SOWK 654
Social Work Practice in Global, Cross-Cultural Contexts
Sample Syllabus

Pre-requisites: Completion of all SOWK 500 level courses

Course Description: This one-semester course provides an introduction to social work practice in an international context. Students will have the opportunity to study several different theoretical models to consider processes of social development in a global, cross-cultural context. Dynamics of power in global social work will be a central focus, as will understanding the diverse roles and activities that social workers play in different countries and when practicing in another country. Since international social work practice is a relatively new field, the focus of the course is on helping each student develop her/his conceptualization of international social work practice, including the areas of policy planning, program administration, direct practice, consultation, and research. For instance, aspects of international social work practice can include: advocate, practitioner with individuals, families, and groups, consultant, educator, and researcher.

An essential aspect of the course is ongoing experience in an international partnership, either through in-country learning experiences (internships), ongoing contact with social workers or clients from other countries who are in the US, or an ongoing on-line relationship with a social worker in another country.

Course Objectives:

Knowledge
1) To acquire an analytic frame of reference for understanding central problems addressed by cross-cultural and global practice at the micro, meso, and macro levels as a base for international social work practice.

2) To understand the most pressing global social problems currently addressed by global social work practice, including human trafficking, illegal drug sales and abuse, environmental disasters, health care emergencies and inequalities, inter-ethnic strife, immigrant and migration rights, and post-traumatic stress syndrome.

3) To acquire a knowledge base for conceptualizing international social work practice in the areas of social policy, direct practice, research, cross-cultural collaboration, and human development in the context of social environment.

4) To formulate one’s own model of international social work practice based on the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession.

5) To be able to conceptualize dynamics of power, oppression, and justice in the context of the relationship between the social worker and clients in international practice settings.

6) To understand the role of an orientation to research that is participatory and empowerment-based as a way to advance both development and global social work practice.
Values
1) To acquire a stable human rights and empowerment orientation to use as a base for making decisions about values and planning of practice interventions.
2) To understand the intimate relationship between a cultural community’s history, heritage, and values.
3) To understand the difficulties in conceptualizing ethics on a global scale, especially the tension when local cultural values conflict with universal values based on internationally-accepted human rights doctrines.

Skills
1) To acquire the capacity to flexibility reflect upon one’s own history, cultural heritage and values in the light of the diversity of histories, heritages, and values around the world.
2) To become able to critically evaluate social problems and potential social work responses to them in the light of ethical and human rights concerns and advancing non-colonial approaches to global social work and development.
3) To be able to actively participate in and foster dialogue with social workers from another country.

Feedback: Students are welcomed to provide feedback to the instructor in any format with which they feel comfortable (verbally, email, anonymous note, etc.) There will be an opportunity for a mid-semester, anonymous course evaluation as well as the usual course evaluation at the end of the semester.

Course Topics and Readings

Text:
Required:

Recommended:

Weeks 1-2: Introduction, Conceptual Framework, Values and Ethics

Class 1: Introduction, course planning, the roles of global social workers
- Global social work roles: Advocacy, education, consultation, community development, practice with individuals and families
- Overview of history, definition, and ethics of international social work
A conceptual framework for global social work practice: Self-determination and freedom of choice

Transnational values and ethics for global social workers


Class 2: Social work, self-determination and economic and social freedom


Throughout this first half of the course, students will be applying the readings to their ongoing conceptualization of their (actual or envisioned) international social work
practice. Students will choose a reading and week and will make a presentation about the relevance of that aspect of the knowledge base to their conceptualization of international social work practice.

**Week 3 International Social Work and Advancing Human Rights**

- History of global social work
- The impact of global professional action


**Classes 4-5 Global interdependence and global interactions of social workers**

Class 4: Healey, Chapters 1-4: Why is International Social Work Important?
  - The History of the Development of Social Work
  - International Professional Action: A Selective History
  - Social Work Around the World Today

Class 5: Healey, Chapters 5-7
  - Global Interdependence and Social Work
  - International Social Welfare Organizations and their Functions
  - Values and Ethics for International Social Work Practice

- **Values and ethics**

- **Human rights, health, mental health and stigma**


**Weeks 6-7: International Perspectives on Human Development and the Family**

**Understanding the development of cooperation v. hostility**


**Social work interventions:**


Recommended reading:


**MID TERM DUE**

No class in the US due to Spring Break
**Week 8: Research in an international context**

Healey, Chapter 8 International Relief and Development Practice


**Recommended readings:**


**Part 2 (Weeks 9 – 14): Working for Social Change in an International Perspective**

**Week 9: Macro level**

Healey, Chapter 9 International/Domestic Practice Interface

**Leadership and group dynamics**


**Comparing Social Welfare Policies across National Contexts**


**A National Policy for Mourning Genocidal Racism**


Recommended articles:


**Week 10: Macro level (cont):**

**Community-based movements for justice and peace**

Healey, Chapter 10 Understanding and influencing global policy

**Fighting Poverty:**

Muhammad Yunus, The Nobel Peace Prize Lecture, 2006

**Fostering Recovery from Genocide in Guatemalan Mayan Communities**


**Aboriginal –White Reconciliation in Australia:**

**Grassroots Mobilization in Mexico:**


Recommended readings:


**Weeks 11-12: Meso level: Educational and Local Community Approaches**

Healey, Chapter 11: Education for International Professional Action: Current Realities, Future Challenges


Recommended articles:


**FINAL PAPER DUE**

**Weeks 13 – 14: Micro level: Practice with Individuals, Families, and Groups in Global Perspective**

Healey, Chapter 12  Social Work as a Force for Humane Global Change and Development

- **Child Welfare:**
  
  Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (see Hague pdf in readings)


- **Psychotherapy and psychiatric care:**


Recommended reading:


**Supplemental Bibliography**


