

University of Minnesota
School of Social Work
Spring Semester 2004
Course Syllabus

SW 5810
Special Topics: Work with Immigrant Populations
2 credits

Course Description:

Trends in immigration to the U.S. and public policy responses. Acculturation processes, issues, and problems. Common social service needs of immigrants and refugees. Skills for engagement and interventions with immigrants and refugees across the main fields of social work practice.

Course Purpose:

This course is concerned with the knowledge base, policy background, value premises, and practice skills useful for working with immigrant and refugee clients in the United States. The first part of the course provides a macro perspective on immigration. Immigration trends and policies are discussed as they influence the lives of immigrants and service delivery, and as a source of professional ethical dilemmas. The second part focuses on experiences and issues common to most immigrants, including the multiple and complex adjustments associated with movement from one culture to another and the process of acculturation.

Immigrants' needs cut across many fields of social work practice such as income maintenance, youth development, health and mental health, juvenile and criminal justice, school social work, family services, child welfare, and community organizing and advocacy. Specific skills and strategies for engaging immigrant clients in various practice settings are emphasized, along with research findings on service utilization of immigrants and refugees.

The course is also intended to increase students' awareness of their own cultural and ethnic heritage, and its possible impacts on their practice.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate the following:

1. Understanding of the historical and present dynamics of immigration in the United States, particularly the reality of the immigrant experience today as it is influenced by economic, political, psychological, and sociological factors,
2. A heightened awareness of their own cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes and how these influence their practice in general and their work with immigrant clients in particular.
3. The ability to understand the culturally determined behaviors of immigrants clients, the cultural premises underlying their psychological functioning, and the strains associated with the acculturation process.

4. The ability to conceptualize, articulate, and apply knowledge and skills that must be incorporated into the various levels of the helping process to work effectively with immigrant client systems.
5. The ability to use culturally appropriate interpersonal relationship-building skills and to draw upon cultural themes, adaptive capabilities, and culturally-specific coping styles when working with immigrant client systems.
6. The ability to provide appropriate interventions for immigrant clients that take into account culturally relevant issues while still recognizing the presence of factors not specifically related to culture
7. Understanding of inter-group and intra-group differences among immigrant populations, while also recognizing individual variability, for social work practice and program development.
8. Sensitivity to the experiences of social injustice, prejudice, racism, and discrimination encountered by members of certain immigrant groups.
9. Knowledge of specific public policy issues affecting immigrants and refugees and of current efforts by various constituencies to influence these policies.
10. Knowledge of community, state and national resources especially designed to assist immigrants and refugees and knowledge of periodicals, data bases, websites, and other resources designed to help professionals working with immigrants and refugees.

Required Texts:

1. Potocky-Tripodi, Miriam (2002). *Best practices for social work with refugees and immigrants*. New York: Columbia University Press.
2. Balgopal, Pallassana R. (2000). *Social work practice with immigrants and refugees*. New York: Columbia University Press.
3. The course packet of required articles.

The packet and the texts are available both at the U of M St. Paul Student Center Bookstore (612-624-9200) and the Coffman Union Bookstore (612-625-6000) on the Minneapolis campus. The St. Paul Bookstore tends to have more copies of each item than does Coffman, however, so you may wish to check in advance by phone.

Assignments:

- (1) Completion of all required readings before the class session for which they are assigned (except for the first class session).
- (2) Regular attendance and active participation in class discussions and in small-group learning exercises, such as case discussions.

- (3) Completion of the **MID-SEMESTER EXAM**. This quiz will include both objective and short essay questions.
- (4) Submission of a **short paper** (5-6 pages, double-spaced)--a “problem statement”-- identifying and describing an issue in the delivery of one or more social services to one or more immigrant populations, making extensive use of the current research and practice literature on the problem. Use APA style in citing the literature. Proofread your paper carefully.
- (5) Submission of a **final paper** (which totals 17-22 pages, double-spaced, including carryover from Paper I) which builds on the problem statement you submitted for Paper I and which discusses policy or practice changes that would help address the problem. Lay out alternative resolutions and take a position with regard to what you think is the best alternative. Provide evidence in the text of your paper and through your documentation (citations and bibliography) that you have delved deeply into the research and practice literature on this topic. Literature sources should be cited within the text of the paper and included in a separate reference list using APA (American Psychological Association) style. Proofread your paper carefully.
- (6) Good academic English is expected in all written assignments. They are to be typed using a font size 12 or larger, double-spaced and carefully checked for sentence structure, grammar, and spelling errors.
- (7) Participation in the course evaluation during the last class session.