Fall, xxxx
Phone: X-XXXX

Instructor Name
Office Hours: TBD

The University of Kansas
School of Social Welfare

SW: 560: Child Welfare: Skills, knowledge, and values for practice

Prerequisites:
Credit Hours

I. COURSE RATIONALE

This course offers a primer in child welfare practice, with a particular focus on the roles assumed by the state. Although the course will be relevant to child welfare practice anywhere in the nation, specific content on the practice of child welfare within a privatized system is offered. A socially just society is one in which the most vulnerable receive our protection; not only are children our most vulnerable citizens, but their well-being has been central to the mission of professional social work for as long as the profession has been in existence. This course will not only cover the basic functions of child welfare, but it will also examine particular issues associated with the most vulnerable sub-populations (see below).

This course both builds on the content offered in SW 530, 532, and 555, but is particularly relevant for students whose field placements involve work with children both already in the child welfare system, and at risk for entering therein. It will complement the content offered in senior-level policy and practice courses. Thus, while the focus will remain on children at risk, the content will constitute an enrichment of generalist practice that all students may benefit from.

Topics will include: the basic functions of child protection: investigation; foster care; family preservation; adoption; children with special needs; First Nations children and child welfare practice under ICWA; culturally diverse child rearing practices; the skills of child welfare: documentation; preparing and providing court testimony; family group conferencing; interviewing families and kids; and using your supervision time most effectively.
II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the evolution of the child welfare enterprise, from the Orphan Trains to the present, following the changing emphases from child-saving, to the current focus on family-centered practice. (Ed. Objective 1, 5)
2. Be able to apply the concepts of family strengths to all families. Of particular importance will be the application of the strengths perspective to diverse family constellations and ethnicities. (Ed. Obj 2-3)
3. Understand the origins and effects of oppression and discrimination as well as multiple social work practice approaches that advance social and economic justice, with particular attention to children and families (Ed. Obj. 4).
4. Acquire greater skill in marshalling resources in the larger environment, both formal and informal, in the service of the client family. (Ed. Objs. 6-7).
5. Understand the evolution of child welfare policy, and be able to assess the impact of these policies “on the ground.” (Ed. Objs. 8-9).
6. Learn to work effectively with collateral agencies and contacts (Ed. Objs. 10, 13).
7. Learn to use supervision effectively. (Ed. Obj. 11).
8. Be able to apply the skills of effective communication with clients and their families. (Ed. Obj. 10).

III. CURRICULUM THEMES

A. Within the Practice-Centered curriculum, the School’s themes are:

1. Strengths Perspective: family-centered practice focuses upon the strengths that can be found in all families, and those are used to increase safety, permanency, and well-being for the child. As our country has moved from a “child-saving” ethos to one that emphasizes family well-being, the strengths focus has become more and more central to child welfare.

2. Critical Perspective: relatedly, this course will look at the evolution of child welfare practice over the course of the last one hundred and fifty years, from the Industrial Revolution to the present. This evolution has changed as our view of childhood has changed from that of a “little adult” to one in which specific developmental tasks and milestones must be the “job” of a child.

3. Social and Economic Justice: the most constant predictor of child abuse and neglect over time has been family income. Thus, the practice of child welfare must be seen as an issue of social and economic justice. Furthermore, the fact that it is neglect, not abuse, that is the most systemic problem of families who come to the attention of child welfare authorities, requires us to examine those elements in the family’s social system that contribute to the problem.
4. Diversity as a means to developing culturally competent practice: child welfare practice cannot be viewed within a “one-size-fits-all” model: child-raising practices of families who have emigrated to this country, the cultural strengths of families, the special considerations posed by the Indian Child Welfare Act, issues of disproportionality, and many other knowledge elements subsumed under the rubric of culturally competent practice must be covered in any relevant child welfare course.

IV. THE LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE

This course will take advantage of the rich literature of the humanities to provide examples of the depiction of children in novels and memoirs; political essays, anthropological and sociological treatises on children and families; models of child development; the role of government in the welfare of children; normative child behavior and treatment worldwide; and other topics culled from a review of the contributions of the liberal arts. This course also requires that the student be able to think and communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.

V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND VALUES

The central rationale for this course is anchored in the social work profession’s commitment to social justice and the elimination of oppression, regardless of age. This course requires that students examine their personal values and beliefs for synchronicity with the stated values of the profession. Students will often state that certain groups (of which “child abusers” is often one) are anathema to them, and they will be unable to work with such clients in the future. This course will employ the concept of person in environment to paint a rich, nuanced portrait of this population group, in all of their complexity, as well as that of the child, family, and the systems mandated to protect them.

VI. PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Any course focusing on children and families must address the over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system, the impact of women and children as the largest growing segment of the population entering poverty, the rationale for the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act, child welfare work with emigrant populations, and the practice of child welfare in rural areas. The goal is to encourage and foster culturally competent practice, and to provide the basis for lifelong learning in this area.

VII. TOPICS

A. Required

1. Child welfare in a privatized environment
2. History of child welfare
2. Mandated reporting
3. Hotlining and the investigation of abuse and neglect
4. The functions of child welfare: Foster care; Family Preservation; Adoption
5. Effective use of supervision
6. Documentation
7. Preparing and providing testimony in court
8. Effective interviewing of children and families
9. Advocacy for kids and families
10. Best practices in fostering safety, permanency, and well-being
11. Cultural competence in child welfare: ICWA and beyond

B. Recommended

1. Family group conferencing
2. Working with collateral contacts: CASA’s, guardians ad litem, schools
3. Differences in the privatized system, county-administered systems, and other public systems.
4. Independent living, and other services for children aging out of the system

VIII. RECOMMENDED READINGS (only one of these would be required for this course; however, the instructor could choose from this list)


IX. RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENTS (these assignments are exemplars; the instructor may choose from the list, keeping the abbreviated number of scheduled weeks for this course)

Recommended assignments include the following:

- Readings: readings from the text, as well as news articles, current journal articles, and book excerpts will assigned on a weekly basis. Students will be assessed for their adherence to the schedule of readings through class discussion, or quizzes.
• Structured interviews of child welfare professionals: students may be asked to interview someone currently working in either investigation and contract oversight (at SRS), or in one of the other child welfare areas (in the private contract agencies). The purpose of the interviews is for the student to attain a more profound understanding of the actual work of the child welfare social worker.

• Oral presentations on selected topics: presentations will provide both the speaker and the audience to gain a greater understanding of a particular topic of interest to the field.

• Debates on selected topics in contemporary child welfare: individuals or teams of students will debate a contemporary issue in child welfare.*

• Papers on selected topics

• Examinations: given midway through the course, or during the seventh week.

*an example of a “debate” assignment is given at the end of this syllabus.

X. GRADING

A. What Grades Mean (plus and minuses will be assigned)

A = Exceptional work: outstanding: this grade will be assigned to work that shows extensive use of the literature as well as wide use of concrete examples from practice.

B = Fully meets course standards: this grade will be assigned to work in which all aspects of assignments are completed satisfactorily, showing a combination of accurate use of theory and principles, and precise descriptions of practice.

C = Overall performance is unsatisfactory, although all aspects of assignments were completed.

F = Failure: overall quality of work is unsatisfactory, or some aspect of assignments not done.

Incomplete grades. A temporary grade of Incomplete may be assigned to a student who, for a reason beyond the student’s control, has been unable to complete the required work in a course on time. It is the student’s responsibility to request an Incomplete from the instructor. A request signed by the student and the faculty member must be on file when grades are submitted. A student may not enroll in a course sequential to one in which he or she has an I or F letter grade. An incomplete not removed by the end of the next semester will be changed to an F.

Attendance policies
Attendance/participation will affect the final grade. Any student missing more than 2 (two) classes (or the accumulation of hours equal to two classes) will have a letter grade deducted. Each class thereafter will have another letter grade deducted. Thus, if you miss four classes, you will earn a D, which is below program standards.

Exemplar.

Other elements of this course:

A. Class participation is essential to this course. An active participator can raise his/her grade by as much as one-half letter (five points). [exemplar]

B. Because this class is so abbreviated, late assignments are doubly problematic. Thus, papers cannot be turned in any later than the end of the week in which they are due. Assignments turned in later may earn a zero for that assignment. [exemplar]

C. Final grades will be determined by an accumulation of points, using the grading system specified in X.

XI. ATTENDANCE POLICY

This is a seven week course. As such, missing one class is not insignificant; missing two, by necessity, will cause your grade to be lowered by one letter. For every missed class after that, your grade will be lowered by one letter.

XII. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Students who have special educational needs of any kind, including those related to learning disabilities, other disabilities, English as a second language should discuss necessary accommodations with the instructor within the first two sessions of the course. The university and School of Social Welfare are committed to provide supportive programs and accommodations to assist students who have special learning needs to successfully meet course expectations. In particular, students who feel that they have a disability that may require accommodation should advise the instructor of such disability and desired accommodation as soon as one obtains written documentation of the disability. The instructor will work with the student and the office of Services for Students with Disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations.

Please notify the instructor if your religious observances conflict with class or due dates for class assignments so we can make appropriate arrangements.

XIII. RECORDING AND SHARING RECORDINGS OF LECTURES

Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. On request, the instructor will usually grant permission for students to audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes are only used as a study aid by the
individual making the recording. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

XIV. HIPAA REGULATIONS

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires that any personal information that may identify a person must be removed to protect confidentiality. Confidentiality applies to both classroom discussions and to written work. Please follow these simple, yet essential guidelines:

- Always disguise the name and other personal identifying information when you speak and write about a person, following the guidelines established by HIPAA.
- If writing in great detail about a client, ask permission from the client.
- Share nothing about specific clients, agencies or other students outside of the classroom.

Any information shared with the class/instructor will be confidential, within the limits defined by the Code of Ethics and state guidelines.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

XV. INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

See office hours, email, and phone number (page 1).

XVI. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather students should call
Lawrence: the University (785) 864-SNOW, or if hearing impaired and have TTY/TDD equipment, (800) 766-3777
Edwards Campus: (913) 897-8499
KCKCC Campus: (913) 334-1100
to determine if classes have been cancelled. Class will be held if classes have not been cancelled, and students should contact the instructor if weather or driving conditions make it impossible for them to get to class.

ASSIGNMENT EXEMPLAR:

Debating Hot-Button Issues in Public Child Welfare

One of the most critical skills a social worker can possess is the ability to shape public opinion, perhaps the most influential force in daily living. Public opinion represents the global judgment of some critical mass of citizens on an issue of public concern. All public
issues are inherently appositional; it is the responsibility of community leaders to listen to the diversity of voices and then to resolve the conflict.

All citizens have a vested interest in the manner in which public issues are resolved. Social workers, however, with their firsthand knowledge of the impact of public issues on the private lives of clients, have not only a vested interest but an ethical obligation to their clients to influence public opinion in a way that will expand choices or resources for them. Given this inherently conflictual nature of public issue resolution, the most common way in which such matters are resolved is through an adversarial process of argumentation or debate. This process requires that we be able to analyze controversial issues and formulate propositions that reveal those issues. It also requires that we then use those skills to prove our conclusions to others in society, hoping ultimately to resolve the controversy in our clients’ or our own favor.

For many people, the prospect of argument is not an appealing one. A distaste for conflict, an aversion to public speaking, or sometimes a lack of confidence in the position we have taken makes us reticent about assuming a vigorous advocacy role. However, it is important to remember that part of the social worker’s job is to help empower or enable marginalized citizens to act on their own behalf. If we are unable or unwilling to exude confidence about ourselves and our abilities, we are highly unlikely to inspire others by our example.

If you are naturally drawn to the profession of social work, it is likely because you have strong opinions about some of the policies that govern the lives of clients and have some ideas about the way you would like to see things change. This is as it should be. The purpose of this workout is to help you become the most forceful child welfare advocate you can be by giving you practice in the skills required to persuade others to adopt your position on a public policy of interest to you.
Location

In/outside class combination

Purpose

1. To practice and sharpen critical thinking and persuasion skills.
2. To learn more about a controversial policy issue of importance to you.
3. To begin to get a feel for the work of an advocate—an important social work role.

Background

During the course of one’s professional life, the social worker in child welfare is called upon to fulfill many roles—broker, resource manager, mediator, and counselor, among others. An equally challenging role is that of advocate, one who uses especially the skills of motivation, strategy development, and persuasion to influence policies in ways that are favorable to clients.

Although this role is central to social work, the skills of the advocate are not well developed in most social workers (Hoffman & Sallee, 1994; McLaughlin, 2009). This, in part, may be the reason why so few social workers feel comfortable in this role. Yet it is in this role that the most hallowed professionals in our history—Jane Addams, Frances Perkins, Bertha Reynolds, and others—made their indelible marks.

Whether you are testifying before a legislative committee, campaigning for a change in policy, developing winning strategies, or working with the media, the heart of the work is persuading others that your position is the correct one. This is done by thoroughly understanding all the arguments both against and in favor of your position (which also means being able to anticipate them) and the facts and opinions of the audience you are trying to persuade.

It is hoped that upon assignment completion, you will feel comfortable, even confident, that given the opportunity you will be able to contribute to a community advocacy effort.
Directions

1. The class should be divided into groups of two (three at most), depending on class size. About six to seven groups should be formed.

2. Each group should divide itself in half, with one side considered the “affirmative” team and the other side the “rebuttal” team.

3. Each team should select a captain. These captains are responsible for negotiating the selection of a topic (either from the group listed below or one of their own choosing, with the consent of the instructor).

Some topics you may wish to consider are these:

- Resolved: that persons in treatment for sexual abuse of children not be required to jeopardize their legal case by admitting their guilt as a prerequisite to obtaining treatment.
- Resolved: that minors facing unwanted pregnancy obtain the consent of parent(s) or guardian(s) before obtaining an abortion.
- Resolved: that a parent reported to child welfare authorities by a child for possible abuse and neglect of his/her children be allowed to face the accuser in a court of law.
- Resolved: that “birthright citizenship” be repealed (this is the law that grants the children of undocumented workers US citizenship if they are born in the United States. Repeal would mean that this would no longer be the case).
- Resolved: that children who have “aged out” of foster care be given financial assistance to attend college for four years.

4. Once the topic has been selected, teams should get to work on the development of their arguments. Ample time should be given to this task—about 1 to 2 weeks.

5. The “affirmative” team is charged with constructing the arguments in favor of the issue; the “rebuttal” team’s job is to anticipate as many of those arguments as possible and to pose questions to the affirmative team that expose the fallacies in those arguments after
the affirmative team has presented its case. It is then the rebuttal team’s job to present arguments against the policy, which the affirmative team is then to question. The actual process should take about 30-45 minutes; each side should assume that it will have about 20 minutes both to present its argument and answer questions. Two people from each team can present their arguments, with another two answering the questions from the opposing side. All team members are to take part in constructing arguments, anticipating the questions from the other side (and the answers thereto), and developing strategies for winning.

6. Each debate is presented to the class, after which the instructor may wish to engage the class in a discussion about which side prevailed, and why (it is not always the side you agree with!). A scoring sheet for the debates such as the one at the back of this workout may also be used. Teams and their representatives should be judged upon their ability to analyze the issue, present their reasoning, provide evidence for their position, organize their argument coherently, and effectively refute their opponent.
1. My debate team is taking the (affirmative/rebuttal) position and consists of the following members:

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

2. Those charged with presenting our case are:

_______________________________________________________________(Captain)

_______________________________________________________________(will answer questions)

3. Our issue is:

Resolved:_______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Note-taking Space:

Issues to include in our argument (and supporting evidence):

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Positions to anticipate and responses:

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Final Draft of Argument

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________
### Scoring Sheet for Judges

(This sheet may be copied to score each debate.)

**Topic:**

**Date:**

**Judge:**

Rank the speakers in this debate from 1 to 4, with 1 being best.

Then, rate the effectiveness of their arguments on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Debater</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Effectiveness Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q and A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebuttal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q and A</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comments and reasons for decisions: