



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

**SWK 597: Social Work and the Law
Summer 2015**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Course Description: (3 semester credit hours). This course is an elective in the MSW program. In this course, the basic structure and operation of the legal systems in the U.S. and in Texas are outlined as well as the interface between social work and the law. Students will learn legal aspects of social work in a range of legal areas: criminal law, education, juvenile justice, family law, domestic violence, child/elder welfare and protection, health/mental health/chemical dependency laws, civil rights, and laws related to the profession of social work.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Understand the major areas and issues where law and social work intersect.
2. Become familiar with laws and processes that specifically address social work issues.
3. Become proficient in researching scholarly, legal/social work journal articles, and become familiar with law journals.

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4. Demonstrate the ability to assess a case and write a technical legal report that could be submitted to a court.
5. Become familiar with courtroom processes and culture.
6. Research and develop a training product that helps explain legal issues related to social work and social issues.
7. Demonstrate the ability to research and interpret Texas Laws, Federal Supreme Court Rulings, and case law.
8. Articulate basic legal definitions and concepts.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COURSES

This course builds on foundation content across both micro and macro level courses. Social workers encounter legal issues when providing direct, organizational, and community practice.

TEXT:

Stein, T.J. (2004). *The role of law in social work practice and administration*. NY: Columbia University Press.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

The following is a general outline of the course. Course material will be made available one week at a time, according to the schedule. Weekly material will be available each Monday. Additional (non-text) readings will be made available under DocSharing. Please note that additional reading assignments may be given throughout the semester as well as video clips and websites that are not listed here. You will be sharing journal articles that you find throughout the semester. I may supplement your articles based on what each of you contributes. I will not list the due date for the assignment Law & Social Work Journal Article, because you will be submitting this assignment according to the content of the week.

Week	Topic(s)	Required Reading & Assignments
1	Introduction and Overview of the Law and the Legal System Intersection of Social Work and the Law Federal and State Court Systems	Stein, Chp 1 NASW Code of Ethics 1.06
2	Sources of Law Part I	Stein, Chp 2
3	Sources of Law Part II	Stein, Chp 3, QUIZ ONE due

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		by Sunday 11:59 p.m.
4	Social Workers and the Courts	Stein, Chp 4 NASW Code of Ethics 1.07 Madden, R.G. & Wayne, R.H. (2003). Social work and the law: A therapeutic jurisprudence perspective. <i>Social Work</i> , 48(3), 338-347 Sarnoff, S. (2004). Social workers and the witness role: Ethics, law and roles. <i>Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics</i> (www.socialworker.com/jswve/Fall2004), 1(1) QUIZ TWO due by Sunday 11:59 p.m.
5	Criminal Law	Stein, Chp 5 & 6 Guin, C.C., Noble, Dornida N., & Merrill, T.S. (2003). From misery to mission: Forensic social workers on multidisciplinary mitigation teams. <i>Social Work</i> , 48, 362-371 Visit www.nofsw.org/ homepage for the National Organization of Forensic Social Work QUIZ THREE due by Sunday 11:59 p.m.
6	Education and Juvenile Court	Stein, Chps 9 and 10 QUIZ FOUR due by Sunday 11:59 p.m.
7	Family Law Marriage, Divorce, Custody & Support	Stein, Chps 8 and 10 Technical Legal Report due by Sunday 11:59 p.m.
8	Domestic Violence Child/Elder Protective Laws	Stein, Chps 11 and 12 Jordan, L.C. (2001). Elder abuse and domestic violence: Overlapping issues and legal remedies. <i>American Journal of Family Law</i> , 15(2), 147-156. Bergeron, L.R. (2001). An

		<p>elder abuse case study: Caregiver stress or domestic violence? You decide. <i>Journal of Gerontological Social Work</i> 34(4), 47-63.</p> <p>QUIZ FIVE due by Sunday 11:59 p.m. Special Project due by Sunday 11:59 p.m.</p>
9	Health, Mental Health, and Chemical Dependency Law	<p>Stein, Chps 13 and 14</p> <p>QUIZ SIX due by Sunday 11:59 p.m. Courtroom Observation Report due by Sunday 11:59 p.m.</p>
10	<p>Civil Rights</p> <p>Professional Liability & Regulation of the Social Work Profession</p>	<p>NASW Code of Ethics 6.01-6.04</p> <p>Texas Statutes</p> <p>Reamer, F.G. (2000). The social work ethics audit: A risk-management strategy. <i>Social Work</i>, 45(4), 355-366.</p> <p>Lynch, J.G. and Versen, G.R. (2003). Social work supervisor liability: Risk factors and strategies for risk reduction. <i>Administration in Social Work</i>, 27(2), 57-72.</p> <p>QUIZ SEVEN due by Sunday 11:59 p.m.</p>

OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS:

There are seven types of assignments in this course.

