



SWK 507: Organizations, Communities and Social Policy

COURSE SYLLABUS: Summer 2023

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: **Tahvia Robinson-Merrill**

Office Location: **Virtual**

Office Hours: **By Appt. only**

Office Phone:

University Email Address: Tahvia.Merrill@tamuc.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: **E-mail**

Communication Response Time: within 24 hours

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required

Hardcastle, D.A., Powers, P.R., & Wenocur, S. (2011) *Community practice: Theories and skills for social workers* (3rd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press

Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (2019) 7th ed.
Washington, DC: American Psychological Association

Software Required

Optional Texts and/or Materials

All MSW students need to purchase the following set of study materials to prepare for the Graduate Comprehensive Exam that they will take in their final semester. You must pass the exam to receive your degree. It is never too early to begin studying for the exam.

Comprehensive Study Guide (Masters, Clinical, Adv. Generalist) Version 9.0.
Social Work Examination Services. [www.https://swes.net/study-materials/comprehensive-study-guide-lmsw/](https://swes.net/study-materials/comprehensive-study-guide-lmsw/)

Course Description

This course utilizes the concepts of empowerment-based practice and the strengths perspective for macro work with client systems such as organizations and communities. The relationships between rural and urban organizations and communities and the intersection of the two and at-risk populations are infused throughout the course.

Prerequisites:

Students must have completed all MSW foundation curriculum requirements; been admitted to the MSW program; and be in good standing in the MSW program.

Relationship to Other Courses:

Student Learning Outcomes (Should be measurable; observable; use action verbs)

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) requires a competency-based approach to identify and assess what students demonstrate in practice. In social work, this approach involves assessing students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in the educational policy. Listed below are the competencies and associated knowledge, skills, values and/or cognitive and affective processes that comprise the expected outcomes for this course.

	Assignment/Assessment	Dimension
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice		
Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services within rural/urban settings	Community Intervention and Community Presentation (75 points) & Community Presentation	

Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice across the rural/urban landscape.	Community Intervention and Community Presentation (75 points) & Community Presentation	
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities		
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies across urban and rural settings and at the complex intersection of these two	Grass Roots Community Building Initiative	
Discern the most appropriate engagement strategy according to each practice context.	Grass Roots Community Building Initiative Petition for Change	
Competency 7: Assess individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities		
Collect and organize client-driven data, and skillfully apply critical thinking to interpret information from both rural and urban clients and constituencies; and those who are at the	Community Intervention and Community Presentation (75 points) & Community Presentation	

intersection of the two environments		
Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies reflective of their environment whether rural, urban or at the intersection of both.		
Consider aspects intrinsic in rural and urban settings considering how the intersection of the two environments impacting assessment such as connections with church communities, neighbors, extended family, fictive kin, and other formal and/or informal resources.	Community Intervention and Community Presentation (75 points) & Community Presentation	

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

In this class you will utilize the Learning Management Systems (LMS) D2L for instructional and learning opportunities, submitting your assignments, participating in online synchronous and asynchronous discussions, accessing resources, and completing quizzes/tests. Additionally, knowledge and skills in using Microsoft Word PowerPoint and Outlook Email, if you have any issues with using the various systems or software, it is your responsibility to contact support services and to notify the instructor of the problem.

Instructional Methods

This course will be delivered via synchronous and asynchronous sessions via D2L and will consist of live class sessions, pre-recorded lectures, group engagement activities, various assignments with some including experiential learning and practical application of the content areas. In addition, small lectures, discussion activities and workshops may be utilized to provide instruction during this course.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

As a student in this course, you are responsible to engage in active learning and reaching out to the instructor if there are problems or challenges that is interfering in optimal learning. Communication is key when engaged in a fully online, virtual environment.

