SOCWRK 1000: Introduction to Social Work (CRN: 19752)

Instructor: Elizabeth Mulvaney, LCSW  
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E-mail address: eam65@pitt.edu  

Day/Time: Tues / Thurs 9:30 – 10:45 am  
Class Location: Cathedral of Learning G-19A  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00 – 2:00 &  
Thursday 2:00 – 3:00

Staff Support: Ms. Monica Ceraso, 2117 Cathedral of Learning, 412-624-6304, mlc85@pitt.edu

I. **PREREQUISITES:** There are no prerequisites. Required class for social work majors and those in Behavioral Health Certificate program. Open to any interested undergraduate students. This section is an Honors section requiring students to have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.25 or permission from a UHC advisor.

II. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course provides an overview of professional social work. It examines the historical development of the profession of social work; introduces the profession’s values, ethics, and practice principles; examines the major interventional methods of social work practice; identifies the generalist base of social work practice; and explores the social service delivery networks which comprise the social welfare system in urban environments. Social work’s historic commitment to social justice and to the elimination of poverty is integrated throughout the course. Ecological social systems framework is also introduced and integrated as diversity and global impacts are introduced. The course format includes lecture presentations, discussion, guest presentations, reading assignments, examinations, student volunteer service, and visits to social agencies.

III. **DEFINITION:** The definition of “Generalist Practice” was unanimously adopted by faculty on April 15, 2009. “Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person and environment construct. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice. Generalist practitioners incorporate diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice. They recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. They engage in research-informed practice and are proactive in responding to the impact of context on professional practice.”
IV. **COURSE OBJECTIVES:** By completion of the course, it is expected that students will:

**Knowledge:**

1. Describe the historical evolution of professional social work, including the social forces and values that shape systems of social welfare. This objective contributes to the following practice behaviors:
   a. Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination (2.1.5)

2. Describe and discuss generalist social work practice. This objective contributes to the following practice behaviors:
   a. Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities (2.1.10A)

**Values:**

3. Appreciate social and economic justice and human diversity. This objective contributes to the following practice behaviors:
   a. Recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power (2.1.4)
   b. Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination (2.1.5)

4. Identify personal values and examine them in relation to societal and professional values. This objective contributes to the following practice behaviors:
   a. Practice personal reflection & self-correction to assure continual professional development (2.1.1)
   b. Attend to professional roles and boundaries (2.1.1)
   c. Recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate or create or enhance privilege or power (2.1.4)
   d. Make ethical decisions by applying the NASW *Code of Ethics* and, as applicable of the IFSW/IASSW Ethics in social work statement of principles (2.1.2)

**Skills:**

5. Be able to use interpersonal skills to effectively intervene with populations at risk. This objective contributes to the following practice behaviors:
   a. Advocate for client services (2.1.1)
   b. Use empathy and other interpersonal skills (2.1.10A)

6. Evaluate and analyze structures and functions of various social service delivery systems and the effectiveness of those systems as related to the following social welfare areas: Maternal and Child Health, Mental Health, Education, Urban Neighborhood Revitalization, Criminal Justice, Income Maintenance, Child Welfare, Health, Housing, and Older Adult Services. This objective contributes to the following practice behaviors:
   a. Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research based knowledge and practice wisdom (2.1.3)
V. **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Readings from various web-sites and other published sources are also required. See Appendix D for list. May be accessed through electronic reserves. Password in CourseWeb.

VI. **BASIS FOR GRADING:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Service Volunteer Activity/Reflection Papers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploration of Cultural Diversity Paper</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Group Presentation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VII. **GRADING SCALE:**

- **B+** 88-89.9
- **B** 83-87.9
- **B-** 80-82.9
- **C+** 78-79.9
- **C** 74-77.9
- **C-** 70-73.9

VIII. **CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

- **Classroom conduct:** As a student, you have an obligation to exhibit honesty and to respect the ethical standards of the social work profession in carrying out your academic assignments. Please refer to specific guidelines outlined in the Academic Integrity Policy of the School of Social Work. These can be found in the *School of Social Work Student Handbook*. As we may discuss challenging or controversial issues, communicating in a respectful and emerging professional manner is expected.

