COURSE SYLLABUS

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the course is to provide the student with generalist practice knowledge in rurality and human diversity. The course builds upon the liberal arts base and generalist practice in content related to rural communities, rural lifestyles, rural social work, and human diversity. Within this context, the course addresses individuals and families, groups, organizations and communities impacted by rural lifestyles and social work practice related to these systems. This course integrates dimensions of human diversity knowledge. Thereby, students acquire greater knowledge on social research and evidence-based practice, social work values, ethics, culture, ethnic diversity, environmental justice, social and economic justice - which are integral to rural populations and communities.

All graduate level social work courses build upon the liberal arts base. This content includes sociology, psychology, political science, economics, human biology, cultural and ethnic diversity, and social research. Rural content is discussed in each generalist practice course and it is required that students take Introduction to Rurality in their first semester in the program. The rurality content provides the basis for the generalist practice in specialized practice in the MSW program.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


RECOMMENDED TEXTS:


II. CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION

The MSW program of SFASU features a generalist practice and a single specialization/specialized practice: *Advanced Generalist Practice in a Rural Context.* Both are defined below.

It is important to note here that the BSW program and the MSW program have developed a shared definition of generalist practice, given below.

**Advanced generalist practice** builds on the generalist foundation, incorporating the elements listed above, but characterized by a greater depth, breadth, and autonomy as demonstrated through specialized knowledge across problem areas, populations-at-risk and practice settings, with a greater selection of diverse interactions across practice levels.

Briefly, advanced generalist practice requires:

- The ability to engage and differentially assess complex problems with systems of all sizes, with a variety of advanced assessment skills.
- Specialized evidence-based interventions with systems of all sizes.
- Differential evaluation techniques with systems of all sizes.
- Strategies to advocate for clients and constituencies influenced by rural lifestyles.
- Readiness for leadership in a variety of areas including: program development, coordination and administration; clinical and organizational supervision; policy creation, reform and implementation; leadership in research development and utilization, particularly in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary practice settings; professional development.

The specialized practice for the MSW program is advanced generalist practice for rural contexts. Theories that describe and predict rural ecological systems and rural strengths, including the incredibly rich interactions, simple and complex, formal and informal, wholesome and debilitating are emphasized. On this basis, the curriculum of the MSW Program emphasizes the ecological systems approach, the strengths perspective, and the social capital and social exchange theories.

**Rural context** refers to social work practice with people with rural lifestyles and systems of all sizes within and outside of rural communities. There is no single accepted definition of rural. In fact, just as generalist practice in social work draws on multiple theories, generalist practice in rural contexts recognizes the many definitions currently in use and their advantages and disadvantages for research, practice, and advocacy. The School of Social Work at SFA utilizes several of these definitions within the United States and globally including:

*The United States Census Bureau* (urbanized areas, urban clusters, and rural populations); *Office of Management and Budget* (metropolitan, micropolitan, and non-core), *Economic Research Service* (rural urban continuum codes); and *the United Nations* that defines urban and rural according to the census definition for each nation, but suggests a definition of rural areas as having a population of less than 2,000 for international comparisons.
III. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
4. Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
5. Engage in Policy Practice
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

IV. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO) CSWE COMPONENT BEHAVIORS

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

1. Demonstrate the ability to apply the value base of the profession and its ethical standards with individuals, families, and groups, organizations, and communities in a rural lifestyle perspective context. (Competency 1)
2. Develop the skills to use various frameworks of ethical decision-making with multiple systems. (Competency 1)
3. Demonstrate the ability to use their understanding of how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior when working with clients from a rural lifestyle perspective. (Competency 1)
4. Demonstrate the ability to work with interprofessional teams, and inter-organizational Collaboration from a rural lifestyle perspective. (Competencies 1 & 8)
5. Demonstrate the understanding of how to use technology to engage in effective social work practice in rural communities. (Competency 1)
6. Demonstrate the skills in the appropriate use of diversity and difference in practice situations with individuals, families and groups. (Competency 2)
7. Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies. (Competency 2)
8. Demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge related to theories of human need and social justice to promote social and economic justice and human rights. (Competency 3)
9. Demonstrate the ability to use quantitative and qualitative research methods to evaluate their practice. (Competence 4 & 9)
10. Demonstrate the ability to engage in policy practice to effect change at the micro, mezzo and macro levels in rural and urban communities. (Competency 5)
11. Demonstrate the use of theories of human behavior and the social environment to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies. (Competency 6)
12. Demonstrate the ability to use empathy, reflection and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies. (Competence 6)
13. Demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate and apply knowledge of human behavior in assessment with diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, and groups. (Competency 7)
14. Demonstrate the ability to implement evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals from a rural lifestyle perspective. (Competency 8)
15. Understand the importance of life-long learning and the commitment to continue to update skills to be an effective practitioner (Competency 1).
16. Understand the dimensions of diversity as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability, and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spiritually, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. (Competency 2)

V. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This course is delivered online. In order to deliver a quality course, students will participate in online class discussions and exercises. Class lectures and presentations will be available online on a regular basis. In order to participate successfully in this course, students will need to use the Internet and D2L.

In order to be successful in this class, it is important that students attend regularly through D2L, read the assigned material, and be prepared to discuss what they have read. Students are expected to be active learners, to not expect that each reading will be summarized, and to ask for clarification when they have questions.

Students must participate regularly. Quizzes and assignments are available online and require participation in discussions, chats, assignments and assessments. Please plan to work in the site and check email at least every day, or more frequently when quizzes and assignments are due. Please also ask all questions in emails within the course.

VI. COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS (per SFA Office of Instructional Technology)

This course will utilize the SFA online product D2L (Desire to Learn) to support the delivery of course content – see the Center for Teaching and Learning for support when necessary. You will need basic skills regarding the use of a word processor and web browser. You must have access to a computer that meets the university’s minimum computer system requirements (for specific details go to http://www.sfasu.edu/sfaonline/consider.asp). Computers are available to you through a number of labs across campus (see www.sfasu.edu or the instructor for details).

VII. COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1  Course Introduction: Getting Started
Introduction to Web-based learning, exploring websites
Online education: Overview of D2L and Online Testing

Week 2  Introduction to Rurality
Overview of rural indicators and social work practice
Rural perspectives and social work practice
Readings
Reamer (2013)
Scales, Streeter & Cooper, Chapters 1-2
Rural Health Information Hub: Retrieved from https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/

Critical Reflection Paper is due

Week 3
Rural Definitions
Office of Management and Budget
Economic Research Service
Isserman definitions

Readings
Miller, K. (2010).
Rural-Urban Continuum Codes: Retrieved from https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes/documentation.aspx#.U76gtyg4g0o
Rural Classifications: Retrieved from https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/what-is-rural.aspx#.U7sASZSwJRo

Week 4
Rural Definitions
US Census
Variations in Definitions
Census Block vs. County
Websites that help
Federal Resources
Rural vs. Frontier

Readings
Am I Rural? Tool: Retrieved from https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/am-i-rural
Week 5

**Rural Theories**

Theories Related to Rural Issues
Social Capital: Interconnectedness
Empowerment
Systems Perspective
Relationship between theories and definitions of rurality

**Readings**

*Scales, Streeter & Cooper, Chapters. 5, 16, 18*
Carabajal, Parsons, Pillai, Sahelin, & Sharma (2011).
Belanger (2005).

Week 6

**Rural Social Work Practice**

Social Work Practice in Rural Communities
Fields of Practice and Their Considerations
Special Circumstances Impacting Rural Communities
Managing Relationships—Social Capital in Practice
Engagement in Rural Communities
Assessment in Rural Communities
Intervention in Rural Communities
Evaluation in Rural Communities
Termination in Rural Communities

**Readings**

*Scales, Streeter & Cooper, Chapters. 3-4, 19-21*

Week 7

**Diversity and Difference in Practice**

Intersectionality
Interrelationships/intercultural
Social Work Profession
NASW/IFSW Codes of Ethics
Social and Economic Justice and Environmental Justice
Social Inequality
Human Rights

**Readings**
Daley, *Chapter 3*
*Scales, Streeter & Cooper, Chs. 2*
Katiuzhinzky & Okech (2014).

**Week 8**

**Diversity**
Gender
Sexual Orientation (LGBTQ)
Gender and Gender Identity Expression
Marital Status and Class

**Readings**
*Scales, Streeter & Cooper, Ch. 8*

**Midterm Exam (Assignment I is due)**

**Week 9**

**Diversity**
Age
Disability and Ability
Veterans

**Readings**
*Scales, Streeter & Cooper, Ch. 10, 15*

**Week 10**

**Diversity**
Religion/spirituality
Tribal Sovereignty Status
Political Ideology

**Readings**
*Scales, Streeter & Cooper, Ch. 13*
Week 11

**Diversity**
Race/Ethnic Group  
Linguistic Diversity  
Immigration Status

**Readings**

Week 12

**Diversity**
Global Perspectives on Diversity: Grand Challenges for Social Work  
Human Trafficking  
Displaced Populations

**Readings**
*Scales, Streeter & Cooper, Ch. 16*

Week 13

**Diversity**
Rural Cultural Competence and Awareness  
Rural Populations at Risk  
Rural Child Welfare

**Readings**
Daley, *Chapters 4-5*
*Scales, Streeter & Cooper, Ch. 4, 6-7, 9, 17*
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014). Improving Cultural Competence.

Week 14
**Presentations/Preparation**

Week 15
**Presentations**
Critical Reflection Presentation is *due*

Week 16
**Final Exam (Assignment II is due)**

**Readings**
Readings and Websites

VIII. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. **Class Attendance and Participation:** In order for the class to discuss the readings, it is essential for you to read assigned material before coming to class, to attend class regularly, and to participate in class discussion (this means accessing D2L at least once every week). You are responsible for all material covered in class and assigned in the syllabus, whether or not you have attended class.

Cell Phones/Pagers/Electronic Devices: Because such devices are disruptive to the classroom environment, I ask that you refrain from using them during class. I also ask that you either place such devices on silent mode or turn them off during class. Repeated interruptions may result in a deduction of points from the final average.

B. **Readings:** The course outline provides a list of required readings for each week (you will receive a detailed schedule the first full week of class that will outline the readings to be covered each class). Since lectures and class discussions are designed to answer questions about the material and expand upon the basic concepts, you are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class. Furthermore, you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the information, as evidenced by active participation in class discussion. For example, you should present well-formulated questions and comments that demonstrate prior preparation.

C. **Exams:** There will be no final exam. Assignment II will serve as your final exam. Students are required to take the exam at the scheduled time. Makeup exams will be scheduled according to university policy with a university-approved excuse.

D. **Quizzes/Exercises:** Students are required to participate in the quizzes, exercises and discussions at the scheduled time. Makeup quizzes/exercises will be
scheduled according to university policy with a university-approved excuse.

E. Assignments/Presentations: See Assignments for a listing of all assignments for this course. All assignments are due at the beginning of each class, unless the assignment is a class presentation which will be due in class. No late assignments are accepted.

GRADING:

Critical Reflection Paper 60
Midterm Exam (Assignment I) 100
Critical Reflection Presentation 100
Final Exam (Assignment II) 140
TOTAL 400

GRADING SCALE:

360-400     A
320-359     B
280-319     C
240-279     D*
Below 240   F*

*Not applicable as credit toward graduate degree

IX. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (SFASU POLICY A-9.1)

Honesty and representing one’s knowledge and abilities appropriately are important ethical principles of the social work profession. All incidents will result in a grade of “0”. Given the limited number of graded assignments in this course, a “0” could have serious consequences for the student’s academic standing.

