

University of Vermont
College of Education and Social Services
Department of Social Work

SWSS 173/174: UNDERGRADUATE FIELD EXPERIENCE
Fall 2016 – Spring 2017

6 credits per semester for a total of 12 credits across the academic year

Prerequisites: SWSS 002, 003, 060, 147, 148, 163, 164, 165, 166, and senior standing

Co-requisites: SWSS 168/169 and SWSS 171/172

Faculty Field Liaison: Julie Richards, Ph.D, MSW
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This two-semester course takes place outside of the traditional classroom environment and inside of local community human/social service agencies. Students are placed in approved social work field sites with professional trained social work supervisors. They have one placement throughout the academic year and complete a minimum of 450 hours.

This social work field experience will provide students with an educationally based hands-on experience grounded in a model that combines 1) the development of an ongoing and deeply self-reflective professional approach to the work, 2) the integration of learned (and still-learning) social work knowledges, skills, and values typically associated with our unique profession, and 3) an unrelenting focus on relational and authentic connections with clients, colleagues, the community, and the world.

The primary objective of the first year of the field education curriculum in an accredited masters program is to provide a foundation in generalist social work practice. Specific objectives include working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities from a person-in-situation perspective and developing broad service coordination skills. All students are also expected to move along a continuum from beginning social work skills to increasingly complex skills. The successful completion of this course indicates a student's ability to move into the more advanced and autonomous concentration year field experience.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students are expected to demonstrate and apply knowledge, skills, values and ethics to generalist social work practice in a professionally supervised setting. The following objectives serve as the basis for both the learning agreement and the student evaluation process.

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- 1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior**
 - a. make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;
 - b. use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
 - c. demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
 - d. use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
 - e. use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.
- 2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice**
 - a. apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
 - b. present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
 - c. apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.
- 3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice**
 - a. apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and
 - b. engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.
- 4. Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice**
 - a. use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research;
 - b. apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings; and
 - c. use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.
- 5. Engage in Policy Practice**
 - a. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services;
 - b. assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services;
 - c. apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

 - a. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and
 - b. use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

 - a. collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;
 - b. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies;
 - c. develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and
 - d. select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

 - a. critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;
 - b. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;
 - c. use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;
 - d. negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and
 - e. facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

 - a. select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes;
 - b. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes;
 - c. critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes; and
 - d. apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to access the Field Education link from the Department of Social Works' Webpage. They are responsible for knowing the contents on this page. The link is below:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~socwork/?Page=field/default.html>

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Field Hours: Field is a year-long-course and therefore the student “time in the course” typically looks and feels differently than a traditionally structured course taken in a classroom. When students start in the fall they remain in the same placement until the end of the spring semester. This means that there is no “course ending” in December or “course beginning” in January.

To manage the required hours and course length, students and field instructors are expected to work together to set both a weekly (micro) schedule and a broader full academic year schedule. The weekly schedule reflects which days of the week and what hours the student is expected to be in the placement, the day and time of supervisory meetings, and the days and times of any regularly scheduled agency meetings students are expected to attend (i.e. staff meetings or treatment team meetings). The full academic year schedule reflects which weeks the student will begin, end, and have time away from the work. Because each agency has unique needs, provides unique services, and has unique hours of service delivery, these scheduling agreements will differ from student to student. Above all, the most important scheduling decisions consider the professional manner in which students begin, take time away from, and put closure to their field experiences. In other words, the relationship and services to ‘clients’ must always be a priority. **So, practically speaking, what this means is that a student should not assume that they have no field responsibilities during school breaks (especially the longer winter break) unless this agreement has been explicitly made during the scheduling process.**

More specific guidance:

1. Undergraduate students complete a minimum of 450 hours in the field between September and May. Approximately half of these hours are completed by mid-December.
2. Some field sites may require more hours than the field program’s minimum. In these cases, students must be made aware of this prior to accepting the placement.
3. Students schedule consistent blocks of time in their agency each week so as to complete their hours within 2-3 days.
4. Student hours reflect the “normal business hours” of the agency. Evening and weekend hours are an exception to the rule and must be approved both by the faculty liaison and field education coordinator. The rationale for this expectation is that the student’s experience as “member of the agency community” is significant to social work practice skill development. And therefore, it follows that if the student is not consistently interacting with other agency personnel within the agency culture, integral learning opportunities are missed.
5. Students either develop their own way to document their hours on a weekly basis or use an agency process to do so.
6. **There is no built in allowance for sick time or vacation time** – students must complete the required hours regardless of the reason for missing. Students make up any regularly scheduled time that they miss. In case of illness or unavoidable absence,

the student informs the agency as soon as possible. The student and field instructor immediately notify their faculty field liaison of absences of more than three consecutive ‘field days.’ Students make up time they have missed within the semester, unless otherwise approved by the Field Education Coordinator. If considerable lengths of time are missed, arrangements can be made to make up time before the beginning of the next semester, but only as a result of a meeting that leads to a written plan and approval of the faculty field liaison, field instructor, and student.

7. There may be occasions when students may be asked to work additional hours in a particular week. An example of this request could be due to a conference or special event that the student has been helping to organize. Students are not required to work outside of their set schedule but if they choose to, student should plan to take compensatory time off in a balanced and professional manner.
8. No student is to be scheduled for “on call” work during class time. Any on-call or crisis duty must be pre-approved by the faculty field liaison and the field education coordinator.
9. While occasionally there will be important field opportunities scheduled during a student’s regularly scheduled class, students can not be required (by their field instructor/agency) to miss class in order to attend a field meeting or event.
10. Students complete their hours no later than the Friday after the last day of classes in May. At the same time, students are expected to be working in the agency at least until the Friday after the last day of classes (also in May). If a student finds that they “have enough hours” and would like to end early, a formal request must be made and approved by the faculty field liaison and the field instructor. In other words, students may not “work ahead” of their approved schedule just so they can finish the field course weeks ahead of time. Having said this, students should not be discouraged from working additional hours for the purposes of planning for unexpected absences; students should only be aware that they may not need to use these hours for successful completion of field. For example, some students choose to carry a balance of 15 - 20 hours with them throughout the year as a back up. They do this knowing (and accepting) the fact that they may not ever need to use these hours.