- **The use of cellular telephones, notebook, and laptop technology.** If you have an emergency and need to have your cell phone turned on, please use the vibrate mode and sit near a classroom exit. If you receive a telephone call, please leave the classroom before speaking (please note: you are still responsible for any material covered while you are not in the classroom). Text messaging and surfing the internet is prohibited in class. Unless arrangements are made with the professor in advance and the reason for doing so is compelling, use of laptop/notebook computers is **not** permitted in this class.

- **Instructional Methods** for this course include lecture, discussion, role play, experiential exercises, student presentations, and video tapes.
IX. UNIVERSITY/SCHOOL POLICIES:

- **Americans with Disabilities Act:** If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both the instructor and Disability Resources and Services (DRS) located at 140 William Pitt Union (412-628-7890 or TTY 412-383-7355) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify the disability and determine reasonable accommodation for this course. A comprehensive description of the services of DRS can be obtained at: http://www.drs.pitt.edu/.

- **Nondiscrimination:** The University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or a veteran of the Vietnam era. Further, the University will continue to take affirmative steps to support and advance these values consistent with the University’s mission. This policy applies to admissions, employment, access to and treatment in University programs and activities. This is a commitment made by the University and is in accordance with federal, state, and/or local laws and regulations. For information on University equal opportunity and affirmative action programs and complaint/grievance procedures, please contact the Office of Affirmative Action, 648-7860.

- **Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct established by the University and the Academic Integrity Policy of the School of Social Work, which is described in the Student Handbook.

- **Religious Holidays:** If you need to miss class due to religious observances, notify the instructor at least 48 weekday hours in advance to make alternative arrangements.

X. COMMUNICATION WITH INSTRUCTOR: I will make myself available to you for communication and consultation outside of classroom hours. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the numbers listed on the front of the syllabus. I am available during office hours and by email; email is often the fastest way to reach me. For longer or more detailed questions, use email to set up a phone or office appointment.

XI. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Attendance:** As discussion and interaction will contribute to your learning, being present is necessary. More than four unexcused absences results in a letter grade reduction. Every two additional unexcused absences results in loss of another letter grade. Without a valid excuse, there will be no make-up opportunities. Assignments must be submitted in advance for excused absences, including those for observance of a religious holiday.

- **Assignments:** All assignments and references must be documented in American Psychological Association (APA; 2009) style. *APA 6th Edition* text can be found in the Hillman Library’s reference section. All papers are to be word-processed, double-spaced, 12 point font, and 1 inch margins, unless otherwise noted. You do not need title pages or the running head on short papers assigned for this class but may use them if you like. In assigning grades, instructor takes into account the quality as well as the content of your work. Seven to fifteen grammatical errors on a page results in a 10 percent reduction in the grade. Fifteen or more errors per page do not constitute college level work. Pitt’s
Writing Center provides help with editing and composition to Pitt students, faculty, and staff (http://www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter/). Utilize it if writing challenges you.

- **Submission of assignments:** Email your assignments to me as Microsoft Word, Rich Text Format, or PowerPoint files. Feedback will be provided using the track changes feature in Word or comments feature in PowerPoint. Assignments are due by the noted date and time, usually the start of class (9:30 a.m.) unless otherwise noted. Late assignments lose a letter grade for each day they are late.

- **CourseWeb:** This class has a CourseWeb/Blackboard area. Links to websites, additional resources and other materials will be on-line. Additionally, there will be a discussion board area to extend class participation and is required to earn participation points. Grades will be posted there, and group areas will be created for the group project.

**XII. ASSIGNMENTS:**

- **Class Participation (On-going, 10% of grade):** Students are expected to participate actively in each class session, to come to class prepared to demonstrate and to discuss content of required course assignments. See grading rubric at end of this syllabus or in CourseWeb.

- **Midterm Exam (November 5, 20% of grade):** There will be a midterm examination covering material from readings, lectures, class discussion, and audio and video media through the date of the exam.