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.
Please read the *Student Academic Dishonesty* policy (SFA Policy 4.1) at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf)

Please also read the *Academic Integrity Policy* on the SFA Graduate School’s website at [http://www.sfasu.edu/graduate/](http://www.sfasu.edu/graduate/)

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (SFA Policy 5.5)**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for computing the grade point average. Please read the complete policy on Course Grades: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades.pdf)

**Acceptable Student Behavior**

The MSW Student Handbook and Academic and MSW Professional Integrity Code outline acceptable student behavior. Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the *Student Conduct of Conduct (SFA Policy 10.4)*). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, visits to agencies, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate or inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed. Please see the following link for the complete policy: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-code-of-conduct_10.4.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-code-of-conduct_10.4.pdf)

**X. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, read *Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities (SFA Policy 6.1)* [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-accomodation-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-accomodation-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf)
XI. COVID-19 MASK POLICY  Masks (cloth face coverings) must be worn over the nose and mouth at all times in this class and appropriate physical distancing must be observed. Students not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be asked to leave the class. All incidents of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Students who are reported for multiple infractions of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing may be subject to disciplinary actions.


ASSIGMENTS

Mini-Assignments

Critical Reflection Paper- 100 pts.
Due week 2: What is your perception of rural lifestyles and social justice? Reflect on your previous personal and professional experience related to rural lifestyles, oppression, social and economic justice, ethics, your beliefs and values, and obstacles to overcoming differences amongst your values and norms compared to other persons, families, groups, or communities.

Assignment I—Introduction and Literature Review
100 points

Due week 8: The purpose of this assignment is to help you begin work on your final paper (assignment II), and to be sure that you understand how to access the library or other sources for peer reviewed and other relevant articles, and to be sure that the people you have chosen to interview are appropriate for the assignment.

1. Please read the final paper requirements, and then choose from the following topics for your final paper:
   Disability and ability
   Immigration
   LGBTQ
Poverty (provision of basic human services)

Religion/spirituality

Women in leadership positions

Mental Health/Illness

Criminal Justice and Injustice

Children and/or Aging Issues

2. Pick a rural county that you wish to use for the final paper. State how you know this county is consider rural, i.e. discuss the different definitions and which one you chose to determine your county is rural.

3. Continuing with the topic you have chosen for your final paper, find a combination of 10 peer reviewed articles and/or quality government or agency reports that relate to this issue. Ask the SFA librarian for assistance if you need help considering what is quality and useful for a professional paper. You WILL be graded on your choice of articles, so please do use the campus resources for assistance. PLEASE NOTE: The articles do not all have to be directly related to the particular county you chose. Backtrack to find articles about the issue in rural areas, or the issue in another rural area, etc. You cannot choose articles more than 10 years old or related to work in foreign countries, unless there is a clear relationship to your topic, and your explanation is appropriate.

2. Write on the findings of these articles and discuss how they relate to your topic and how this knowledge sheds light on the situation/challenge/condition in the community you have chosen. In other words, if you were trying to improve conditions for the elderly (if you chose rural elderly), what does each of these articles tell you that might help you as you chose interventions? Make connections between article findings, compare and contrast differences (read on how to conduct a literature review to complete this section successfully).

3. Provide the name of 2 (key informants) you will interview about the issue in the county you chose in order to clarify the issue in that county, how it is addressed (if at all), suggestions, extent of problems, etc. Just the name, title, and reason he/she was chosen are sufficient. You do not need to have conducted the interviews at this point, but you do need to identify whom you will interview.

4. Provide a one-page Reference List constructed according the APA manual, 6th edition. You can find help for this at the Owl at Purdue Online Writing Lab (for example: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/ for basic rules for constructing reference pages). The SFA library may also help you.
5. This paper should be 5-7 pages total and in APA Format. You must follow the outline below:
a. Introduction

a1. Topic Selected

a2. County Selected

b. Literature Review

c. Key Informants

d. Conclusion

d. References

Grading Rubric:
1. Quality of references (articles, etc; 10 points).
2. The entire paper is APA style format and free from grammatical and spelling errors (no abstract necessary but please include a cover page; 10 points).
3. Rural county selection is appropriate and based on a sound rural definition (20 points).
4. Written description relating the articles to the issue in the community—literature review (40 points).
5. List of persons (and appropriateness of persons) to be interviewed in the county; explanation of the choice (10 points).
6. Outline was followed (10 points)

Critical Reflection Presentation
100 pts

Due Week 15—Critical Reflection Paper Presentation: Based on what you have learned in this course, what is your perception of rural lifestyles and social justice? Reflect on your previous and current understanding related to rural lifestyles, oppression, social and economic justice, ethics, your beliefs and values, and obstacles to overcoming differences amongst your values and norms compared to other persons, families, groups, or communities.
Assignment II—Assessment and Evaluation

This is also the final exam.

