

Revising social work policy curricula to enhance responsiveness to changing times

Faculty Communities for Inclusive Teaching, 2018

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Project Overview

- **Goal:** Engage instructors of *Social Work 530: Introduction to Social Welfare Policy and Services* to review and revise our curriculum with greater emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). This is particularly relevant due to the major shifts in social policy under the current administration.
- **Course Background:** SW 530 is required for the master of social work (MSW) degree, with 10 sections offered every fall. The course surveys the history of social welfare policy and services and examines current social welfare issues in the context of history.
- **Proposed changes** for consideration included:
 - Adopt a new textbook with a DEI focus
 - Incorporate a critical intersectionality framework to policy analysis
 - Update course content to reflect and challenge the ever-changing social welfare policy situation related to LGBTQ rights, immigration, policing, education, and other policy issues

Key Insights / New Questions

- How can we more intentionally incorporate inclusive teaching principles into SW530? While examining this issue, we focused on accessibility and affordability of textbooks, inclusive teaching and assessment practices to reach more students, broadening the range of readings to include more diversity in authors as well as more diversity in DEI content.
- Are there innovative, interactive learning opportunities, including the use of case studies and/or simulations, that could support our course objectives and introduce social welfare policy issues from a social justice perspective?
- From the perspective of inclusive teaching, how can we revise assignments to better engage and meet the needs of students?
- What are some strategies for examining intersectional frameworks for understanding/analyzing policy that are appropriate for graduate students in their first semester of the MSW program?
- How can we continue building upon our collaborative learning to effectively introduce and integrate current events within course content given the divisive, polarizing political climate? How can we share strategies for facilitating this integration? How can we incorporate flexibility in order to address current events while ensuring core content is covered? Our discussions were mindful of the role of full-time faculty and LEO faculty and the importance of leadership from full-time faculty.
- How do our efforts to enhance inclusive teaching practices in SW530 fit within the broader curricular reforms within the SSW? We met with the SSW curriculum committee to advocate for how the course's core content meets DEI goals in both content and practice of implementation.

Artifacts

- The main artifact for this effort is our instructor Canvas site.
- Dr. Karen Staller created lesson plans on key social welfare policy topics.

"As a LEO faculty member within the School of Social Work..the opportunity to participate in this inclusive teaching project was invaluable to me both professionally and personally. Each month...we covered different topics from redesigning our syllabus, looking at our classroom materials, discussing how to manage difficult classroom dynamics and heated discussions, as well as provide a generally supportive environment for each other as we learn and grow in our professions." - Collen Crane, LCSW, LMSW

Resources

- Developed **core readings** that *reflect diverse populations* and their experiences AND *reflect diversity of identities among authors*. We chose this approach rather than a new textbook to be more inclusive of diverse identities, positionalities, and perspectives, as well as *reduce economic burden on students*.
- