

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

***Course #550 Seminar in Management and Community Practice:  
Community Based Practice in Mexico and the United States***

***(2 Credit Hours)***

**Prerequisite(s):** 510, 512, 513, 517, 519, 520, 522, 537, 538, 539

**Instructor information**

**Sandra J. Gonzalez, MSSW, LCSW**

Phone: (615)782-6157

E-Mail: [sgonzale@utk.edu](mailto:sgonzale@utk.edu)

Office: 192 Polk Avenue, Suite E  
Nashville, TN 37210  
Room 276  
Office hours by appointment

**Gayle Lodato, MSW, LCSW**

Phone: (865)974-6677

E-Mail: [glodato@utk.edu](mailto:glodato@utk.edu)

Office: 320 Henson Hall  
Knoxville, TN 37996

**Code of Conduct**

It is the student's responsibility to have read the College of Social Work Ethical Academic and Professional Conduct Code that is in the College of Social Work MSSW Handbook ([www.utk.csw.edu](http://www.utk.csw.edu)).

**The Honor Statement**

An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity. (*Hilltopics*, 2008).

**Disability**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact The University of Tennessee Office of Disability Services at 2227 Dunford Hall (865) 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

**Course Description**

This course is a concentration elective course. This course provides an understanding of community based social work practice as carried out in Mexico and the United States. The course focuses on social work community practice trends as they affect the delivery of human services and the requisite knowledge and problem solving skills needed to address them. Critical thinking skills and the principles of evidence-based practice are emphasized in order to analyze the extent to which trends are transformed in the delivery of human services both in the United States and in Mexico. Particular emphasis is placed

on social and economic development, including community organizing, activism, and micro enterprise.

### **Course Rationale**

Human service organizations exist to protect and promote the welfare of the people they serve. These organizations accomplish this through the efforts and influences of multiple interest groups, internal and external as well as international. Social workers at all levels of practice must be aware of the significant national and international trends and changes. They must also be able to demonstrate the capacity to enlist others within their organizations and the task environment to respond effectively to such changes while serving the best interest of the clients. International practice is especially focused on an understanding of and respect for the customs, values, cultures and practices of the client (population) being served. In order to respond to the needs of communities effectively, it is important that social workers gain a greater understanding of the person in the global environment. Short-term immersion in the culture will serve to enhance the student's knowledge of social work in an international setting.

**Course Competencies:** By the completion of this course, the students are expected to be able to demonstrate (through course activities, assignments, and/or exams):

1. Analyze social problems and the policies designed to improve them using an evidence-based policy practice framework. CT/EB Conc. #1; Policy Conc. #3. (*Content: policy practice problem solving frameworks; problem statements, goals, objectives; evidence-based practice*).
2. Identify and assess the current management and community practice trends being carried out in human service organizations in the United States and Mexico and their impact on service delivery. Practice Conc. #1. (*Content: community building and community development strategies; impact on individuals, groups, communities, and organizations*).
3. Appropriately apply critical thinking skills in comparing the community economic development strategies in national and international communities. CT/EB Conc. #3; Policy Conc. #3; Practice Conc. #1. (*Content: critical thinking skills; international social work practice; current community economic development strategies in the global environment*).
4. Utilize the most appropriate methods of intervention when working with diverse client systems in both the United States and Mexico, with a particular emphasis on assessing cultural barriers and recognizing potential ethical dilemmas. Populations at risk/SJ Conc. #2; Diversity Conc. #2; Values/Ethics Conc. #2. (*Content: discrimination and oppression; availability and accessibility to resources; resolving ethical dilemmas within and among complex systems*).
5. Evaluate practice theories and models in order to formulate a planned change strategy that addresses the needs of a particular community. CT/EB Conc. #2;

Practice Conc. #3. (*Content: target systems at all levels of the problem; identifying obstacles to change; the impact of the political environment*).

6. Articulate the use of advocacy skills and the promotion of social and economic justice in impoverished communities. Diversity Conc. #2. (*Content: individual and group advocacy; social activism; microenterprise*).

### **Required Text**

Sherraden, M. S., & Ninacs, W. A. (Eds.). (1998). *Community Economic Development and Social Work*. New York: Haworth Press.

Additional readings listed will be available on the course website. Due to the nature of the course, the instructor reserves the right to add or amend readings as needed. New readings and amendments will also be available on the course website.

### **Course Policies**

All students are expected to complete each week's readings and online assignments within the one week period between class sessions, unless otherwise advised by the course instructor. Participation in the discussion boards is mandatory and it is expected that the student develop clear and thoughtful responses to the discussion board topics. Failure to participate in the discussion board will result in an automatic zero for the corresponding assignment. No assignment will be accepted after the due date, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

Incompletes will be given only according to the rules specified in the University of Tennessee Catalog. Please refer to the catalog for additional information.

University policy regarding religious holidays will be observed. As stated in the UT student handbook, any student may request to be excused from class to observe a religious day according to her/his faith.

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

The course grade will be determined on the basis of grades earned in 10 weekly assignments, a travel journal, and a final presentation. The weekly assignments will be a combination of group discussion boards, worksheets, reflective essays, and quizzes. A short description of the assignments follows.

Weekly Assignments	50%
Travel Journal	30%
Presentation	20%

## Description of Assignments

*Assignment #1:* Students will develop a short reflective essay on cultural variables and potential ethical dilemmas that may arise when working with diverse communities.

*Assignment #2:* Identifying social problems and the impact of policy – Students will identify a social problem of interest, develop a clear problem statement and apply an evidence based problem solving approach in order to answer a variety of questions related to policies that impact community change.

*Assignment #3:* Quiz #1 will cover policy practice problem solving frameworks.

*Assignment #4:* Using a case study provided by the instructor, students will develop a plan for community organizing and community development in an impoverished part of the United States. Students will base their plan on one theory of community organizing.

*Assignment #5:* Quiz #2 will cover the role of human service organizations in addressing community needs.

*Assignment #6:* Community economic development strategies – Students will use critical thinking skills in order to appraise and analyze articles related to community economic development in the United States.

*Assignment #7:* Students will review articles on social development and social activism as they are carried out in the U.S. and Mexico. Students will engage in thoughtful discussion (in the discussion board) about their impressions regarding these strategies for mobilizing communities.

*Assignment #8:* Quiz #3 will cover material related to community economic development strategies in the U.S. and Mexico.

*Assignment #9:* Students will conduct an Internet search on social work community practice in Mexico with an emphasis on describing the role of promotoras and/or murals in engaging the community and will post their reflections on the discussion board.

*Assignment #10:* Students will create a mock microenterprise for a rural community in either the United States or Mexico. Advocacy and social activism should be addressed.

*Travel Journal:* Students will be responsible for keeping a comprehensive and thoughtful journal regarding the exposure experience in Mexico. Students should ideally post one entry per day. In addition to their personal reflections regarding the culture and customs of the country they are visiting, students should also aim to integrate previous course materials into their analysis and understanding of the ways in which social problems, policies, and community practice are similar to and differ from the methods discussed in their current and previous social work courses.

*Presentation:* Students will use critical thinking skills and their requisite knowledge of community based practice in the U.S. and Mexico as a foundation for describing their experience with the course, the exposure trip, and its relevance and implications for social work education and practice.

## Grading

A = (95-100) Outstanding/Superior. Exceptional performance. Consistently exceeds expectations.

B+ = (90-94) Very Good. Student consistently meets, and occasionally exceeds, normal expectations for the course.

B = (85-89) Good. Student consistently meets normal expectations for the course.

C+ = (80-84) Average. There is unevenness in grasping course content. Student is inconsistent in meeting normal expectations for the course.

C = (70-76) Poor. There is lack of understanding of course content. Student does not meet course expectations.

F = (69-Below) Very Poor. There is a lack of attendance or incomplete assignments. Course expectations are not met.

## Course Outline

Date	Topic/Assigned readings
1/13 <i>Readings:</i>	Review of course description and requirements; Identifying community problems and using the problem solving approach Pippard, J., & Bjorklund, R. (2003). Identifying Essential Techniques for Social Work Community Practice. <i>Journal of Community Practice, 11</i> (4), 101-116.
1/20 <i>Readings:</i>	Social policy and the political process Schneider, R., & Netting, F. (1999, July). Influencing Social Policy in a Time of Devolution: Upholding Social Work's Great Tradition. <i>Social Work, 44</i> (4), 349-357. Welss, I., Gal, J., Cnaan, R., & Majiaglic, R. (2002, January). What kind of social policy do social work students prefer? A comparison of students in three countries. <i>International Social Work, 45</i> (1), 59-81.
1/27 <i>Readings:</i>	Community Practice and Community Development in the United States McDevitt, S. (1997, July). Social work in community development: a cross-national comparison. <i>International Social Work, 40</i> (3), 341-357. Weil, M. (1996, September). Community Building: Building Community Practice. <i>Social Work, 41</i> (5), 481-499.
2/3 <i>Readings:</i>	Community Economic Development Carrilio, T. (2007, July). Utilizing a social work perspective to enhance sustainable development efforts in Loreto, Mexico. <i>International Social Work, 50</i> (4), 528-538. In Sherraden & Ninacs, Introduction: Community Economic Development and Social Work

In Sherraden & Ninacs, Jobs, Wealth, or Place: The Faces of Community Economic Development

- 2/10  
*Readings:* Social Development; Activism  
Ohmer, M., & Beck, E. (2006, March). Citizen Participation in Neighborhood Organizations in Poor Communities and its Relationship to Neighborhood and Organizational Collective Efficacy. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 33(1), 179-202.  
In Sherraden & Ninacs, Social Capital and Local Economic Development: Implications for Community Social Work Practice  
In Sherraden & Ninacs, Self-Employment as a Social and Economic Development Intervention for Recipients of AFDC
- 2/17  
*Readings:* Community Practice and Community Development in Mexico  
Hernández, S., & Dunbar, E. (2006, February). Social Work Practice and Education in México. *Social Work Education*, 25(1), 52-60.  
Arizmendi, L., & Ortiz, L. (2004). Neighborhood arid Community Organizing in Colonias: A Case Study in the Development and Use of Promotoras. *Journal of Community Practice*, 12(1/2), 23-36.  
Delgado, M., & Barton, K. (1998, July). Murals in Latino Communities: Social Indicators of Community Strengths. *Social Work*, 43(4), 346-356.
- 2/24  
*Readings:* Micro-Enterprise Development  
Sanders, C. (2004, June). Employment options for low-income women: Microenterprise versus the labor market. *Social Work Research*, 28(2), 83-92.  
Vonderlack, R., & Schreiner, M. (2002, November). Women, microfinance, and savings: lessons and proposals. *Development in Practice*, 12(5), 602-612.  
In Sherraden & Ninacs, Micro-Enterprise Development: A Response to Poverty
- 3/3  
*Readings:* International Social Work  
Preparation for Trip to Mexico - safety/travel/cultural etiquette  
Blumberg, R. (2001). WE ARE FAMILY': Gender, Microenterprise, Family Work, and Well-Being in Ecuador and The Dominican Republic with Comparative Data from Guatemala, Swaziland, and Guinea-Bissau. *History of the Family*, 6(2), 271-299.  
Raheim, S. (1996, January). Micro-enterprise as an approach for promoting economic development in social work: lessons from the Self-Employment Investment Demonstration. *International Social Work*, 39(1), 69-82.  
In Sherraden & Ninacs, The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh: Helping Poor Women with Credit for Self-Employment

3/7 – 3/14 Exposure trip to Colima, Mexico

3/17 Spring Break – No Class

3/24 Evidence-based Practice in International Social Work

3/31 Presentations