Part I: Course information

SW 5906-Advanced Ethical Decision Making
1 credit

Faculty contact:
Name:
Email:
Phone:
Office Location:

Course descriptions:

a. Short Version:
This course will help students acquire the knowledge base required to identify ethical
issues, the skills necessary to resolve ethical dilemmas, and the capacity to make ethical
decisions when confronted with conflicting duties and choices that occur within the
context of professional social work at all levels of practice.

b. Long Version:
Social workers constantly face ethical issues and dilemmas requiring ethical decision-
making in all fields of practice (e.g. child welfare; child protection; adult protection;
family services; mental health; gerontology; school social work; medical; juvenile and
criminal justice; youthwork) and at every level of practice (e.g. direct practice with
individuals, families, and groups; community practice; management and supervision;
policy and planning; and research). This course will help students acquire the
knowledge base required to identify ethical issues, the skills necessary to resolve ethical
dilemmas, and the capacity to make ethical decisions when confronted with conflicting
duties and choices that occur within the context of a profession with a specific values
base and a code of ethics specifying ethical principles and standards related to clients,
colleagues, employers, the profession of social work, and society.

Clinical Content for MN Social Work Licensure:
This course contains some clinical content, as required by the Minnesota Board of Social Work
for eligibility for the Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW). The number of hours
in each required category is listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Differential Diagnosis</th>
<th>Assessment based treatment planning</th>
<th>Clinical Intervention Methods</th>
<th>Evaluation methodologies</th>
<th>SW values and ethics</th>
<th>Culturally specific clinical assessment</th>
<th>Other areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
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Part II: Course outcomes

By the end of the course, students should:

- acquire a basic understanding of some of the philosophies, approaches and theories underlying the study of professional ethics and ethical decision-making;
- understand the meaning of ethical concepts, principles, and terms;
- thoroughly understand the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Worker (1996; revised 1999 and 2008) and the Minnesota Board of Social Work Practice Act (Minnesota Statutes, 2010, Chapter 148E) as it relates to standards of practice and ethical conduct.
- clearly understand and distinguish among personal and professional values and ethics and consider possible courses of action to pursue when personal and professional values conflict;
- understand and utilize the ten-step ethical decision making model presented in class;
- develop an awareness and understanding of cultural competence related to social work ethics and ethical decision making;
- be able to present, verbally and in writing, a logical, ethically sound, culturally competent argument for the resolution of ethical dilemmas relevant to social work practice;
- reflect on and discuss controversies, issues, and perspectives relevant to professional ethics;
- present an in-depth, critical analysis of the ethical issues, considerations, and controversies related to a field of practice or a specific client group.

Social Work Practice Competencies
Successful completion of this course implies that the student has achieved competency in the following practice behaviors:

| Competency: 2.1.1 – Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly |
| :----------------- | :----------------- | :----------------- |
| Social workers serve as representatives of the profession, its mission, and its core values. They know the profession’s history. Social workers commit themselves to the profession’s enhancement and to their own professional conduct and growth. Social workers: |
| Practice Behavior | Covered in class through (i.e., activity, reading, content) | Assessed |
| • Foundation: Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development. | Class sessions 1, 2, 3 | Autobiographical Reflection Assignment |
| • Foundation: Attend to professional roles and boundaries. | Class session 6 | Class discussion of case examples |

- Competency: 2.1.2 – Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice
Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and relevant law. Social workers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Behavior</th>
<th>Covered in class through (i.e., activity, reading, content)</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Foundation: Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice.</td>
<td>Class sessions 2, 3</td>
<td>Autobiographical Reflection Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Foundation: Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and, as applicable, of the International Federation of Social Workers/International Association of Schools in Social Work Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles.</td>
<td>Entire course</td>
<td>Decision Making Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Foundation: Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts.</td>
<td>Entire course</td>
<td>Decision Making Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Foundation: Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decision.</td>
<td>Entire course</td>
<td>Decision Making Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advanced: Identify and analyze value-based and ethical dilemmas that arise in their area of practice, using professional codes of ethical standards and through appropriate professional consultation.</td>
<td>Entire course</td>
<td>Decision Making Paper</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**EP 2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice**

Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers:

<table>
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<tr>
<td>• Foundation: Recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power</td>
<td>Class sessions 3, 7</td>
<td>Autobiographical Reflection Paper Assignment 3</td>
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**Part III: Course requirements**

Required texts and materials:


Sections 148E.185 through 148E.290 of the Minnesota Board of Social Work Practice Act related to standards of practice and ethical conduct. [Full text of the entire Minnesota Board of Social Work Practice Act, Minnesota Statutes 2010, Sections 148E.001 to 148E.290 can be found at www.socialwork.state.mn.us]

Additional required readings are available online or will be handed out in class.

