

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

The department of social work at Niagara University is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education at the baccalaureate level and offers a program leading to the bachelor of science degree in social work.

Mission Statement

The Social Work Department at Niagara University is committed to the creation of a just and compassionate world, where human dignity and cultural diversity are restored, preserved and celebrated, and where social and economic choices and opportunities are fairly distributed among all members of our diverse and interconnected world. Education for social work is accomplished through a curriculum that combines a solid liberal arts perspective with social work foundation courses. Within the social work curriculum, our special concern is for poor and at-risk populations living in our region and beyond.

Given this commitment, the mission of the Social Work Department at Niagara University is the preparation of competent generalist social work practitioners capable of empowering practice with diverse client systems of all sizes and types, who act ethically, who think critically, who participate actively within the community, and who are committed to social and economic justice. Consistent with the Vincentian tradition of Niagara University, students and faculty engage in social service and social action activities to benefit at-risk populations and impoverished communities.

The Department's Goals

There are five goals derived from the Department's Mission Statement:

- Prepare competent generalist practitioners who are grounded in liberal arts and who integrate social work knowledge, values and skills with diverse client systems of various sizes and types
- Prepare graduates with special skills and knowledge to empower populations-at-risk and the poor
- Provide a foundation for graduates to demonstrate commitment to social and economic justice through active citizenship, social policy activism, and through improving social service delivery systems
- Provide a foundation for students to demonstrate concern for poor and at-risk populations in service learning and extra curricular service activities
- Prepare graduates for employment in entry-level generalist social work practice and graduate education.

Graduates of the Niagara University Department of Social Work will demonstrate mastery of the following nine CSWE Core Competencies as operationalized by the accompanying suggested Practice Behaviors:

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Associated practice behaviors:

1. Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context.
2. Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations.
3. Demonstrate professional demeanor in

- behavior;
- appearance; and
- oral, written, and electronic communication.

4. Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes.
5. Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Associated practice behaviors:

1. Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.
2. Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences.
3. Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Associated practice behaviors:

1. Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels.
2. Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Associated practice behaviors:

1. Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research.
2. Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings.
3. Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Associated practice behaviors:

1. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services.
2. Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services.
3. Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Associated practice behaviors:

1. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multi-disciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies.

2. Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Associated practice behaviors:

1. Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies.
2. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies.
3. Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies.
4. Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Associated practice behaviors:

1. Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies.
2. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies.
3. Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes.
4. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies.
5. Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Associated practice behaviors:

1. Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes.
2. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes.
3. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes.
4. Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Admission Procedures

Students go through two separate admissions procedures as they progress through the department's degree program. Initially, students apply for entry into the preprofessional foundation sequence. After successful progress in the preprofessional foundation sequence, students apply for entry into the professional foundation sequence. These admission procedures are described in the baccalaureate social work student handbook.

Bachelors

- Social Work, B.S. (<http://catalog.niagara.edu/undergraduate/programs-az/arts-sciences/social-work/social-work-ba/>)

Minor

- Social Work, Minor (<http://catalog.niagara.edu/undergraduate/programs-az/arts-sciences/social-work/social-work-minor/>)

Courses

SWK 100 — Intro Social Work (SS) (3 credits)

An introduction to the profession and beginning generalist social work practice. The values, knowledge, and skills necessary for practice will be critically examined and discussed, along with the social problems of concern to the profession. Social work in the empowerment tradition will be emphasized. This course requires 25 hours of service learning. This course is required for social work majors and minors.

SWK 120 — Understanding & Addressing Poverty (CD) (3 credits)

The course explores poverty and discrimination. We will explore: How is poverty defined? How is poverty measured? What does living in poverty or being raised in poverty do to individuals, families, communities, and society? What can the poor do to help themselves? What can we do to help the poor?

SWK 200 — Intro Soc Srv & Pol (H) (3 credits)

Prerequisite Take SWK 100

This course focuses on the historical development and structure of the social services system. In the evaluation of social policies, specific attention will be given to populations at risk, such as African Americans, Native Americans, women, persons with disabilities, and gays and lesbians, who all have encountered social injustice. Students will learn how these groups resisted efforts to dominate them and how they empowered themselves.

SWK 210 — Diversity & Soc Justice (SS) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite Take SWK*100*

This course is designed to stimulate and enhance a student's understanding of various cultural issues that are relevant to his or her professional aspirations. One thrust of this course is to develop in students a respect and appreciation for diversity in all its forms. It is intended that this course will facilitate effective communication among diverse populations. This course requires 20 hours of service learning and is required for social work majors.

SWK 211 — Human Behav & Soc Envi 1 (SS) (3 credits)

Prerequisite Take SWK 100

This is the first course in a two-semester sequence. The course provides students with basic descriptive knowledge about how biological, social, and psychological systems affect the human person from birth through young adulthood. In addition, students assess the strengths and limitations of various theories of human behavior for diverse populations, and consider alternative and possible theories that change or extend traditional theories.

SWK 212 – Human Behav & Soc Env 2 (SS) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take SWK 211*

This course is a continuation of SWK 211. The course provides students with basic descriptive knowledge about how biological, social, and psychological systems affect the human person from middle adulthood through late life. In addition, students assess the strengths and limitations of various theories of human behavior for diverse populations, and consider alternative and possible theories that change or extend traditional theories.

SWK 240 – Topic: (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take SWK*100*

Areas of special interest to students are offered. Examples of topics include: crisis intervention, school social work, poverty, industrial social work, social work and technology, social work and the law, and domestic violence. Emphasis will be placed on student research, presentations, and participation through a seminar format.

SWK 250 – Human Sexuality (SS) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take SWK*100*

This course will present a survey of contemporary issues and problems in human sexuality from a social, psychological, biological, cross-cultural, and clinical perspective. Topics such as sexual orientation, adolescent sexuality, teen pregnancy, infertility, family planning, sex research, coercive forms of sex, and treatment of sexual problems will be explored.

SWK 252 – Death & Dying (SS) (3 credits)

This course deals directly with the psychological, social, and behavioral dynamics inherent in confronting the issue of death and dying, from both the personal and professional perspectives. Aspects related to euthanasia, refusing life-sustaining medical treatment, factors influencing grief and bereavement among people from diverse populations, and hospice care are some of the topics explored. This is a required course for the gerontology minor.

SWK 253 – Women's Issues & Soc Wk (SS) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take SWK*100*

In this course, students will explore the impact of gender, race and ethnicity, and social class on women's mental, physical, and economic well-being. Through investigation of their own experiences as women and men, and through readings and classroom activities, students will become familiar with a variety of contradictions confronting women social workers and women clients. Gender inequality within the social work profession and strategies for change will be highlighted.

SWK 300 – Social Policy Analysis (3 credits)*Prerequisite Must have taken SWK*100 and SWK*200;*

This course focuses on teaching the skills and tasks of policy practice. The first half of the course reviews the economic and cultural underpinnings of social policy in the United States with emphasis on populations at risk. The second half is devoted to learning the tasks of policy practice: agenda setting, problem defining, proposal writing, policy enacting, policy implementing, and policy assessing.

SWK 310 – Basic Helping Skills (3 credits)*Prerequisite Must have taken SWK*100*

This course is the first part of a two-semester sequence on social work methods with individuals, families, and groups. The course focuses on developing the necessary skills for generalist social work practice from an empowerment perspective. Areas explored include: theories and models of social work practice with populations at risk, skills of effective social work practice, and effective social work practice with individuals. This course requires 25 hours of service learning.

SWK 320 – Practice Methods I (3 credits)*Prerequisite Must have taken SWK 310*

This course is a continuation of SWK 310. The course specifically focuses on social work practice with families and groups, with an emphasis on populations at risk. Content areas that are explored include: professional values and ethics, family practice in the social work context, problem-centered family practice, social work practice with groups, and helping clients to negotiate social systems. This course requires 25 hours of service learning.

SWK 330 – Social Work Research Methods (3 credits)

Students will acquire the knowledge and basic skills necessary to evaluate generalist social work practice activities. Students will develop an understanding of factors affecting research results including the political and ethical context of research, the impact of diversity as it affects the research process, and the reporting of social work research.

SWK 351 – Health/Mental Health Care (SS) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take SWK*100*

This course focuses on individual and family needs in the areas of physical and mental health. Issues of access, quality, and cost of care, especially as they affect populations at risk, are explored from a social work context. Topics to be considered include the impact of physical and mental illness on individual and family functioning and the development of individual and family coping mechanisms.

SWK 352 – Soc Work with Aging (SS) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take SWK*100*

This course provides an overview of issues in the field of gerontology as well as an introduction to various intervention techniques for working with the elderly. Social service programs and social policies affecting the aged will be examined. (Methods of empowering the aged will be explored.) Appreciation for and empowerment of long living people will be emphasized. This is a required course for the gerontology minor.

SWK 353 – Children's Services (SS) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Must have taken SWK 100*

This course provides an overview of the problems, needs, and rights of children and their families. Emphasis will be placed on increasing sensitivity to gender, racial, and cultural factors that affect the provision of child welfare service to populations at risk. Basic counseling techniques that can be used in empowering children in child welfare settings will also be presented.

SWK 354 – Alcohol & Drug Abuse (SS) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take SWK*100*

This course will examine the role of the social worker in the treatment and prevention of alcoholism and substance abuse. Such topics as client assessment, counseling issues and techniques, self-help and recovery, and social policy issues will be examined. The efficacy of preventive efforts with diverse populations will be analyzed.

SWK 420 – Practice Methods II (3 credits)

*Prerequisite Must have taken SWK*310 and SWK*320;*

This course focuses on developing the skills necessary for effective generalist social work practice with large groups, organizations, and communities. The course teaches the skills of community organizing from an empowerment perspective. Content areas that are explored include: historical goals of community organizing, empowerment and community organizations, mobilization and social action, feminist perspectives on community organizing, and social workers as managers.

SWK 425 – Field Seminar I (3 credits)

*Prerequisite Must have taken SWK*320;*

Students attend a weekly two-hour seminar that integrates the field practicum with the social work curriculum. Students present and analyze their own client cases. Special topics such as brief solution therapy, crisis intervention, and policy advocacy will be discussed.

SWK 426 – Field Seminar II (3 credits)

*Prerequisite Must have taken SWK*420, SWK*425 and SWK*427;*

This course is a continuation of SWK 425. Students attend a weekly two-hour seminar that integrates the field practicum with the social work curriculum. Students present and analyze their own client cases. A variety of topics, such as group techniques, art therapy, treatment of sexual problems, and elements of mediation will be discussed.

SWK 427 – Field Practicum I (EXP) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite Must have taken SWK*320;*

Students must complete a field practicum application process. Students spend two full days per week in the fall semester in a community agency working under the supervision of a qualified social work practitioner. Students apply the theoretical social work material learned in classes to real life situations.

SWK 428 – Field Practicum II (3 credits)

*Prerequisite Must have taken SWK*420, SWK*425 and SWK*427;*

This course is a continuation of SWK 427. Students spend two full days per week during the spring semester in a community agency working under the supervision of a qualified social work practitioner. Students apply the theoretical social work material learned in classes to real life situations.

SWK 430 – Capstone (3 credits)

*Prerequisite Take SWK*310, SWK*320, SWK*420*

This course involves an evaluation of the student's growth and learning across the Council on Social Work Education's nine competencies and 31 behaviors. The purpose of the Portfolio is to integrate and assess the students' knowledge, skills, values, cognitive, and affective processes, including professional development through documentation and an oral defense.

SWK 450 – Soc Work with Family (CD) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite Take SWK*100*

This course introduces the student to social work methods of working with family dynamics and family counseling. Various aspects of family functioning will be explored with an emphasis on social problems confronting families, issues of ethnic and cultural difference, and efficacy of social work intervention methods and techniques. Ways of supporting and empowering families will be actively examined.

SWK 493 – Social Work Co-op (6.00 credits)

*Prerequisite Take SWK*100 SWK*200*

A work-study program providing relevant employment experience. The objective of the program is to integrate classroom theory and practical work experience, thus lending relevancy to learning and providing the student with a realistic exposure to career opportunities. Registration is to be arranged through the Chairperson.

SWK 494 – Social Work Co-op (6.00 credits)

*Prerequisite Take SWK*100 SWK*200*

A work-study program providing relevant employment experience. The objective of the program is to integrate classroom theory and practical work experience, thus lending relevancy to learning and providing the student with a realistic exposure to career opportunities. Registration is to be arranged through the Chairperson.