1. **Seven eCollege Quizzes @ 50 points each (350 points).** Each unit will have a quiz posted. The questions will come from assigned readings. Because it is so easy to put off reading assignments, especially during the summer, I have built in these quizzes to help you stay on task. It is important to do the readings and be able to synthesize this information into the

assignment and discussions. The quizzes will be available during the scheduled time of the unit. You will be allowed to enter each quiz ONE TIME only and will have 2 hours to complete it.

2. **Law & Social Work Journal Article Review** (50 points). You will research peer-reviewed journals and find a good quality journal article and 1) upload it to DocSharing. Make SURE that it is in a readable format and that people can open it; 2) post a short summary of the article, posting it under Journal Article Review Discussion for the week in which the subject of the article most closely corresponds. For example, if you chose an article pertaining to domestic violence, you would post it during that week. I hope to have a wide variety of articles. A particular article may only be posted once. If you see that several people have posted articles relating to elder abuse laws, for example, please choose a different topic. Note that articles relating to law and social work may be found in a variety of journals. You might find an interesting article in a law journal, but it has social work/social justice relevance. This is fine.
3. **Technical Legal Report** (100 points). Each student will be given a case study. You will need to write a 3 page court summary. You will be given guidelines and suggestions for the report. It needs to be based on objective facts, be very professional, and fair.
4. **Courtroom Observation/Report** (100 points). You will either attend an open court hearing/event; or if you cannot attend one because of your work schedule, then you will need to watch one (or part of one) on television or another source. I will help you find potential sessions if you need help. I expect you to observe for one hour at least, and then write up a brief summary of your observations. You will be given a checklist with the items you minimally need to report on. Here, you will really be teaching each other. You will post the summary under one of the Discussions so that you can ask each other questions about the case. DO NOT mention client names or specific details that would expose/harm them. But all courtroom testimony that you will have access to should be cases that are open to the public. If you have access to closed hearings because of your employment/internship (such as closed CPS/APS cases), then we need to get permission from your supervisor first. Please discuss these cases with me via private email.
5. **eCollege Discussions** (100 points). There are ten Discussion items throughout the semester. You must post one response to an initial topic presented and then two subsequent responses to other students. You will be graded not only on the quantity of responses, but on the *quality* of your input. Please remember to be professional in your interactions with others.
6. **Special Project** (200 points). Use this assignment to your professional advantage. You may do this individually or in groups. Select a topic that is of interest to you. You will be producing a “product” that trains social workers about a particular area of law. Some choices could be: a training manual (such as “Child Custody in Texas”), a detailed Power Point (such as “How Does Probate Court Work in Dallas?”; 15 slides), a local Resource Guide (such as “Your

Health Care Entitlements in North Texas”) , an informational brochure/packet for clients (such as “Your Rights as a Criminal Defendant”). Be creative. Make sure you research the topic and related laws thoroughly. Get professional consultation from an expert, and provide contact information for that individual. Use this opportunity to produce an actual product that will help each other.

7. **Class Participation** (50 points). You will be rated based on your overall participation in the course, including time spent on the course (tracked by eCollege), the quality of your class participation, and your professionalism over the internet.

Course Grading

Seven eCollege Quizzes @ 50 points each	350 points
Law & Social Work Journal Article Review	50 points
Technical Legal Report	100 points
Courtroom Observation/Report	100 points
eCollege Discussions	100 points
Individual Special Project	200 points
<u>Class Participation</u>	<u>50 points</u>
Total Points	950 points

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

ONLINE OR WEB-ENHANCED CLASSES: Just as students are required to attend face-to-face classes, students are required to log in and participate in online components. To receive credit for attendance online via eCollege, students must log in and complete assignments in a timely manner. Not logging in to eCollege (which can be monitored by the instructor) and completing assignments online during the appropriate time is the equivalent of an absence for each week this occurs.

Final evaluation and grades depend on both presence and participation. Students’ grades will be significantly impacted by inadequate participation or lack of required time commitment each week. Students are expected to spend a comparable amount of time in the online learning environment as they would in class (3 hours a week in the classroom). In addition, just as in traditional F2F classrooms, students are expected to spend time reading and studying class materials.

NOTE: PROBLEMS WITH YOUR INTERNET CONNECTION AND/OR COMPUTER ARE NOT CONSIDERED AS REASONS FOR LACK OF PARTICIPATION. You have access to the university’s computer labs (in the social work department AND other campus facilities, including the library) as well as local libraries and other access to computers and ISPs.

If you believe that you are unable to fulfill the requirements for the course you should talk with your instructor about the possibility of dropping or withdrawing.

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Class participation has three components: (1) Appropriate interactions with classmates, (2) Attentiveness, and (3) Active involvement in class activities. Evaluation of class participation is based on instructor observation. Students will be given feedback if problems are evident.

POLICY ON DUE DATES:

All assignments are due by midnight on the scheduled due date or as otherwise indicated. Discussion postings are due by midnight on the Sunday of each given week. The scheduling for each week's assignments is Monday morning through Sunday midnight. There will be 5 points per day deducted for major assignments turned in late regardless of reason. After one week, no points will be awarded. Weekly participation in quizzes, activities, discussions and journal postings must be completed during the week assigned or no points will be awarded for that week.

Quizzes will be open on Wednesdays of the given Quiz week at 2 p.m. and will close at midnight. on the final day of that unit (Sunday). You will have the opportunity to go into a quiz one time and will have one hour to complete it.

POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

Every student is expected to do his/her own work. Law, ethical standards, university policy, and departmental policy demand that students refrain from plagiarism and any form of cheating. Plagiarism is the "Act of appropriating the literacy composition of another, or parts of passages from of his [or her] writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the products of one's own mind." (Black's Law Dictionary, Abridged Fifth Edition, 1983). When using others' words, phrases, or ideas in writing, the original author should be given proper credit.

Cheating may take different forms. These include, but are not limited to, copying others' answers during an exam, using notes or other forms of help during an examination or quiz, except when explicitly permitted by the instructor, giving or receiving help on exams or assignments, or submitting work for one class which has already been submitted for another class for credit. Use of citations from the Internet without paraphrasing content AND proper referencing is regarded as plagiarism. Professors have the right to use electronic review programs (such as Turn It In™) to identify plagiarism.

The department does not tolerate plagiarism or cheating. A student found to be engaging in such illegal and unethical conduct may receive a failing grade in the course and may be subjected to further disciplinary proceedings. Any assignment or exam that lacks honesty will be given a grade of "0".

ACCEPTABLE CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:

“Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to obey all federal, state, and local laws, in addition to the regulations of the University. The standards of Student Conduct including disciplinary rules and procedures are designed to provide and conform to the basic tenets of due process, as developed by institutions of higher education. As such, the University Updated Version 12.12

distinguishes these procedures and regulations as an educational and growth process which is not intended to conform to adversary proceedings as in a court of law. (Student's Guide Book, 2011, p. 35).

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS:

The Department of Social Work expects all social work students to conduct themselves in an ethical, professional manner. Professional ethics are at the core of social work. The profession articulates its basic values, ethical principles, and ethical standards as set forth in the *NASW Code of Ethics* to guide social workers' conduct. The *Code* is relevant to all social workers and social work students, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve. Accordingly, we expect social work students to demonstrate courtesy, respect and support for fellow students, instructors, clients, and all other persons.

All students enrolled in BSW or MSW classes are expected to observe the tenets of the NASW Code of Ethics and the Social Work Student Code of Conduct. Our Code of Conduct is reflective of professional and academic expectations – a student who cannot demonstrate appropriate behaviors will not be appropriate for practice in the social work profession. Students who violate these Codes may be asked to meet with appropriate Social Work faculty (instructors or Program Directors). In addition, the department's Academic and Professional Issues (API) Committee is responsible for dealing with student issues when requested by faculty.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

It is the policy of Texas A&M University-Commerce and the Social Work Department to do everything we can to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law, and the University's commitment to providing equal opportunities. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation, for example, in accessibility, seating placement or in arrangements for examinations should not hesitate to inform the instructor. If required, large type, Braille or cassette recordings of syllabus or assignments can be provided.

Students with conditions that require special attention or accommodation should contact the Director of Disability Resources & Services at 903-468-5150 (located in the Library, Room 132).

