

**WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY**  
**Graduate Social Work Department**  
**MSW Program**  
**Syllabus**

**Fall**

- I. Course Number**            SWG 596
- II. Course Title**            Field Practicum I (First Semester, Foundation Year)
- III. Course Instructor**      Faculty Field Liaison
- IV. Credit Hours**            3 Graduate Credit Hours

**V. Program Mission Statement**

The Graduate Social Work Department provides a quality, affordable and accessible Master of Social Work Degree in preparation for a career in an evolving, complex, technological, and global society. It prepares graduates who can think critically, communicate effectively, embrace diversity, practice ethically, respond to the needs of vulnerable and oppressed populations, are committed to social justice, and are competent to practice with individuals and families.

**VI. Program Goals**

The goals of the West Chester University Graduate Social Work Department are to:

1. Provide a quality Master of Social Work Program in accord with the standards of the Council on Social Work Education and the PA State System of Higher Education.
2. Prepare graduates to practice competently and ethically with individuals and families.
3. Prepare graduates to think critically, communicate effectively, and engage research in the practice of social work.
4. Prepare graduates to practice social work with a commitment to social justice.

**VII. Course Description**

SWG 596 is the first of two required Foundation-Year field practicum courses, each consisting of a structured field experience at an assigned practicum site for average of 16 hours per week during the academic semester. Included in the 16 hours is a mandatory 60-minute individual supervisory session with an approved Field Instructor, as well as at least 30 minutes of additional supervisory time in group or other settings. SWG 596 is taken concurrently with Foundation Practice, SWG 501.

Grounded in a person and environment construct, an understanding of oppressive systems, and respect for human diversity, SWG 596 provides students with the opportunity to develop competencies for generalist social work practice with individuals and families.

## VIII. Theoretical Framework

The West Chester University, MSW Program, strives to be on the cutting edge of theory-driven and research-informed practice. To this end, the program takes an integrative approach to social work practice with individuals, families and communities. This approach incorporates a number of theories, perspectives and models for practice with the various levels of social systems, depending on mutually identified strengths, needs, and goals. What is central to this approach is the importance of a collaborative relationship between the social worker and those served, building on strengths and working together to affect meaningful and socially just change. The theories and models incorporated include, but are not limited to: attachment theory, a developmental perspective, the ecological perspective, conflict theory, the empowerment perspective, feminist theory, crisis theory, the risk/resiliency model, the social justice perspective, the social action model, social constructivist theory, social exchange theory, social learning theory, social systems theory, theories of social change and the strengths perspective.

In Field Practicum, the emphasis of work will be on a strengths-based collaborative model of generalist social work practice. *Strengths-Based Generalist Practice* is a *Collaborative Approach* to social work that draws on the principles of Dennis Saleebey's (2006) *Strengths Perspective* and Uri Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *Ecological Perspective*, as well as an orientation toward *anti-oppression* and *empowerment*.

## IX. Course Outcomes

The WCU, Graduate Social Work Department has adopted a competency-based, outcome performance approach to its curriculum consistent with the Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (2008). Competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. Each course is designed to provide students the opportunity to develop and demonstrate core competencies through measurable practice behaviors.

The core competencies and expected practice behaviors for this course are as follows:

### 1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct themselves accordingly

- Advocate for client access to the services of social work
- Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development
- Attend to professional roles and boundaries
- Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance and communication
- Engage in career-long learning
- Use supervision and consultation

### 2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice

- Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics
- Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice
- 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 of Social Work Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles
- Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts
- Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions

### **3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments**

- Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom
- Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation
- Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues

### **4. Engage in diversity and difference in practice**

- Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power
- Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups
- Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences
- View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants

### **5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice**

- Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination
- Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice
- Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice

### **6. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research**

- Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry
- Use research evidence to inform practice

### **7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment**

- Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation
- Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment

### **8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.**

- Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being
- Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action

### **9. Respond to contexts that shape practice.**

- Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services
- Provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services

### **10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities by:**

- **Engagement**
  - Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
  - Use empathy and other interpersonal skills
  - Develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes
- **Assessment**
  - Collect, organize, and interpret client data

- Assess client strengths and limitations
- Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives
- Select appropriate intervention strategies
- **Intervention**
  - Initiate actions to achieve organizational goals
  - Implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities
  - Help clients resolve problems
  - Negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients
  - Facilitate transitions and endings
- **Evaluation**
  - Social workers critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions

## **X. Standards for Professional Behavior**

Students are expected follow the Graduate Social Work Department's Standards for Professional Behavior at all times. The policy can be found on the program's website:

[http://www.wcupa.edu/academics/sch\\_sba/gradSocialWork/currProBehavior.asp](http://www.wcupa.edu/academics/sch_sba/gradSocialWork/currProBehavior.asp)

Additionally, students are expected to comply with the University's policies on academic integrity and student conduct, as outlined in the Graduate Catalog:

<http://www.wcupa.edu/INFORMATION/OFFICIAL.DOCUMENTS/GRADUATE.CATALOG/>

## **XI. Field Hours**

The MSW Program publishes a Field Calendar each semester with specific dates pertinent to Field Practicum. Students must complete 224 hours of Field Practicum over the course of each semester, and in accordance with the Field Calendar, averaging 16 hours per week. A regular weekly schedule is negotiated with the Field Instructor and approved by the Field Liaison in the Learning Agreement at the beginning of the semester. Because these are required practicum hours, any days or hours that are missed for illness or other reasons must be made up. Hours should be made up during the semester at times negotiated with the Field Instructor. In certain circumstances, hours can be made up over the Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring breaks with prior approval from the Field Instructor and the Field Liaison. Students are not permitted, however, to accumulate hours over breaks and end their field practicum early in the semester.

