Syllabus

Course Instructor:
Christina Chiarelli-Helminiak, MSW, PhD

Credit Hours: Three graduate credit hours

Course Description:
This course will provide the theoretical, conceptual, and practical foundation for social workers to engage in a human rights-based approach to social work. Students will gain an understanding of how the international human rights principles can be applied to social work practice in domestic and international settings, particularly in crisis situations. A number of historical and current cases from a variety of countries will be used to examine how social workers can both advocate for and respect human rights in a manner that promotes recovery, resiliency, and capacity building.

This course was originally developed by Kathryn Libal at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Course Outcomes/Behavioral Indicators Measured</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Daily Reflective Journal</td>
<td>FPB 2 Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>FBP 15 Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups</td>
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<td>FBP 16 Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference shaping life experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Group Presentation</td>
<td>FBP 19 Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td>FBP 20 Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice</td>
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<td>FBP 25 Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being</td>
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<td>Class exercises and participation</td>
<td>FBP 4 Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication</td>
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<td>FBP 7 Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice</td>
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<td>FBP 11 Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FBP 19 Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice</td>
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Texts
Recommended:

Assignments.
All assignments are required to be in proper APA format. Professional style, format, and organization; integration of course concepts; and implications for social work practice are expected. Additional information is provided on the individual assignment rubrics. All final submissions of assignments are to be submitted via DropBox as a .pdf.

Daily Reflective Journal *(due January 12)*
Each night after class, write a brief reflection on the readings and class discussions. The reflection should be at minimum 2-pages for each day (for a minimum total of 10 pages). Your reflections should include a response (at least in part) to the following questions:

- Day 1: How have the readings begun to shape or reshape your understanding of human rights?
• Day 2: It is often cited that since its inception social work has been a human rights profession. Reflecting on the readings and class discussions for Unit 2 assess whether or not you think this statement accurately portrays the profession (in its ideals and practices).
• Day 3: Identify a human rights related issue in your practice. Apply at least one of the human rights treaties to the issue, discussing what principles apply and how. Discuss ways in which you would address the issue using a human rights approach. Include both micro and macro actions.
• Day 4: Identify a human rights violation in your locality or in the state of Pennsylvania. Identify how social workers (and allied professionals if relevant) should be involved to advance human rights advocacy on this issue.
• Day 5: Thinking about Healy (2008), our other readings, and class discussions for the week, do you see yourself engaged (or could you see yourself engaged) in human rights work as a social worker? How will you care for yourself in your social work practice?

Group Presentation: Applying a Human Rights Lens to National Association of Social Workers Social Work Speaks Policy Statements (January 9)

Since 2008 the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the accreditation body for social work in the United States, has called upon educational institutions to integrate human rights concepts and practices into curricula, including field education. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has also recognized the role for human rights and social work in its policy statement on “International Policy on Human Rights.” One limitation of NASW approach has been that it segregates human rights into the realm of “the international” and does not systematically address human rights dimensions of the varied policy statements included in Social Work Speaks (2012).

For this assignment, either in small groups (no more than three students in a group) or individually, choose one NASW policy statement to address in a critical commentary/brief. Small group work is encouraged, as discussion/dialogue may yield deeper insights into how to apply a human rights framework to the chosen policy statement.

Prepare a formal 30 minute presentation in which you:

• Provide background on the social issue the policy statement is addressing.
• Highlight with specific reference to human rights treaties and related documents how the issue could be reframed or more fully understood from a rights-based perspective.
• Draw upon at least four different human rights documents in your critique/analysis, elaborating on how attention to human rights standards may strengthen NASW’s official response to the particular issue.
• Finally, rewrite and/or expand upon the final section of the policy statement regarding action steps as a “proposed” revision that could be submitted to the original authors of the statement for consideration.
• Include appropriate references (in APA format).

I will allow for some class time for group work and to help troubleshoot specific questions, show you how to find relevant documents, etc. This part of the class will be run as a “workshop” to build your capacity to locate, identify, analyze, and apply human rights concepts and practices to a specific social work policy issue. You will need to bring laptops/tablets to class each day to prepare the presentation.

During the last session each group will present its key insights into the policy statement and share a copy of the specific recommendations the group drafted. After each presentation the class will provide feedback and raise questions. I will also provide written feedback/questions to consider as you finalize revisions. Following Unit 5, you will have one week to integrate feedback, make edits, and turn in a revised version of the assignment. Final assignments are due on Friday, January 16 at 5pm.

6. Class Activities and Participation
Students are expected to actively participate in class discussion and exercises. Class participation includes quality engagement in active learning activities, small group and dyad discussions, and D2L. Your participation should communicate evidence of reading and contribute relevant resources to the discussions.

Prepare one discussion question generated from the readings for each day to be used in small group discussions during class.
Course Outline:

Unit 1 – January 5

Topics:
- Introduction to Human Rights
- Overview of Civil, Political, Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights
- Social Work as a Human Rights Profession
- U.S. Exceptionalism
- Racism as a Human Rights Issue

READ IN ADVANCE:


Recommended reading:


Unit 2 – January 6

Topics:
- Human rights, values, and social work ethics
- The UN Human Rights System
- Rights of immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees
- A rights-based approach to social work practice

READ IN ADVANCE:


Recommended reading:


Unit 3 – January 7

Topics:
- Social and economic rights
- The right to access health care, right to food, and right to housing
- Rights-based approaches to examining social protection policies
- Non-discrimination and equality as human rights principles
- Tackling heterosexism and ableism as human rights concerns

READ IN ADVANCE:


Recommended reading:


September 2014

Unit 4 – January 8
Topics:
- Women’s human rights
- Public and private spheres—State accountability for gender-based violence
- Children’s human rights
- Employing a rights-based approach to social work practice with women and children

**READ IN ADVANCE:**

Recommended reading:

Unit 5 – January 9
Topics:
- Responding to current crises
- Self-care in human rights and social work
- Group presentations
READ IN ADVANCE:

Recommended reading:

USEFUL WEBSITES
International Federation of Social Workers: www.ifsw.org
International Association of Schools of Social Work: www.iassw-aiets.org
National Economic and Social Rights Initiative: www.nesri.org
UN High Commission on Human Rights: www.ohchr.org

USEFUL SOCIAL WORK AND HUMAN RIGHTS JOURNALS ON HUMAN RIGHTS TOPICS
Human Rights Quarterly
Human Rights Review
International Journal of Social Welfare
International Social Work
Journal of Health and Human Rights
Journal of Human Rights
Journal of Human Rights
Social Development Issues