Dynamic Systems Change:  
Clinical Social Work Practice & Criminal Justice Reform

MSWEL-GS3079001  
1 Washington Square North  
Room 302  
MWF, 1/12/2015, 1/14/2015, & 1/16/2015  
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

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COURSE OVERVIEW
Across the five boroughs, the breadth of criminal justice practice settings is extraordinary; it ranges from court-based demonstration projects, alternative to detention programs, and reentry initiatives, to government agencies, prosecutors’ offices, and indigent defense organizations. The practice of social work in criminal justice settings draws upon a broad range of clinical and theoretical frameworks developed outside of the criminal justice context, such as systems theory, trauma-informed intervention, and cognitive-behavioral approaches. Despite the influence of these diverse perspectives, however, it is by all accounts a unique – even idiosyncratic – area of clinical social work practice that is both conceptually and clinically distinct. It is also incredibly challenging – replete with complex treatment and social service issues, ethical dilemmas, interdisciplinary tensions, and a host of environmental obstacles.

This mini-course will utilize a laboratory model to prepare social work students for criminal justice settings by integrating case studies, applied ethics, relational theories, anti-oppressive praxis, and systems change perspectives.

Students will explore some of the most salient dynamics of clinical practice in the criminal justice system, including:

- Client self-determination
- Engagement strategies in mandated treatment
- Legal proportionality
- Managing roles and relationships with legal personnel
- Interpersonal dynamics, including triangulation and splitting
- Working across lines of difference, especially as it relates to race, class, gender, and culture
- Managing power dynamics with clients and legal partners
- Creating and maintaining a trauma-informed, strengths-based practice in systems that tend to pathologize and dehumanize.
LOGISTICS
This mini-course will meet for three sessions the week of 1/12, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 9:00AM – 12:00 PM. Class will begin promptly at 9:00 AM, and students are expected to attend the full nine hours of the course. A student who is not present for all nine hours cannot receive a passing grade except under extreme circumstances, which must be communicated with the course instructors.

Readings

All assigned readings must be completed before each class session. Students will be required to participate in small- and large-group discussions based on the assigned material, and participation is required for a passing grade. Unless otherwise indicated, all readings are available electronically.

Assignment
The final assignment is a 5 page paper applying and integrating concepts from class to a case example. A minimum of 2 articles from each class section are required in the paper, for a minimum total of 6 citations. A detailed overview of the assignment will be distributed in class.

The final assignment is due on Monday, 2/2/14, by 5pm. Papers must be emailed as a MS Word Document to both professors.

ASSIGNED READINGS

Class #1: Overview of Clinical Practice in Problem-Solving Courts


Class #2: Integrating Anti-Oppressive Practices


Class #3: Psychodynamic Issues in Criminal Justice Settings