Students with a field placement in a school setting should take the field placement school's fall, spring or holiday breaks rather than WCU's to avoid losing too many practicum days/hours.

Students with employment, caregiving or other responsibilities who are unable to attend field practicum regularly for 16 hours per week may be eligible for an "extended" Field Practicum. The "extended" program allows Students in certain field sites to design a schedule that satisfies an average of 12 hours per week over a longer period of time. Proposals for the extended program must be formally submitted to and approved by the Director of Field Education prior to the start of the semester. They are then submitted to the Faculty Field Liaison and to the Field Instructor with the Learning Agreement.

## **XII. Attendance**

Students are expected to attend Field Practicum regularly and arrive when expected, prepared to engage in the assigned tasks. Students must notify Field Instructors and any other pertinent individuals of their lateness or absence ahead of time. Failure to attend Field Practicum with regularity and punctuality will constitute a violation of the *Standards for Professional Behavior*.

Students are expected to attend Field Practicum during the Fall Break in October if these are regularly scheduled days. Per the Field Calendar, Students are not expected to be at Field Practicum during the following times:

- Labor day
- Wed, Thurs or Fri of Thanksgiving Week
- Mon-Fri of spring break, (unless a school placement has different spring break dates)
- After the last day of the semester (assuming hours have been completed and unless a student is doing an approved “extended” field placement)

Clients are often best served when Students are available on a consistent basis. Students often choose to continue to work over the breaks, especially those in the second year of field practicum or who are in sites where this would be particularly important to client well-being. If the University closes for inclement weather or other reasons, Students are still expected to attend Field Practicum unless the field site closes or delays opening, in which case students are not expected to attend, but are expected to make up the field hours. If a Student feels that travel is unsafe, s/he must alert the Field Instructor and arrange to make up the hours at another time. The Student and the Field Instructor are encouraged to create a contingency plan for how the Students’ activities will be handled in the Student’s absence.

### **XIII. Assessment of Course Outcomes**

Course outcomes are assessed through the following measures: (details and specific grading rubrics will be available on D2L):

1. Learning Agreement  
Working with their Field Instructor and Field Liaison, students will develop a learning agreement to define mutual expectations of specific field practicum experiences that support the development of practice competencies.
2. Process Recordings  
Students will complete two process recordings during the course of the semester based on actual practice scenarios. Process recordings must be reviewed and signed by Field Instructors before being submitted.
3. Practicum Evaluations  
Field Instructors, in collaboration with the Student, will complete two evaluations of practice behaviors during the semester: one at mid-semester and one at the end of the semester.

### **XIV. Course Grading Rubric**

	<b>Course Outcomes Assessed*</b>	<b>% Grade</b>
Learning Agreement **	1-10	15
Process Recording #1	1-10	15
Mid-Semester Evaluation	1-10	15
Process Recording #2	1-10	15
Final Evaluation **	1-10	40

\* Refer to section IX for explanation of the Course Outcomes

\*\* Key Indicator Assignment

## MSW Grading System

Numerical Grade Range	Letter Grade	GPA Calculation	Explanation
100-94	A	4.00	Superior graduate attainment
93-90	A-	3.67	
89-87	B+	3.33	Satisfactory graduate attainment
86-84	B	3.00	
83-80	B-	2.67	
79-77	C+	2.33	Attainment below graduate expectations
76-74	C	2.00	
73-70	C-	1.67	
69-0	F	0	Failure

West Chester University does not recognize a grade of D for graduate study. Therefore, any grade below a C- in a graduate course is considered a failure. A graduate student earning an F grade in any course will be dismissed from the University.

Graduate students whose cumulative grade point average falls below 3.00 will be placed on *Academic Probation*. Graduate students must raise their GPA to 3.00 by the end of the next semester (or full summer term) in which they register. Graduate students earning a cumulative GPA of 2.00 or lower will be dropped from their graduate program without a probationary period.

Students should consult the Graduate Catalog for a full listing of academic policies:

<http://www.wcupa.edu/INFORMATION/OFFICIAL.DOCUMENTS/GRADUATE.CATALOG/gdstndg.htm>

## XV. Disabilities

We at West Chester University wish to make accommodations for persons with disabilities. Please make your needs known by contacting the course instructor and/or the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities at ext. 3217.