Written Learning Agreement: The learning agreement is a formal document collaboratively developed by the student and field instructor. It is reviewed and approved by the Faculty Field Liaison. It is intended to ground the student in their work and provide a plan for completing assignments. Please see the specific guidelines posted on Blackboard and on the UVM Social Work Department’s field webpage.

Process Records: Students are required to produce four (4) written process records for by the end of the academic year – two (2) each semester. Please see specific guidelines posted on Blackboard and on the UVM Social Work Department’s field webpage.

Evaluations: It is important to contextualize this evaluative process as a practice within professional social work, as a whole. So, while the specific course requirement of “evaluation” exists for a student “grade” in a “course”, it is potentially more significant to notice that feedback from the Field Instructor to the student and from the student to the Field Instructor is part of a dynamic and relational social work practice in all of our communities. Twice a year the student and Field Instructor (and potentially the Faculty Field Liaison) sit together and formally review the student’s learning progress. These meetings contribute to the student grade each semester. Guidance for these meetings and copies of the forms used are posted on Blackboard. Therefore, Field Instructors have an authentic and practical opportunity to teach/model the skills related to giving and receiving feedback, requesting specific feedback from colleagues, and processing feedback in ways that generate a deepening of skills and relationships.

Confidentiality of the latter two written forms is honored; however, the year would be incomplete if students and Field Instructor did not also participate in a verbal evaluation of their overall field experience with one another. Therefore, students will be expected to initiate the need for this discussion as they end their time with their Field Instructor.

Clearly, the content and outcome of these student evaluations is integral to the student's final grade, however, we must hold the process of participating in and completing them as equally important.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE

Field Practicums Begin	September 6th Students will have already determined the day and time that they will begin in their organization. They are expected to follow through on any needed communication with their Field Instructor to confirm this.
Learning Agreements Due	September 30th
Process Records #1 and #2 Due	Date TBD Faculty Field Liaisons will set these dates with the Field Instructor and student individually. However, both must be Completed and have the Field Instructor comments by the end of the second week in December.
December Evaluation of Students	December 9th Student and Field Instructor turn in the written and signed copy of this evaluation to their Faculty Field Liaison.
Learning Agreement Addendum	February 3rd Students must review and write an addendum to their Learning Agreements if changes have been made to their learning plans. This addendum should be agreed to and signed by the student, field instructor, and liaison before being turned in to the field education coordinator.
Process Records #3 and #4	Date TBD Faculty Field Liaisons will set these dates with the field instructor and student individually. However, both must be completed and have the field instructor comments by the end of the first week in May.
Student Ending Evaluation	May 5th Student and Field Instructor turn in the written and signed copy of this evaluation to their Faculty Field Liaison.

GRADING

This field course is evaluated on a letter grade basis determined by the completion and quality of the above course requirements. The standard University of Vermont grading system is utilized (A = Excellent; B = Good; C = Fair; F = Failure). A student's grade is assigned by the Field Education Coordinator in consultation with the field liaison and the field instructor(s) and is determined as follows:

ASSIGNMENT:	PERCENTAGE OF GRADE
Completed expected number of field hours	40%
Completed an approved/signed learning agreement or its revision/addendum	Up to 10%
Completed two process records per semester	Up to 10%
Content of the formal December and Ending written evaluations	Up to 40%

RELATIONSHIP OF THIS COURSE TO THE REST OF THE CURRICULUM

This field education course builds on and adds to the core curriculum as presented in the classroom. The field practicum engages students in supervised social work practice in diverse settings and provides opportunities to apply concurrent classroom practice orientations (social justice, strengths, family centered, and human rights) to practice with individuals, groups, families, organizations, and communities.

The Field Education Coordinator and the faculty work directly with field instructors to inform them about the core curriculum. Field instructors attend the field orientation, field instructor seminars, and other related events during the academic year and meet regularly with faculty field liaisons.

During the field orientation phase at the beginning of the fall semester, for example, field instructors and faculty collaboratively review and discuss the syllabi for practice, social policy, research, and human behavior in the social environment courses and begin the learning agreement development process. The learning agreement for the field is directly related to the syllabi of these courses. There is a high degree of interrelationship between classroom learning objectives and assignments and tasks associated with concurrent field experiences. Classroom faculty also participate in field instructor seminars during the academic year on topics related to curriculum and professional issues. They meet with and discuss policy and practice issues with field instructors, thus receiving feedback from the field on application of theory and classroom instruction to direct practice work in the field.

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Honesty and Professionalism

All students are required to be familiar with and adhere to the "Academic Honesty Policy Procedures" delineated in the most recent edition of "The Cat's Tale." (<http://www.uvm.edu/~umvppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf>).

Accommodations

Accommodations will be provided to eligible students with disabilities. Please obtain a letter of accommodation from the ACCESS office and see the instructor early in the course to discuss what accommodations will be necessary. If you are unfamiliar with

ACCESS, visit their website at <http://www.uvm.edu/access> to learn more about the services they provide.

Religious Observance

The official policy for excused absences for religious holidays: Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Each semester students should submit in writing to their instructors by the end of the second full week of classes their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester. Faculty must permit students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance to make up this work.