workers critically evaluate and utilize theoretical models and empirical research methods for the purpose of informing and evaluating social work practice and programs.</td>
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### 7. Human Behavior
*Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment*

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<td>7.1 Social workers differentially apply theories of human behavior that address the bio-psycho-social-spiritual nature of clients and the social environment to guide social work practice.</td>
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### 8. Policy Practice
*Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.*

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<td>8.1 Advocate with and inform administrators and legislators to influence policies that affect clients and services.</td>
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### 9. Practice Contexts
*Respond to contexts that shape advanced social work practice.*

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<td>9.1 Social workers assess the current political, economic, social, and cultural climate as it affects the most vulnerable members of society.</td>
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9.2 Social workers intervene through advocacy to serve the most vulnerable persons within the political, economic, social, and cultural contexts.

10. Engage, Assess, Intervene, Evaluate

*Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.*

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<td><strong>Engagement:</strong></td>
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<td>Social workers:</td>
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<td>• 10.1.1 Use empathy, active listening, and other clinical skills to establish rapport in order to set treatment goals with clients.</td>
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<td>• 10.1.2 Develop culturally responsive therapeutic relationships.</td>
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<td>• 10.1.3 Attend to the interpersonal dynamics and contextual factors that both strengthen and potentially threaten the therapeutic alliance.</td>
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<td>• 10.1.4 Effectively use interpersonal skills to establish collaboration between multiple stakeholders involved in enhancing organizational, community, and social well-being.</td>
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### Assessment:
Social workers:
- 10.2.1 Use multi-dimensional assessment tools that include bio-psycho-social-spiritual data to assess client’s strengths, capacities, and readiness for change.
- 10.2.2 Use differential diagnostic processes.
- 10.2.3 Assess organizations, communities, and policy environments using relevant theories and models.

### Intervention:
Social workers:
- 10.3.1 Develop, with clients, an intervention plan that incorporates client strengths, capacities, and protective factors.
- 10.3.2 Use culturally appropriate clinical techniques for a range of presenting concerns identified in the assessment.
- 10.3.3 Adapt appropriate intervention strategies based on continuous clinical assessment.
- 10.3.4 Use appropriate and collaborative interventions to affect organizational, community, and societal change.
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<td>Social workers:</td>
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<td>• 10.4.1 Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions and program implementation and outcomes.</td>
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<td>• 10.4.2 Revise intervention and program implementation plans based on ongoing process and outcome evaluation.</td>
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III. FURTHER EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the core principles of trauma-informed services and explore ways to apply them in a practice setting.
2. Understand the symptoms of vicarious trauma and identify ways to create personal and organizational supports for social workers.
3. Critically evaluate policies, programs, and clinical interventions designed to help trauma survivors.
4. Gain in-depth knowledge about one specific dimension of trauma through either a scholarly paper or a class presentation.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts and Readings:


   Other Required Readings:
   There may be other required readings that come from scholarly journals or other pertinent resources. These readings are posted on the Blackboard page for the course. Individuals not enrolled in this course may not have access to the Blackboard page or readings.

B. Recommended Readings:


C. Other Recommended Resources and Media:


Herman, J. L. (1997). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence--from domestic abuse to political terror*. New York: Basic Books.


D. Course Assignments:

1. Attendance and Class Participation = 15% of Final Grade
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. All practice content in discussions must be kept confidential, in keeping with the Student Confidentiality Agreement.

Missing class sessions will result in a significantly reduced grade. 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. In addition, this could result in reduced class participation grade.

2. Weekly Discussion Board Postings = 15% of Final Grade
Students are expected to the Discussion Board on Blackboard for Classes 2-12 no later than 9:00am the day of class. These postings should demonstrate a critical reflection on some aspect of the readings. Postings will be graded based on their relevance to the course and the topic of the week, demonstration of critical thinking and understanding of the material, and timeliness. They will be used to guide class discussion.

3. Trauma-Informed Services Analysis (Due Class 4) = 20% of Final Grade
See Attachment A for detailed description

4. Concept Paper Proposal OR Group Contract (Due Class 5) = 10% of Final Grade
Students are required to submit a one-page proposal for their paper and a preliminary reference list with a minimum of ten scholarly references OR a group project contract.