Due week 16: The purpose of this assignment is to determine how well you understand the practice of rural social work with rural people in all system sizes and issues of social and economic justice. You have chosen an issue to explore and a county in which to explore it in Assignment I. This paper continues to explore rural implications of this issue.

I. Introduction:
Provide an overview/summary of the current findings and thinking related to the issue in rural communities (1-2 pages, correctly cited—see APA 6th). 10 points

Follow this with a one-paragraph critique of the articles/findings. Did they use a definition of rural that actually relates to your county? Do their findings have limitations related to the county you chose? Use your own thinking about this. 10 points

The issue in your county: statistics
Try to get statistics about the issue in your county. For example, how many elderly are there? What is the number and percent of people in poverty in the county? Who is it who is poor? If on health, how many hospitals are there? Is the population medically underserved? Etc. 1-2 pages 10 points

II. Interview
Use the questions below to help you guide the interview with your informant. You can always add more questions or have follow up questions. While you don’t need to provide the names of the informants (if they would rather be anonymous), provide the positions or employment, experience, etc. that explains why they would have a credible opinion about this issue. You must include their responses verbatim, which means you have to record and transcribe the questions and answers. Then, organize your interview responses as one component using a matrix (a table); additionally, analyze the content and categorize their responses. (2-3 pages) 40 points

1. How serious is________currently?
2. How has it changed since you have been here (if so, how)?
3. How is _____ different from a major city, e.g. Dallas/Fort Worth?
4. What programs or services are there to address _____ in this county?
5. What suggestions do you have in how to improve_____?
6. How can social workers help with improving_____?

III. Course readings (Literature Integration)
Provide a one-page description that ties what you learned from the course readings (the text, the required readings, and other peer reviewed articles) that applies to the issue in the county you have chosen. Again, this is your thinking. I won’t grade you on your opinions, but I will grade you on your ability to apply course material to the challenges in this community. Please be
IV. Planning: Now, based on your newly acquired knowledge of rural definitions, rural challenges, and rural solutions, how do you think that this issue should be addressed in rural communities? (1 page) **10 points**

V. Write your paper professionally (quality of the overall paper). Check your spelling and grammar. Do not copy from your resources, except when you are citing statistics… **you do not have to paraphrase statistics.** If you must quote from an article, please be sure that you put the copied text in quotes. Not putting it in quotes is plagiarism (i.e. saying that those words are your own). To be sure that you are not plagiarizing, you might try reading the article and then putting the article face down next to you, and then writing what you think the article said about the subject in your own words. Then you can look at the article again to see if you were correct, and correct anything you need to. Use spelling and grammar check. There is no excuse whatsoever for using the “copy and paste” method of writing a paper. Even if you put it in quotes, you are not writing your own thoughts. I will discount all copied and pasted materials and not count it toward the assignment. In serious cases, (extensive copying and pasting, not crediting authors, etc.) your paper will receive a zero. **If you are unsure how to do this, look at other peer reviewed articles and see how they write/reference/cite.** The SFA librarian is also an excellent resource. **20 pts.**

VI. The paper should be about 10-15 pages long, excluding the reference page. Submit your paper in D2L, in the assignment dropbox by the deadline. Please note the time deadline for the submission. The paper must be professionally written, using the current APA style manual and the outline below must be followed:

A. Introduction
   a. Overview
   b. Findings Critique
   c. County Issues

B. Interviews

C. Literature Integration

D. Planning
BIBLIOGRAPHY