Assignments (additional detail about assignments will be handed out in class)

1) A 5-7 page (minimum) autobiographical reflection on the development of your personal values and ethics, including any perceived conflicts in personal vs professional values. 20% of course grade.

2) A 6-8 page paper (minimum) in which you demonstrate your ability to analyze, resolve, and justify a social work/welfare ethical dilemma through the application of social work values, ethical principles and standards, and the model of ethical decision-making presented in class. You will be given two or three practice situations involving ethical dilemmas, and you will choose which one to analyze and resolve in your paper. Because consultation with others usually leads to more thorough, thoughtful ethical decisions, students may complete this assignment by working with one other student. However, this is not required and you will not be penalized in any way if you choose not to work with a classmate. 25% of course grade.

3) Four substantive contributions on the course Moodle site reflecting on (and integrating course content on) questions, themes, and issues raised by course readings and/or current ethical issues with which society, the field of social work, or you (in your role as a social worker) are grappling. The instructor will pose questions for reflection throughout the course, or you may generate your own substantive questions or issues for reflection. 10% of course grade.

4) A final presentation to the class using Camtasia and PowerPoint through the course Moodle site. Each student in class will view and critique the presentations of two classmates. This project should thoroughly discuss and analyze ethical issues, principles, or types of dilemmas related to a specific field of social work practice, a specific type of social work practice or intervention, a specific social practice or policy debate, or a particular population with whom social workers are involved. All topics must be negotiated with and approved by the instructor by XXX. 45% of course grade.

Course Grading:

<table>
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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Course Points</th>
<th>Grade Descriptors</th>
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A  95 and above  Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

A  90-94
B+  87-89
B  83-86  Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.

B-  80-82
C+  77-79
C  73-76  Represents achievement that meets course requirements in every aspect.

C-  70-72
D+  68-69
D  66-67  Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

F  65 and below  Represents failure; work not worthy of credit.

Note: To receive a grade of S (if you are taking the course S/N), you must have a grade of C+ or above.

Course Policies
There are many University and School of Social Work policies that govern this course. Please go to http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/Documents/SSWCoursePolicies.pdf to see a complete description of all the policies.

Part IV: Course content

Readings from the Reamer textbook are cited as Reamer. Required readings available online, as well as readings from class handouts, are cited individually in the outline. Readings from the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) are cited as C of E, and those from the Minnesota Board of Social Work Practice Act are cited as SWPA. This outline and these readings may change as learning opportunities arise throughout the semester. Ample notice will be given to students.

THE FUNDAMENTAL COURSE ASSUMPTION

We all want to behave ethically. If there is disagreement about what ethical behavior is, it does not mean one person is unethical and another person is ethical. A sound ethical decision is almost always made after thoughtful review of and discussion about the ethical dilemma with colleagues.

NOTE: I am constructing this with 8 two hours class periods.
[Class #1]

**Topics:**
- Introductions / Students' views on common ethical concerns in their practice
- Course overview and expectations
- The centrality of professional values and ethics in social work practice
- Defining and differentiating among values, ethics, and laws in social work practice
- What is an ethical dilemma?
- Ethical and non-ethical aspects of social work practice
- The evolution of social work values and ethics
- Brief overview of and introduction to the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers and the Minnesota Board of Social Work Practice Act


[Class #2]

**Topics:**
- Social work values: Their relative influence in social work over time
- Typologies of values in social work practice
- Clarifying and reconciling personal, cultural, religious and professional values

**Required Readings:**

- Reamer, Chapter 1, Social Work Values and Ethics: An Overview, pp. 1-10
- Reamer, Chapter 2, Social Work Values, pp. 11-41
- Reamer, Chapter 3, Ethical Dilemmas and Decision-Making, pp. 43-61 ONLY
- Minnesota Board of Social Work Practice Act - sections of MN Statutes Chapter 148D related to standards of practice and ethical conduct [Sections 148D.185 through 148D.240

[Class #3]

**Topics:**
- An overview of ethical theories and approaches to the study of ethics
- Values and ethical tensions: When cultures collide
- Ethical decision-making: a ten step model

**Required Readings:**

- Reamer, Chapter 3, Ethical Dilemmas and Decision Making: A Framework, pp. 62-86 ONLY.
- Hamel, Ronald (1990). Ethical dilemmas: A way to work them through.

[Class Handout]

[Class #4]

Topics:
Privacy, confidentiality, and privileged communication [MN and Federal laws]
Confidentiality: Case Examples
Records: Keeping and releasing
When ethics and legal issues conflict: What’s a social worker to do?

Required Readings:
Reamer, Chapter 4, Ethical Dilemmas in Social Work: Direct Practice, pp. 87-98 ONLY


C of E, Standard 1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality
SWPA 148D.230 Confidentiality and Records

MN Statutes, Chapter 148.975, Subdivision 2. This is the Minnesota duty to warn statute. [Class Handout]

Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 595.02. Testimony of witnesses Subdivision 1 paragraph (g) . This is the state statute that grants privileged communication to social workers. [Class Handout]

C of E Standards 1.08 Access to Records; 3.04 Client Records
SWPA 148D.225 (subd 4) Records
SWPA 148D.240 (subd 6-9) [Refers social workers to related state statutes]

[Class #5]

Topics:
Self-determination and paternalism
Physician assisted suicide: an issue of self-determination?
Informed consent

Required Readings:
Reamer, Chapter 4, Ethical dilemmas in social work: direct practice, pp. 98-102 ONLY.

C of E, Standards 1.03 Informed Consent; 5.02(e) Informed Consent in Evaluation and Research
SWPA 148D.230 (Subd. 1) Informed Consent

Video: Vacco v. Quill

[Class #6]

Topics: Conflicts of interest
Professional boundaries in social work practice
Dual/Multiple relationships
Sexual relationships with clients

Required Readings:

Reamer, Chapter 3, Ethical Dilemmas in Social Work: Direct Practice, pp. 103-121 ONLY.

MN Statute Chapter 148A. Sexual exploitation; psychotherapists [CLASS HANDOUT]
C of E, Standards: 1.06 Conflict of Interest; 1.09 Sexual Relationships; 1.10 Physical Contact; 1.11 Sexual Harassment; 1.12 Derogatory Language; 3.01 (b) (c) Boundaries and Multiple Relationships in Supervision and Consultation; 3.02 (d) Boundaries and Multiple Relationships with Students

SWPA 148D.220 Relationships with Clients, Former Clients, and other individuals


[Class #7]

Topics:

Cross-Cultural Practice and Supervision
Ethical Issues in Supervision
Professional malpractice and misconduct
Whistle blowing and unethical colleagues
Impairment

The regulation of social work practice: The Minnesota Board of Social Work complaint process
NASW adjudication process

Required Readings:


C of E, Standard 3.01 Supervision and Consultation

Reamer, Chapter 6, Ethics Risk Management and Ethical Misconduct, pp. 155 – 188

Minnesota Board of Social Work Licensure Handbook, Complaint Process
[CLASS HANDOUT]

C of E, Standard 4.01, Competence; Standard 4.02, Discrimination;
Standard 4.03, Private Conduct; Standard 4.04, Dishonesty, Fraud,
and Deception; Standard 4.05, Impairment; Standard 4.06
Misrepresentation; Standard 4.07, Solicitations; 4.08,
Acknowledging Credit

C of E, Standard 5.01, Integrity of the Profession

SWPA, 148D.200 Competence
SWPA, 148D.205 Impairment
SWPA, 148D.210 Professional and Ethical Conduct

Class #8

Topics:

Ethical Dilemmas for Managers: allocating limited resources; social work’s relationships with private and public funders, compliance with laws regulations; organizational ethics; whistle blowing and contracts

Advocacy and Community Organizing: Ethical Considerations

Required Readings:

Reamer, Chapter 5, Ethical Dilemmas in Social Work: Indirect Practice, pp. 123-154


C of E, Standards 3.07 Administration; 6.04 Social and Political Action

Additional Bibliography: