Scholars, Educators, Leaders
PhD in Social Work
Upcoming Graduates 2022-2023
Fall 2022

Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the upcoming graduates of the PhD Program at the University of Tennessee College of Social Work.

Our students are trained in rigorous research methods and innovative pedagogy. They are eager and ready to serve as the newest scholars, educators, and emerging leaders in our profession.

At the University of Tennessee, we are proud of our scholarship grounded in community needs, with an eye to intersectional oppression, social impact and social change. Our students’ research interests reflect these values and—as their biographies and curriculum vitae attest—include a deep commitment to improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable groups in society.

It would be my pleasure to connect you with any of our upcoming graduates or to provide you with additional information.

Please contact me at (865) 974-3802 or geely@utk.edu

With warm regards,

Gretchen E. Ely, PhD, MSW
Professor, PhD Program Director

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Shannon Cain
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Shannon Cain’s work is informed by a passion for addressing trauma and improving care for groups who have been historically disadvantaged. Cain has over seven years of post-master’s direct practice experience working in inpatient and outpatient behavioral healthcare settings. She has completed specialized training in addictions and crisis services, and she is clinically licensed in both Tennessee and Virginia.

Cain’s dissertation research focuses on trauma-informed care in neonatal intensive care units (NICU) with mother-infant dyads impacted by in utero opioid/opiate exposure. Using mixed-method analyses, she explores experiences of NICU social workers and nurses while providing trauma-informed care to mother-infant dyads.

Cain has independent teaching experience at the undergraduate and master’s levels, including experience in the advanced standing program. She uses a variety of learning approaches to accommodate diverse learning needs and draws upon her clinical experiences to provide examples that bring concepts to life. She strives to provide significant opportunities for self-reflection to her students to help prepare them for the immense privilege and responsibility of working with individuals and families who have historically been vulnerable to the impacts of oppression.

Cain serves on her local health department’s fetal and infant mortality review board, and she is a foster care and respite parent.

Bachelor of Arts, Hope College
Master of Social Work, Indiana University

Dissertation: Trauma, Opioid Use Disorders, Motherhood, and Trauma-Informed Care: What is the State of Trauma-Informed Care with Mother-Infant Dyads Impacted by In Utero Opioid/Opiate Exposure in NICU Settings

Research Interests:
- Trauma (Prevention, Intervention, Treatment)
- Best practices and evidence-based practices for addictions
- Healthcare equity
- Child welfare

“My heart is for hope and healing for clients and communities. My driving goal is to help clients and communities by equipping the next generation of passionate, empathic, competent, and ethical social workers who will change the world one day at a time.”
Melody Huslage  
mhuslage@vols.utk.edu

With her undergraduate degree in computer science and a graduate degree in social work, Melody Huslage brings a unique blend of expertise and a love of interdisciplinary collaboration to her research and teaching practices. While employed by the federal government, Huslage gained an appreciation for cultures and perspectives different than her own while traveling and living overseas in countries such as Pakistan, Iraq, and Greece. Huslage’s commitment to and passion for social justice ultimately led her to a career in social work.

Utilizing an intersectional framework, Huslage strives to better understand how social forces may perpetuate oppression and to pursue interventions to challenge them. Her dissertation seeks the college student-athlete perspective on sex integration in sport, with a specific focus on transgender athletes. Her research agenda includes a continuation of this work to increase the inclusion of all athletes and challenge inequities in the current structure of sport.

Viewing teaching as a way to manifest social work principles in the classroom, Huslage strives to co-create an environment with her students where they feel empowered, valued, and can cultivate their critical consciousness. Huslage has independently taught both BSSW and MSSW courses in on-line, face-to-face, and hybrid modalities.

Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Texas A&M University  
Master of Social Work, University of Texas at Austin

Dissertation: Sex Integration and Transgender Inclusion: The College Student-Athlete Perspective

Research Interests:
- Diversity, equity & inclusion
- Immigrant and refugee populations
- Gender-based violence
- International social work

“The forces we are fighting against are ubiquitous, systemic, and even internalized. Dismantling oppression and advancing social justice requires collaboration: collaborations between researchers, practitioners, and policy advocates; collaboration across disciplines and across issues; and collaboration across communities, states, and countries.”
Kristel Scoresby is a mixed-methodology scholar who is passionate about engaging in and disseminating research that will support direct practitioners. She specifically integrates quantitative and qualitative data to identify rich and meaningful findings, ultimately, to help improve lives of vulnerable populations. She has a strong clinical background with extensive LCSW practice experience in loss, trauma, and mental health.

In her dissertation, Scoresby utilizes an explanatory sequential approach to examine the relationship of metacognition and ableism on mental health for individuals with hearing loss during pandemic masking. This project was designed to explore the challenges that masking created for a population that relies heavily on lipreading and facial cues to communicate. Importantly, she is an experienced interdisciplinary scholar as evidenced by her successfully funded collaborations with the Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology.

Using her research, clinical practice, and lived experience to inform her teaching, Scoresby employs Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as her pedagogical approach, and she is especially attentive to increasing equitable access in educational spaces. She is an experienced instructor having taught at the bachelor and master’s level across all delivery formats (online, face-to-face, hybrid). Furthermore, she has been invited multiple times to serve as a guest lecturer in the Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology at the University of Tennessee.

Bachelor of Social Work, Brigham Young University
Master of Social Work, Brigham Young University

Dissertation: The relationship of metacognition on COVID related masking anxiety for individuals with hearing loss

Research Interests:
- Hearing loss and mental health
- Access to research
- Universal design for learning

“Social work is about the individual story and the systemic narrative-to change lives, we must not only understand and intervene in both, but we must take dissemination seriously. What good is research if it never becomes known to the people who need it most?”