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. COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), requires that students meet 10 core competencies, which are operationalized as practice behaviors. Each course is designed to cover one or more of the ten core competencies and each course is also designed to cover some, but not all of the practice behaviors within a competency. Upon completion of this course, students will able to demonstrate the following practice behaviors within the noted competencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Practice Behaviors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Identity</strong>: Identify as a professional social worker &amp; conduct self accordingly</td>
<td>Social workers advocate for client access to the services of social work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Ethical Practice

**Ethical Practice:** Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.

Social workers recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice.

### Critical Thinking

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

Social workers distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom.

### Diversity in Practice

**Diversity in Practice:** Engage diversity and difference in practice

Social workers recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power.

### Human Rights & Justice

**Human Rights & Justice:** Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

Social workers engage in practices that advance social and economic justice.

### Policy Practice

**Policy Practice:** Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.

Analyze, formulate, and/or advocate for policies that advance social well-being.

### Human Behavior

**Human Behavior:** Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment

Social workers critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

### Practice Contexts

**Practice Contexts:** Respond to contexts that shape practice

Social workers continuously appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services.

### Engage, Assess, Intervene, Evaluate

**Engage, Assess, Intervene, Evaluate:** Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

**Engagement:** Social workers use empathy and other interpersonal skills.

### III. ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL 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 acquire knowledge of the complex network of service needs required to comprehensively address homelessness.

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

7. To formulate strategies that might address homelessness.

IV. 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. Students may want to write about the process they used for engaging someone experiencing homelessness, what thoughts occurred in attempting to complete the assignment.

All papers should include a discussion of whether the experience broke down or reinforced a student’s 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. Grading Policy and Weights of Assignments

Grades will be based on the CUA Grading Policy as described in the Graduate Announcements. Full credit will not be given for assignments that are submitted late. **No credit will be given for assignments submitted after they have been reviewed in class.** The following provides weights for the various course assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**Grading System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numeric Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 94</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>70 - 79</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 - 69</td>
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E. Preparation, Attendance & Participation

Students are required to attend classes and are expected to participate meaningfully in class discussion/exercises and online forums as required. The class participation grade will be determined by the instructor’s perception of the student’s preparation for and contributions to class discussion/activities. Different students will make different kinds of contributions. Some will have an easy time with spontaneous interactions while others will be more comfortable making planned statements about key ideas from the readings or other sources. Both types of contributions are valued.

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.

V. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements (http://ncsss.cua.edu/courses/index.cfm), including scholastic and behavioral requirements.

NCSSS is committed to creating an open and inclusive learning environment where all members - including students, faculty, administrators, and staff – strive to listen to and learn from one another. We recognize that in a multicultural society, it is inevitable that issues or tensions relative to diversity and different life experiences will arise. It is how we handle these events that matters. Therefore, when such issues occur – inside or outside of the classroom - we agree to engage in respectful and productive discussion with one another until learning is enhanced and understanding is deepened by all involved.

A. Scholastic Expectations
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. 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.

C. 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 (http://graduatestudies.cua.edu/currentstudents/academintgrt.cfm) and appropriate Program Handbooks.
D. Confidentiality
Each student is expected to adhere to the Confidentiality Agreement that is signed at the beginning of every semester. This agreement covers “practice materials” in classes, supervisory sessions, case conferences, seminars, and other educational settings within the NCSSS BSW or MSW programs are for professional learning purposes only and are subject to strict professional standards of confidentiality. These same standards of confidentiality also extend to various forms of written communication and peer consultation.

Adherence to these standards means all students refrain from communicating beyond the classroom setting about practice material that is presented in class. I will also refrain from using social media outlets (blogs, twitter, Facebook, etc.) or email to discuss practice settings, program responsibilities and projects with individuals who are not in teaching or supervision roles directly related to the situation.

E. 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, you must present that documentation to your instructors and arrange a meeting with as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.

F. Use of Electronic Devices Please turn off all cell phones or other devices that would disrupt the learning environment of the classroom and put them away and removed from the classroom environment.
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 in homelessness among individuals, families and young adults/adolescents.

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


Read Selectively


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