Expectations for success include:

1. Always demonstrate professional behavior, including demonstrating respect for instructor and peers; being open to feedback and guidance throughout this class and in the program.
2. Adhered to the School of Social Work and University student code of conduct, along with NASW Code of Ethics.
3. Begin reading the assigned text and supplemental readings as soon as possible, with a focus on completing all readings prior to engagement with instructor or peers.
4. Prepare to engage in live class sessions, discussions, and other activities so you can be a contributor as well as receiver of knowledge and skills.
5. Actively participate in engagement activities which will include live virtual class sessions, online discussions, and interactive learning opportunities -as this is vital for learning and success in both this course and the program.
6. Work ahead when possible, completing assignments ahead of due date so you are prepared to submit on the due date.

7. Sign into the D2L course multiple times during the week to access updated announcements or posted resources.
8. Check your university email daily. This is the official method of communication by the university, department, and instructor.
9. Be open and focused on the “process” and not the “product” as earning this degree requires time, effort, work and ultimately growth in knowledge, skills, abilities along with personal and professional attributes.

GRADING

1. Community Intervention Paper	100 points
2. Grass Roots Community Bldg.	50 points
3. Petition for Change	50 points
Total Points Possible	200 points

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100% of total points

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% or Below

Specifics for grading will have to be individualized and entered here

Assessments

Community Intervention and Community Presentation (75 points) & Community Presentation (25 points): 100 points

This assignment involves writing a 6–8-page paper that proposes a community intervention to a significant LOCAL community problem. This paper should reflect the content from all applicable assigned readings. The paper must be correctly referenced using American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines. Special attention should be given to the **correct style of referencing**. Papers need to be original, typed, with clear and lucid analyses, and excellent grammar.

Please note that this is a graduate level course, and the expectations are considerably higher than those at an undergraduate level. This research paper is intended to demonstrate your ability to **apply theories of community practice and macro-level**

model of intervention to a real problem situation. The paper should be written in a formal, scholarly format.

In addition to reflected problem analysis, planned intervention and proposed change efforts consider issues related to economics, social policies, political influences, and involvement of various levels of systems (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities). Papers will be graded on quality of analysis, creativity, incorporation of theories and knowledge, and quality of writing. **Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to proposed intervention.**

Your selected problem should target **one specific community or regional area** and the content related to community assessment and resources should be specific to that community.

Presentation – You will be expected to present your identified problem, assessment data, and proposed solution to a body of LOCAL POLICY DECISION-MAKERS (such as city council, county commissioners, local school board, Council of Governments, public hearing on a particular issue, etc.). All communities have decision-making bodies that are open to public comment and input. However, you will need to find out the parameters of such input AHEAD OF TIME. Sometimes there is a time limit and advance request for permission to speak. Failure to present before an appropriate group will result in point deductions. You will need to include documentation (including a contact person) that can verify your presentation.

Petition for Change – 50 point

Students are to work with their assigned group and decide on a social or community problem and strategy to enhance social justice and quality of life. Students are to write a petition to be submitted through Change Communications (www.change.org). Each group should submit ONE draft of the petition. Groups are encouraged to get approval from their instructor on their selection of problem. One member of the group shall then submit the petition online after receiving instructor approval incorporating any changes recommended/required by the instructor. This assignment is intended to have 2 purposes: one is to require students to use group skills and the other is to allow students to actively engage in community change and impact a social problem using an electronic venue. Points awarded for this assignment will include instructor's assessment of "group process", meaningful and constructive contributions, group member feedback directly to the instructor AND number of votes that petition generates in the week following the posting (use your Facebook or other means to encourage others to sign your petition!)

Grass Roots Community Building Initiative – 50 points

Students are to choose a state or national grass roots organization or initiative. Students are to contact the founder, executive director, or other key staff to interview

them about the organization. It should be a grassroots organization, NOT A SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY as described in Ch. 8. Students are encouraged to check with instructor to ensure appropriate organization. Students are to include the role and relationship of clients in the operations of the program. Students are to write a 4-5 page summary of the information learned (paraphrase the input from the interview), and relate what they learned about the organization to content in Ch. 7. DO NOT LIFT INFORMATION FROM THE WEBSITE TO INCLUDE EXPLICITLY IN PAPER. The bulk of the content should be from the individual interviewed.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your instructor via email. Instructor will respond to email queries within two business days

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

School of Social Work and Council on Social Work Education Specific Policies

Course Engagement

Final Evaluation and Grade Depends on both Classroom attendance and Participation

Inadequate participation or lack of required time commitment in each class significantly affects students' grades. No matter the course venue, students must engage in a comparable amount of time. Expectations of both Face-to-Face classes and those with Online components include time spent reading and studying course material. To earn a level of competency within a specific course, students must demonstrate both mastery of content and active engagement.

Mastery of content areas is evidenced by successful completion of course assignments such as written papers, group project deliverables, tests/quizzes and other tangible products designed by instructors to evaluate knowledge and skills.

Additionally, the Social Work Profession is built upon human interactions and building human relationships – which is defined as engagement. Engagement is defined as meaningful involvement in interactions with instructor, peers, outside stakeholders as appropriate (such as contacting a social worker to interview for a required assignment). Within the classroom setting, whether virtual or F2F, students must actively participate in 80% of engagement activities as outlined by individual instructors. These activities may include, but are not limited to participation in live, synchronous virtual classes, attending a Face-to-Face course when appropriate, interacting with peers in posted discussions and collaborating in group interactive projects.

Students must meet standards for content mastery on tangible assignments and meet the threshold of active engagement of the time set during a semester by the instructor.

Instructors are experts in each course content area and set the standards for students to meet for successful completion of the course.

Student Conduct

Students preparing to become professional social workers must adhere to the *University Code of Conduct*, *Department Code of Conduct* and *National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) Code of Ethics*.

Department Code of Conduct

"Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class/lab/internship practicum or to block access to online courses and may refer offenses to the [Academic and Professional Issues Committee (API)] or to the Department Head. More serious offenses by be referred to the University Police Department and/or the Judicial Affairs Office for disciplinary action" (Student Guidebook p 35)

Social Work students conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner. Closely linked with professional recognition is the social worker's compliance with the profession's ethical standards. It is imperative for professional social workers to be competent and ethical in practice if the profession is to maintain the public trust. It is essential that each social work student gain a thorough understanding of the ethical principles that guide practice and actively demonstrate in behavior, both in and out of the classroom. Student conduct is to reflect the tenets of *NASW Code of Ethics* (located at <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>) on the NASW website: <https://www.socialworkers.org>

University Code of Conduct located in the *Student Guidebook* at <http://www.tamuc.edu/campuslife/documents/studentGuidebook.pdf> (pp 34- 66). On the University Website under Campus Life Documents

To become aware of university policies related to student academic and behavioral expectations for students refer to the Guidebook

APPENDIX A RUBRICS

RUBRIC FOR COMMUNITY INTERVENTION PAPER

Score	Possible Points	Point breakdown	Area	Consisting of
	5	Introduction of a significant LOCAL community and describe what makes it a community using content from your readings, identify a significant problem affecting the community and close section with the direction or purpose of your paper (thesis statement) . This should be in general of what your paper is about.	Subject	Identification
	15	10 pts. Problem Description- Provide a description of the problem including how widespread it is along with its causes and consequences. Students are to use appropriate scholarly resources to support your description of the problem. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services.	Demonstration of Assimilation of Knowledge	Discussion
	5	Describe target of change. Local public officials, elected officials, local institutions		
	5	Scope of Concern -		
	15	Planned intervention and proposed change- Describe your proposed intervention or change effort. It must be a macro-level model of intervention (analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies) Be sure to consider issues related to economics, social policies, political influences, and involvement of various levels of systems (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities). Specify the social work roles you would play as a community practitioner.		
	5	Desired or expected outcomes		

	15	Theories of community practice- Apply theories and concepts from assigned readings.		
	5	Conclusion: Show utilization of critical thinking by synthesizing all material discussed into a cohesive summation of what was learned and overall impression of the experience. WITHOUT USING FIRST PERSON	Critical Thinking	Your Conclusion
	20	Community Presentation- Describe your community presentation experience and upload verification form and other supporting documents (pictures, videos etc).		
	10	Grammar, spelling, and paragraphing are correct; headers provide a correct map for the reader, APA used (Cover Page, in text citations and Reference page are A MUST).	Writing Competency	Professional Presentation
	100			

Score	Possible Points	Point breakdown	Area	Consisting of
	5	Introduction of the grassroots organization and cover the following: Introduction of grassroots organization, its founder or executive director and close section with the direction or purpose of your paper (thesis statement) . This should be in general of what your paper is about.	Subject	Identification
	15	10 pts. each –Provide a summary of a comprehensive interview with a founder or executive director about their grassroots organization including its history, target population, services provided, funding sources etc. Students are to include the role and relationship of clients in the operations of the program.	Demonstration of Assimilation of Knowledge	Discussion
	15	Relate what they learned about the grassroot organization to content from your readings, especially chapter 7.		
	5	Conclusion: Show utilization of critical thinking by synthesizing all material discussed into a cohesive summation of what was learned and overall impression of the experience. WITHOUT USING FIRST PERSON	Critical Thinking	Your Conclusion
	10	Grammar, spelling, and paragraphing are correct; headers provide a correct map for the reader, APA used (Cover Page, in text citations and Reference page are A MUST) .	Writing Competency	Professional Presentation
	50			

RUBRIC FOR GRASS ROOTS COMMUNITY BLDG.

Score	Possible Points	Point breakdown	Area	Consisting of
	5	Introduction of a social or community problem and direction or purpose of your paper (thesis statement). This should be in general of what your petition is about.	Subject	Identification
	25	5 pts. each – Discussion of the strategy to address the social or community problem and enhance social justice and quality of life. Cite credible theoretical or statistical evidence to showing your comprehension of the information and persuade your target audience to sign your petition.	Demonstration of Assimilation of Knowledge	Discussion
	5	Conclusion: Show utilization of critical thinking by synthesizing all material discussed into a cohesive summation of why you need your readers to respond to your petition. WITHOUT USING FIRST PERSON	Critical Thinking	Your Conclusion
	15	Grammar, spelling, and paragraphing are correct; headers provide a correct map for the reader, APA used	Writing Competency	Professional Presentation
	50			

RUBRIC FOR PETITION FOR CHANGE

APPENDIX B

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Weeks	Class Meetings (Zoom)	Topics & Instructional Materials	Activities, Assignments & Examinations
Week 1 6/5-11	Zoom Meeting TUESDAY 6/6 at 6:00 pm	Course Overview Ch. 1 Community Practice: An Introduction	- Review Course Syllabus and Expectations - Participate in the Meet/Greet Zoom Meeting and form groups
Week 2 6/12-18	ONLINE	Ch. 2: Theory Based, Model Based Community Practice	Read Chapter 2
Week 3 6/19-25	ONLINE	Ch. 3 – The Nature of Social and community Problems & Ch. 4 – The Concept of Community in Social Work Practice	Read Chapter 3 & 4 Peer review of draft of Sections I and II of community intervention paper due on 6/25
Week 4 6/26-7/2	ZOOM Meeting Tuesday Discussion #1 Tuesday 6/27 at 6:00 pm	Ch.5 – Assessment: Discovering and Documenting the Life of a Community Ch.6- Using Assessment in Community Practice	- Read Chapter 5 - Discussion #1
Week 5 7/3-9 Happy 4 th !	ONLINE	Ch. 12 Using the Advocacy Spectrum	- Read Chapter 6 - Petition for Change
Week 6 7/10-16	ONLINE	Ch. 13 Using Organizing	Read Chapter 7
Week 7 7/17-23	ZOOM Discussion #2 Tuesday 7/18 at 6:00 pm (See	Ch. 7 & 8 Using Self & Agency Read Handout on “How to Run Mtgs”	- Read Chapter 8 - Discussion # 2 - Grass Roots Community

	Discussion topic in Week 8 in D2L)		Bldg Interview.
Week 8 7/24-30		Ch. 9 &10 Using working Groups & Networks	Read Chapter 9& 10
Week 9 7/31-8/6	Zoom Community Intervention Presentations to class Tuesday 8/1 at 6:00 pm	Ch 11- Using marketing	Community Intervention & Presentation paper due
Week 10 8/7-10	ONLINE		Complete online class evaluation