

The University of Texas at Austin
School of Social Work

Dynamics of Organizations and Communities

Course No.:	SW 381T	Instructor:	John Barton
Unique No.:	63695	Teaching Asst.:	TBD
Semester:	Fall 2009	Telephone:	463.1185 (office)
Meeting Time	MON 5:30-8:30 p.m.	Email:	barton.utaustin@gmail.com
Location:	SSW 2.112	Office Hours:	By appointment

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course familiarizes students with the macro context of social work practice. It examines the reciprocal relationship between human behavior and social environments and explores the consequences of that interaction for populations-at-risk and people from diverse backgrounds. It examines the impact of social structure and other societal factor on one's personal life chances in relation to equity, fairness, opportunity, and other issues of social and economic justice. Drawing on a systems perspective, this course helps students develop skills at using systems thinking approaches to understanding organizations and communities with special emphasis on their application to a variety of oppressed and disadvantaged populations and multiple levels of intervention. Special emphasis is given to the development of assessment skills and intervention methods that are relevant to empowerment, capacity building, and social change within organizations and communities.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

1. Discuss communities and organizations as a context for professional practice to meet individual needs, build community capacity, and promote social and economic justice;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the value dilemmas and ethical issues confronting social work professionals and their implications for social work practice with organizations and communities;
3. Assess the influence of community norms, priorities, and competitive community factions on the social structure of communities and the delivery of human services;
4. Assess various evidence-based intervention approaches for working with organizations and communities;
5. Analyze the impacts of organizational and community dynamics on populations at risk and relate those impacts to the participation of such populations in organizational and community governance, human service provision, and policy formulation;

6. Evaluate alternative strategies for initiating change in organizations and communities, including planning models, coalition building, community development, direct action, and legislative advocacy;
7. Understand the relevance of age, race, gender, social class, culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, and physical and mental ability in social work practice that is grounded in social and economic justice.

III. TEACHING METHODS

Course content is covered through reading, listening, thinking, and discussing social work practice in organizations and communities. One or two students will be asked each week to summarize the week's required readings from Community Practice: Theories and Skills for Social Workers (see Course Schedule) and other texts (e.g., Tribal Leadership). Students are expected to ask questions, share experiences, and actively participate in class discussions. In addition, the class may include small group experiential learning, videotapes to generate discussion, and guest speakers who work in agency and community-based settings.

IV. REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS, AND MATERIALS

Alinsky, S. D. (1971). Rules for Radicals. New York: Vintage Books.

Hardcastle, D. A., Powers, P. A. & Wenocur, S. (2004). Community Practice: Theories and Skills for Social Workers, 2nd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Legislative Budget Board, Texas. (2008). Fiscal Size-up: 2008–09 Biennium. Austin.

Logan, D., King, J., & Fischer-Wright, H. (2008). Tribal Leadership. New York: HarperBusiness.

Osborne, D. & Plastrik, P. (2000). The Reinventor's Fieldbook: Tools for Transforming your Government. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Additional readings will be assigned as we make our way through the semester. As additional readings are assigned, I will provide copies of the readings to the class the week before so that students will have adequate time to read it before class. The assigned readings for this course represent the minimum required reading for this course.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course assignments, due dates, and their contribution to the final grade are summarized below.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>% of Course Grade</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Critical Thinking Paper	20%	21 September
Exam One	20%	12 October
Issue Assessment		
Written report	25%	
Presentation	15%	
	40%	16 November
Exam Two	20%	7 December

Grades for this course will be assigned using the following +/- scale.

100 – 94 = A	76 – 74 = C
93 – 90 = A-	73 – 70 = C-
89 – 87 = B+	69 – 67 = D+
86 – 84 = B	66 – 64 = D
83 – 80 = B-	63 – 60 = D-
79 – 77 = C+	59 and below = F

Issue Assessment. Each student is expected to prepare and present a “publication-quality” assessment of an organizational or policy issue of their choosing, preferably one that relates to their own personal and professional interests and experience. The assessment will examine either how well the organization is performing its stated mission, or how well an existing or proposed policy has been, or could be implemented at the local and/or state-level.

Emphasis will be placed on the:

- impact of external and internal forces;
- management and delivery of services;
- relationship with outside constituencies, both at the individual and community level;
- roles played by ethics, change and innovation; and
- need for service delivery improvement.

Using relevant material from assigned readings and other sources, the assessment will include a statement of findings, a list of concerns, and recommendation(s) for change, including specific discussion of how the recommendation(s) could be implemented. The assessment should be between 16 and 20 pages in length, excluding references and attachments or appendices. Students should have their assessment topic selected by 21 September 2009, and a draft of the assessment completed by 16 November 2009.

Critical Thinking Essay. Critical thinking is a skill that you will need for this class, your graduate education, and throughout your professional life. A five-page essay is due on 21 September 2009 that will employ the concept(s) of critical thinking in relating Saul Alinsky’s organizing principals to the process of enacting national healthcare reform.

Exams. There will be two essay exams. The first exam will be on 12 October 2009 and will include material covered in the first half of the class. The second exam will be on 8 December 2009. This exam will focus on material covered subsequent to the first exam. Both exams will be take-home exams. Each exam is worth 20 percent of your final grade.

VI. CLASS POLICIES

Accommodations for students with disabilities. The University of Texas at Austin provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodation for any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive). For information about academic accommodations, students should contact the Office of the Dean of Students, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Information is also available online at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/>. Students are asked to notify the professor of any accommodations they may need prior to the end of the second week of class.

Attendance and Participation. Attendance and participation are important for effective learning. This means that students should not only attend class but should be prepared to actively participate in class discussions. Because this class meets once-a-week, it is imperative that students attend all scheduled class meetings. At the same time, there may be occasions when students will not be able to attend class because of illness or other unforeseen problems. In such cases, the student should notify the professor before class that they will not be in class. In the case of unexcused absences, the professor will deduct points from a student's final course grade.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line. If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Conditional admission. Students who were admitted into the MSSW program on a conditional basis are not able to take an incomplete for this course if the conditions for admission are still in place.

Conduct in Class. I expect students to act like professionals in class. This means arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, I do require that you engage one another with respect and professionalism.

Documented Disability Statement

Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

E-Mail

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Publication style manual. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association is the style manual adopted by the School of Social Work. All papers prepared for this class should conform to the APA style. A summary handout of this manual is available in Student Services. The complete manual is available in the Learning Resource Center. You can also find on-line assistance with electronic reference guidelines at: APAStyle.org.

Religious Holidays. By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Safety. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.

Scholastic Dishonesty. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

If a student has any questions concerning the application of the rules prohibiting scholastic dishonesty in regard to a particular assignment, it is the responsibility of that student to seek clarification from the instructor of the course. Violations of the University's policy on scholastic dishonesty will result in a grade of F for the course and may result in reporting to the Dean of the School of Social Work and the Dean of the Graduate School.

VII. COURSE SCHEDULE: FALL 2009

Date	Description	Text / Readings
31 Aug	Introduction and course overview	
7 Sep	No Class	
14 Sep	Understanding the social environment	Text: Chapters 1 and 2
21 Sep	Community and community practice Assessment Topic Due Critical Thinking Essay Due	Text: Chapters 3 and 4
28 Sep	Understanding the community	Text: Chapters 5 and 6
5 Oct	Professional use of self in community practice	Text: Chapter 7
12 Oct	Understanding the agency and work groups	Text: Chapters 8 and 9
19 Oct	The community as a social network Exam One Due	Text: Chapters 10 and 11
26 Oct	Social marketing	Text: Chapter 12
2 Nov	Community intervention: models and approaches	Text: Chapter 13
9 Nov	Organizing for community change	Text: Chapter 14
16 Nov	Organizing for organizational change Draft Assessment Due Student presentations	Text: Chapter 15
23 Nov	Student presentations	Text: TBD
30 Nov	Student presentations	Text: TBD
7 Dec	Course wrap-up	Text: TBD
14 Dec	Exam Two Due	

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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