- **Exploration of Cultural Diversity (October 10, 20% of grade):** Students will choose a novel/memoir listed below which explores some facet of cultural diversity. Students who wish to choose a novel that is not listed must obtain prior permission of the instructor.
  
  o Read the novel and write a 4-6 page paper, which includes:
    1) A brief description of a major character in terms of age, personality, race, class, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, religious preference, and gender (discuss what is known about the character).
    2) A description of the cultural identity of the character in terms of values, norms and beliefs, including power determinants.
    3) A description of the similarities and differences between you and the chosen character in terms of human development, privileges, values, customs, educational and vocational opportunity.
    4) A discussion of the challenges that you would face in confronting your own biases, assumptions and values, if this character were a client assigned to you.

| Rubyfruit Jungle by Rita Mae Brown | Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides |
| Bean Trees by Barbara Kingsolver | The Color Of Water: A Black Man’s Tribute To His White Mother by James McBride |
| The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd | The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison |
| Cry the Beloved Country by Alan Paton | The Jungle by Upton Sinclair |
| The Help by Katherine Stockett | The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls |
Community Service Volunteer Activity / Reflection Papers / Verification Letter (25% of grade): 45 clock hours of community service must be completed over the course of the semester at a human services organization.

- Agency/Organization Selection & Approval (September 17): You must submit your preference for the organization or agency in which you plan to carry out the volunteer activity no later than the seventh class session. The selection must be approved by the professor before the activity begins. Submit choice via e-mail; approval will be emailed and noted in grade section of CourseWeb.

- Finding Organizations: The following may help you find a volunteer opportunity.
  1) The University of Pittsburgh Student Volunteer Outreach Office (WPU 119, 412-624-1065).
  2) The United Way’s Helpline Information and Referral Service for Allegheny County: http://www.unitedwaypittsburgh.org/uwac/searchforservices/helpconnections/index.jhtml
  3) The University of Pittsburgh Collegiate YMCA (WPU 730, 412-624-7960). The Collegiate Y organizes student volunteer activities by early October.

- Reflection Paper #1 (September 19): By this time you have decided where you would like to volunteer and which population you will be serving. Write a 2 page paper. Answer the following questions in your paper:
  1) What are your expectations for your community service experience (you will want to discuss what society thinks of this population as well as discuss what you think of this population)?
  2) What do you believe a generalist social worker does with this population?

- Reflection Paper #2 (December 3): You have now completed your community service volunteering. Write a 2 to 3 page paper. Answer the following questions in your paper:
  1) How have your experiences to date compared to your expectations, summarizing what you have learned?
  2) How has this experience challenged your personal beliefs in regard to this population and your appreciation of social justice and diversity?
  3) What does a generalist social worker need to know about this at-risk population based on your experience?

- Verification Letter (December 5): Your volunteer supervisor in the organization must submit a letter of verification (on the organization’s letterhead/stationery) of the total hours volunteered. A sample letter is attached to this syllabus and available in CourseWeb.

Responsibility for ensuring that the verification letter reaches the professor belongs to YOU, the student. Professor will post its receipt in the grade section of CourseWeb. Students without a letter will be given a G grade, indicating incomplete work and then have up to six weeks to submit the letter. Failure to do so results in a failing class grade.
• Final Group Project (November 19 & 21, December 3 & 5, 25% of grade):
The purpose of the final group project is to allow you to share what has been learned through
diligent research about a particular at-risk population.
  o Each presentation must be 20 – 30 minutes in length.
  o A copy of the power point presentation and annotated bibliography must be provided
to the instructor at least 48 hours in advance of your presentation. They will be
posted on Courseweb for your peers.
  o Presentations are expected to be of professional quality (as if you were presenting at a
conference).
  o Each person in the group needs to be present for the final group presentation.
  o Creative expression is encouraged (including, but not limited to dress, food, music,
etc.) to enhance the presentations.
  o The presentations MUST include the following information:
    1) How your group selected the population (1 point).
    2) A brief description of the group you researched, including size and diversity
features (2 points).
    3) A report on the historical experience of this population, as a whole, and the
historical relationship of this group to the Greater Pittsburgh community. Discuss the historical experiences of this group as relevant to social work
practice (3 points).
    4) What steps have members of the majority culture taken to address overt or
covert discrimination against this group? What approaches has the group
historically taken to address oppression? In what ways have the group’s
members advocated for themselves? (3 points)
    5) Based on the review of the literature, discuss the unmet needs of this
population. What are the major issues that present barriers to serving this
work (3 points)
    6) What does the literature suggest about macro, mezzo, and micro interventions
that best serve this population? (3 points)
    7) A role play, video, or other audio/visual to show how to utilize one or more of
the discussion points listed above (3 points).
    8) Provide an annotated bibliography of five (5) articles from peer reviewed
journals (these are also to be given to the instructor with the power point
presentations AT LEAST 48 hours prior to the group presentation). (5 points)
    9) Quality of PowerPoint (1 point)
   10) Quality of Presentation (1 point)
  o The group's final task is to decide whether members will receive individual grades or
one group grade. Individual grades will be given based on individual contributions to
the project as identified by the group (i.e. the group will have to determine the value
of each member's contribution). Group grades will be based on the entire
presentation and written work. This decision must be documented and all group
members must sign the document to receive credit for the assignment (0 points for
this, but it is mandatory). If you choose the individual grade option, each student in
the group must submit a statement indicating his or her part in the project and
perceptions of all group members’ contributions. (See Appendix E)
**TOPICAL OUTLINE:**

Overview
- Unit 1: Introduction and Course Overview (Week 1)
- Unit 2: The Profession of Social Work (Weeks 2, 3 & 4)
- Unit 3: Social Justice, Diversity & Vulnerable Populations (Weeks 5, 6 & 7)
- Unit 4: Generalist Social Work (Weeks 8, 9 &10)
  - Midterm
- Unit 5: Contemporary Issues in Social Work Practice (Weeks 11, 12 & 14)
- Unit 6: Final Presentations (Weeks 13 & 15)

Full citations for articles may be found in the bibliography (Appendix D) and in CourseWeb. Most of this material is available through electronic reserves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNIT 1</td>
<td>Introduction and Course Overview</td>
<td>Text Introduction &amp; chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Syllabus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Assignments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Expectations</td>
<td><strong>Due</strong>: Nothing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>• Perceptions about Social Work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Generalist Social Work Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNIT 2</td>
<td>The Profession of Social Work</td>
<td>Text chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 &amp; 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 3, 5</td>
<td>• The Emergence of Social Work as a Profession</td>
<td>Somers, M.R. &amp; Block, F. (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10, 12, 17, &amp; 19</td>
<td>o Historical antecedents</td>
<td>Tangenberg, K. (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 2, 3, &amp; 4</td>
<td>o Defining social work as a profession</td>
<td>Podcast of your choice (see CourseWeb)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Social work practice: knowledge, values, skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Social Work and Social Systems</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Ecosystems perspective</td>
<td>9/17: Choice of organization for volunteering</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Client systems and levels of intervention</td>
<td>9/19: Reflection Paper 1</td>
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<td>o Social work methods</td>
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<td>• Social Service Delivery Systems</td>
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<td>o Social service settings</td>
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<td>o Funding for services</td>
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<td>o Service delivery issues</td>
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<td>Dates</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UNIT 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Justice, Diversity, &amp; Vulnerable Populations</strong></td>
<td>Text chapters 10, 14, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 &amp; 26</td>
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<td>Weeks 5, 6, &amp; 7</td>
<td>o Human rights</td>
<td>National Association of Social Workers (2003)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Social justice and social injustice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Power determinants</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong> 10/10 Exploration of Diversity Paper</td>
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<td><strong>NOTE:</strong> No class Tuesday, October 15 related to Fall Break</td>
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<td><strong>UNIT 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Generalist Social Work</strong></td>
<td>Text chapters 8, 9, &amp; 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 8, 9 &amp; 10</td>
<td>o Values and ethics defined</td>
<td>Farber, M. &amp; Maharaj, R. (2005)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Foundation of professional social work values</td>
<td>Hodge, D.R. (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o (1) Engagement, (2) assessment, (3) planning, (4) intervention, (5) evaluation, (6) integrating gains/termination</td>
<td>Murdach, A. (2011)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Social Work Functions and Roles</td>
<td>NASW (2008)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Resource management</td>
<td>Video Interview: Chuck Collins (see CourseWeb)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Integrating policy, practice and research</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong> Nothing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Social Work and Social Policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Social policy defined</td>
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<td>o Social policy and politics</td>
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<td>November 5</td>
<td>o Social work and social policy</td>
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<td>o Public welfare policy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries</td>
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<td>o Current public welfare programs</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Dates</td>
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<td>Readings/Assignments</td>
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<td><strong>UNIT 5</strong></td>
<td>Contemporary Issues in Social Work</td>
<td>Text chapters 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 27</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Poverty, homelessness, hunger, unemployment</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong> Nothing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Social Work in Health, Rehabilitation, and Mental Health</td>
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<td>• Social Work with Families and Youth</td>
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<td>• Social Work with Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities</td>
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<td>• Social Work and Criminal Justice</td>
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<td>• Social Work with Veterans</td>
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<td>• Social Work and Terrorism</td>
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<td>• Social Work and Global Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 11, 12, &amp; 14</td>
<td>3 guest speakers &amp; 1 hour video during this unit</td>
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**NOTE:** No class Thursday, November 28 for Thanksgiving

