

**School of Social Work
Virginia Commonwealth University**

**SLWK 201: Introduction to Social Work
Fall, 2014**

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Class:	Temple Building, Rm. 2226		

COURSE DESCRIPTION

SLWK 201. Introduction to Social Work. Semester course; 3 lecture hours; 3 credits. Systematic overview of the social work profession. Begins the process of professional socialization, both through class content and required service experience. Knowledge of the nature of social work, the fields of social work practice, target populations, overview of social work methods.

COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

Upon completion of this course, students will achieve a beginning level of skill in demonstrating the following competencies as evidenced by the related practice behaviors:

Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice (EPAS 2.1.2).

Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics.

Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions.

Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments (EPAS 2.1.3).

Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues.

Engage in diversity and difference in practice (EPAS 2.1.4)

Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power.

Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups.

Recognize and communicate my understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences.

Advance human rights and social and economic justice (EPAS 2.1.5)

Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Segal, E. A., Gerdes, K. E., & Steiner, S. (2013). *An introduction to the profession of social work: Becoming a change agent (4th ed)*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks Cole.

COURSE FORMAT

Our class sessions will consist of:

- a. Instructor lectures
- b. Informal discussions of the readings and other course material
- c. Guest presentations by practicing social workers
- d. Multi-media presentations

Students are encouraged to be active participants in this course. Don't just sit and listen! I'm not that interesting!

Each student's classroom comments should reflect sensitivity to the feelings of classmates and be constructive in tone.

Assignment and Evaluation

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Participation	10%
Paper: Social Worker Interview	15%
Exams (3)	25% each

Each assignment addresses all four course objectives.

Final Grading Scale: 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, Below 60 = F

DETAILS OF ASSIGNMENTS

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

(10% of the course grade)

Attendance

The participatory nature of this course leads to the expectation that each student attends every class in its entirety. In this way you assume responsibility for helping to create a mutual learning environment for all of us. If you cannot attend a class, please inform me in advance if possible.

To uphold the integrity of the curriculum it is important that you attend and participate in class. Some exceptions may be made in the cases of extreme circumstances (i.e., death, hospitalization, etc.), but the student **must** discuss his/her situation with me prior to missing class and provide documentation. You will be **deducted one letter grade on your 3rd absence and on your 4th absence you will receive an automatic F for the course.**

Tardiness

Each student is expected to arrive at class on time as roll call will take place randomly. Tardiness can be a distraction and disruption to the class that is small in size such as this class. Please be on time. **Students that are repeatedly late will be counted as 1 day absent per every 3 episodes of tardiness.**

Participation

All students begin the semester with 8 points for a participation grade. At the end of the semester I will add one or two points to your total based on my subjective assessment of the quality of your verbal participation.

Technology

Use of laptops will not be permitted. Cell phones must be placed on silent. Phone calls, texting, and surfing the web in class will not be tolerated. If you need to use your phone, you are permitted to step outside of the classroom to attend to the matter. **Students that violate this policy will be asked to leave the class and counted as absent.**

Withdrawal from Course

The last day to withdraw from the course with a "W" is **October 31st**. Students that drop the course after the withdrawal date will receive an automatic F for the course.

EXAMS (3)

(Each one worth 25% of the course grade)

There will be three in-class, one-hour exams, given on September 25, October 23, and December 4. The exams will include course material covered up to that point but will not be cumulative. They will include fill in the blank and short answer questions taken from the readings, class activities, and discussions. I will provide study guides for the exams.

PAPER (1)

An Interview with a Practicing Social Worker

(Due November 14th, but you must inform me of your plan no later than October 24th)

The purpose of this assignment is to acquaint you with the range of the services and programs offered by human service organizations and some of the challenges faced by professional social workers employed there. This exposure will enable you to better understand and appreciate what social workers do, the kinds of problems confronting their clients, and your affinity for such work.

Fulfilling this assignment will necessitate your visiting an agency and conducting a face-to-face interview with a practicing social worker on staff. This person **MUST** have an undergraduate or graduate degree in Social Work. You may collect additional information by accessing the agency web site, reading various material/documents from the agency, or volunteering your services. Use the following outline as a guide to your interview. When you complete the interview, write a 4-5-page paper (not including the title page) in which you describe what you learned about social work by addressing the following:

Part I: The Nature of the Job (20%)

Name of the agency

The social worker's job title

Range of the social worker's responsibilities and activities

The kinds of clients he or she works with

The kinds of problems or challenges faced by his or her clients

Part II: The Social Worker's Background (15%)

Why he or she became a social worker (including any relevant life or job experiences)

The person's educational and field placement background