5. Scholarly Paper (Due Class 12) OR Group Presentation (Classes 6-12) = 40% of Final Grade
Students choose one of two major projects for the course:

The Scholarly Paper option allows students to explore one area of trauma in a more academic fashion (See Attachment B).

The Group Presentation option allows students to work in teams of three or more people to explore resources and services for survivors of particular traumatic experience and share these with their peers. (See Attachment C).

E. Grading Policy: The university grading system will be utilized (see policy in bulletin). The grade will be based upon the extent to which the student meets the course objectives as demonstrated by class participation and the two NCSSS required papers.
F. **Attendance and Participation**

1. Students are expected to attend all class sessions, to arrive at classes on time, and to conduct themselves in an ethical and scholarly fashion. In the event that it is necessary for a participant to miss a class session or come late, s/he is expected to notify the instructor in advance. Students are responsible for obtaining any class notes or other materials distributed when they are absent. Unexcused or multiple absences may result in a reduction of the final grade.

2. The use of laptops or other devices should be used in such a manner that they do not disturb or distract other students. Recording devices should only be used with the permission of the instructor and should be turned off at the request of the instructor or class participants when requested in the event that personal or confidential information is being discussed.

3. Students are expected to read all required readings for each class session and be prepared to participate in classroom discussions and exercises.

4. The course combines the formats of didactic lectures and participatory seminars. Students and the instructor will endeavor to draw on their own experience including professional practice experience, relevant literature and analytic thinking about the course content. Each student is expected to participate actively in class discussions and to come prepared to share current knowledge, ideas, and relevant experiences as appropriate. Students and the instructor will view each other as resource persons.

G. **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 special requests. These evaluations will serve as a basis for ongoing course revisions.

V. **CLASS EXPECTATIONS**

**Scholastic Expectations:**

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

**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.

**Accommodations:**

Students with physical, learning, psychological or other challenges wishing to request accommodations must identify themselves with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. Once you have documented a disability, DSS will establish whether any accommodations or academic adjustments are required. If so, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.
CLASS SCHEDULE

UNIT 1 – Introduction

Class 1 - 5/17/16  The History of Social Work Practice with Trauma
This class will address the history of understanding trauma in the social work profession and address core understandings of historical trauma.

Required Reading:
DSM-5, Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders, pp. 265-290
Ringel & Brandell, Chapters 1 & 10

Class 2 – 5/19/16  Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Trauma
Assessing Programs and Policies Designed to Address the Phenomena Creating Trauma-Informed Social Work Services
This class will explore the influences of feminist theory, empowerment theory, social constructionism, trauma theory and the strengths perspective on the understanding of, treatment of, and policy formulation about the causes of trauma. In addition, students will review the value-critical approach to policy analysis and explore the connections among theory, policy, programs and clinical intervention with trauma survivors.

Required Reading:
Chambers & Wedel, Ch. 2
Ringel & Brandell, Chapters 2, 3 & 4.

Classes 3& 4  Trauma Treatment
5/24 & 5/26/16
These classes will explore central issues in trauma treatment, as well as current models of practice in the fields of clinical social work, psychology, and psychiatry. Cultural competence and countertransference will be addressed as they relate to a variety of dimensions of treatment.

Required Reading:
Dass-Brailsford, Chapters 3 & 6; Appendicies I, II, V, X & XI
Ringel & Brandell, Chapters 5 & 10
Additional Readings on Trauma-Focused CBT will be on Blackboard

Note: Trauma-Informed Services Analysis Due Class 4
**Class 5 – 5/31/16**  
**Addressing the Effects of Vicarious Trauma on the Social Worker: Individual and Organizational Solutions**

This class will address the effects of working with trauma on the individual social worker organizations. Strategies for change on personal, professional and organizational levels will be presented and discussed.

**Required Reading:**

Dass-Brailsford, Chapter 14, Appendicies VIII & IX


Ringel & Brandel, Chapter 11

**Recommended Reading:**


Pearlman, Saakvitne, & Buchele, All

Richardson, All


**Note: Paper Proposal/Group Contract Due**

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**UNIT 2: Macro Practice with Trauma**

**Class 6 – 6/2/16**  
**The Traumatic Impact of War and Terrorism on Military and Non-Military Communities**

This class will address the experience of terrorist attacks and war on individuals serving in the military, as well as on the families of those in service. It will address the experience of war or terrorism on communities and those in the line of fire. Finally, the impact on other professionals such as journalists and first responders will be explored.

**Required Reading:**


Dass-Brailsford, Chapter 12


Ringel & Brandel, Chapter 7

**Recommended Reading:**

Friedman, Keane & Resick, Chapter 25


**Class 7 – 6/7/16**

**The Traumatic Impact of Geopolitical Dislocation (Immigration, Trafficking, and Refugee Experiences)**

This class will explore the macro issues of human trafficking, immigration and refugees, as well as the experiences of trauma on a micro level. The role of the social worker in addressing geopolitical dislocation, social justice issues, and individual oppression will be addressed.

**Required Reading:**
Chambers & Wedel, Ch. 2

Dass-Brailsford, Chapter 11


**Recommended Readings**

Class 8 – 6/9/16  
**The Traumatic Impact of Natural Disasters: The Role of the Social Worker in Disaster Relief and Emergency Response**  
This class will explore the human impact of natural disasters and traumatic reactions to hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, and other natural disasters. The role of the social worker in disaster relief planning for governmental and non-profit organizations will be explored, as well as the current clinical interventions.

**Required Reading:**  
Chambers & Wedel, Ch. 2  
Dass-Brailsford, Chapter 13  

**Recommended Readings:**  

UNIT III – Micro Practice with Trauma

Class 9 – 6/14/16  
**Intersections of Traumatic Experiences, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Disorders**
This class will address the impact of traumatic experiences on coping behaviors, specifically substance abuse problems. The co-morbidity of PTSD, substance use disorders, and other mental health disorders will be explored. Students will view “Healing Neen” and discuss micro and macro factors related to these overlapping dynamics.

**Required Reading:**

**Class 10 – 6/16/16**

**The Traumatic Impact of Sexual Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence**
This class will address the power and control dynamics present in intimate partner violence and the traumatic effects of sexual abuse. The role of the social worker in creating public policy to address the issues, and social worker’s interface with the criminal justice system will be addressed. A particular focus will be placed on vulnerable populations such as children, older adults, and persons with disabilities.

**Required Reading:**
Chambers & Wedel, Ch. 2
Dass-Brailsford, Chapter 9 & 10
Class 11 – 6/21/16  The Traumatic Impact of Stalking, Emotional Abuse, and Bullying
This class will address the issues of stalking and bullying and the use of technology. The connection between what was once viewed as harmless “Peeping Tom” or “mean girl” behavior and physical and/or sexual violence will be explored. The role of the social worker in clinical interventions, legal responses, program development, and policies to address these issues will be explored.

Required Reading:
Chambers & Wedel, Ch. 2
Ringel & Brandel, Chapter 8

Recommended Readings:
Wiseman, All

Class 12 – 6/22/16  Who is Causing the Trauma?
This class will address policies, programs, and interventions related to perpetration of violence, with a focus on interpersonal violence. The role of the social worker in creating public policy to address the issues, as well as the role in rehabilitation through clinical interventions will be addressed. The Community Protect Model will be presented and ethical issues will be discussed.
**Required Reading:**


**Scholarly Papers Due**
Attachment A
Trauma-Informed Services Analysis
Guidelines

In Class 2, we explored the concept of trauma-informed services through ten principles outlined by Elliott, et al. (2005) and Knight (2015). Choose a setting in which you have worked providing social work services (e.g. current/previous field placement, employer, etc.) and explore these ten principles of trauma-informed services. Address the following four areas:

1. Describe the agency setting. Is it public or private, non-profit or for-profit? Is the agency’s primary goal to serve trauma survivors? Approximately what percentage of clients would be defined as trauma survivors? (1 page, 10 points)

2. Explore each of the ten principles in detail and if/how well the setting applies each principle. Present this in table format using a grading or scale system. For example, you can use letter grading (A-F) or a scale of 0-5 where 0 indicates that the principle is not applied and 5 indicates that the agency does an excellent job of applying it. Identify your scale and the meaning for each rating. Provide a brief narrative to support your evaluation (2-3 pages, 40 points)

3. What are your ideas for improving the principles that are not well implemented? Be specific about organizational, environmental, programmatic, and/or administrative changes that would need to be made. Also address federal, state, or local policies that would need to be changed to create trauma-informed services. Clearly state how you would advocate for these changes. (1½ pages, 20 points)

4. Address a minimum of three barriers to creating trauma-informed services in this setting. Indicate how you would address each barrier. (1 page, 20 points)

Submit the assignment at the beginning of Class 4 in a Word document, no more than seven pages in length (double-spaced, using 12-point font and normal margins). It should be presented in a clear and coherent manner, and reflect critical thinking and a clear understanding of trauma-informed services (10 points). You do not need to cite the readings.
Attachment B
Scholarly Paper
Guidelines

Students will choose a dimension of trauma and address (1) a clinical social work intervention; (2) a community response; (3) a private or public program; OR (4) a federal, state, or local governmental policy designed to address the issue.

The paper will include a literature review using scholarly references and provide a critical analysis of the current response, and concrete recommendations for improvements or changes. The paper must be written in APA style and follow the MSW Program’s expectations for a scholarly paper. Write the final paper using the following headings to structure your writing, and include reference pages. Submit a printed copy of the paper in a Word Document at the beginning of Class 12.

1. **Introduction**: A brief statement about the focus and purpose of the paper. The introduction should give your reader an understanding of the dimension of trauma you will focus on, and the level of social work intervention (micro, macro, mezzo) you will address. (1/2 page, 5 pts).

2. **Literature Review**: Review the research and writings on your dimension of trauma from the scholarly literature. Address the history of social work’s role with this issue. Include sections on the social, political, and interpersonal factors that cause and/or are impacted by this traumatic experience. Summarize the scholarly literature regarding the current, state of the art interventions/policies/community programs. Address any applicable explanatory theory and models of practice (6-7 pages, 40 pts).

3. **Critique**: Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the state of the art practice with this dimension of trauma. Address gaps in services, inadequacies of programs, problematic policies, etc. (2 pages, 10 pts)

4. **Future Directions for Social Work**: Propose ways to strengthen what already exists and/or new methods of alleviating the problem and/or its sequela. Be concrete about what you, as a future social work leader, would do to improve upon the current state of the art on this dimension of trauma (2-3 pages, 20 pts)

5. **Conclusion**: Summarize the findings of your paper. What are your final thoughts on the dimension of trauma and current social work practice? How might your critique strengthen the role of social workers in this area? (1/2 page, 5 pts).

6. Use the correct APA format, grammar, and writing style throughout the paper. (20 points)
Attachment C

Group Presentation
Guidelines and Expectations

Students will choose a dimension of trauma covered in Classes 6-12 and create a professional presentation to share with their peers on the programs, services, and resources for social work practice with survivors of that specific experience. The presentation must be given on the date for that topic on the syllabus and will follow the instructor’s lecture. The group must provide also provide a comprehensive list of resources for use in working with the population.

1. Students should form groups of three (3) or more to work on the project. The instructor reserves the right to add or remove students from groups to fit the needs of the class, as there will only be one group presentation per class period.

2. Each group must create a contract (see Blackboard – Assignments Tab – for a sample contract) for working together. The contract specifically outlines each member’s responsibilities and is signed by all. One signed copy of this contract is due NO LATER THAN Class 5. It is highly recommended that groups addressing issues covered in Classes 6 and 7 submit the contracts earlier.

3. The presentation must be no longer than 40 minutes, including questions and answers, and demonstrate contributions from each member of the group. Be sure to fully address current responses to the issue, policies, programs, services, and barriers to providing services. The lecture for the day will outline the scholarly research on the issue itself, so the group will be building on this, and does not need to address it.

4. Finally, each group will be asked to evaluate the process and each other. Your classmates will also be asked to complete an evaluation of your presentation. These evaluations will be used in part to determine the group grade on the project.