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>UNIT 6</strong></th>
<th>Group Presentations</th>
<th><strong>Due:</strong> 48 hours before presentation: PowerPoint and Annotated Bibliography</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 19 &amp; 21</td>
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<td>12/3: Reflection Paper 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 3 &amp; 5</td>
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<td>12/5: All discussion board posts as part of participation grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 13 &amp; 15</td>
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<td>12/5: Verification letter for volunteering</td>
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Saturday, December 14 – 4:00 to 5:30 pm – Make up for snow day or to finish presentations
Appendix A

ON AGENCY’S LETTERHEAD

Date (DUE NO LATER THAN December 5, 2012)

Elizabeth Mulvaney
University of Pittsburgh
School of Social Work
2011 Cathedral of learning
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dear Ms. Mulvaney,

____________________________ (student name) has completed ________ (minimum 45) hours of volunteer work in __________________________________________________________ (the specific program) of our agency. These volunteer hours occurred between (dates) ________________ and _____________________.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at ________________________________.

Sincerely,

__________________________ (supervisor’s signature)
__________________________ (printed name)
Appendix B

Volunteer Fair

Sponsored by the:
STUDENT VOLUNTEER OUTREACH
University of Pittsburgh

All Pitt students are welcome to attend!

Date: Thursday, September 12
Time: 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
Location: William Pitt Union Lawn
(In case of rain the fair will be held in the Assembly room and Ballroom of the WPU.)

Get Connected!
Over 80 community agencies offering volunteer opportunities

This event is sponsored by Student Volunteer Outreach

Outside the Classroom Curriculum
Your Pitt Pathway
# Appendix C
## Participation Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Preparation</strong> (3 possible)</td>
<td>Came to class having completed most or all readings most of the time as demonstrated by asking questions and participation in class discussion &amp; posting in discussion board. (3 points)</td>
<td>Came to class having completed many readings as demonstrated by asking some questions and making some comments &amp; posting in discussion board. (2 points)</td>
<td>Came to class having completed some readings as evidenced by occasional comments or questions in class or on discussion board. (1 point)</td>
<td>Showed no evidence of reading or class preparation through in class comments or questions or use of discussion board. (0 points)</td>
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<td><strong>Attention, Involvement, &amp; Engagement in class</strong> (4 possible)</td>
<td>Participation in all class exercises/role plays. Attentive and interactive with instructor and peers. (4 points)</td>
<td>Generally participated well in class exercises. Typically interactive with peers and instructors. (3 points)</td>
<td>Often interactive with class and peers. Attempted exercises but often strayed from topic or was unprepared. (1 to 2 points)</td>
<td>Rarely joined in class discussion or exercises. Paid little attention, perhaps sleeping through class. (0 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion Board</strong> (3 possible)</td>
<td>Posted ideas or responded to five or more posts while expanding the conversation on the topic. (3 points)</td>
<td>Posted ideas or responded to three or four posts with some depth OR responded without really expanding the conversation. (2 points)</td>
<td>Posted ideas or responded to one or two other posts OR responded in with simple or surface ideas. (1 point)</td>
<td>Did not post or respond to any peer or instructor comments. (0 points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Bibliography

SOCWRK 1000 – Introduction to Social Work

Primary Text:

Additional Readings:


APPENDIX E

Group Project Grading Request
(1 form per group)

The members of the group presenting on ____________________________ request

☐ Individual grades

OR

☐ A group grade

Signatures:

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Date: _________________________________

Please note, if you select individual grades, each person must also submit on a separate sheet a description of the following:

- What part he/she played in project (what he/she did)
- Perceptions of what part each other person played (what they did)
- An assessment of your group process and what role you played in its unfolding this way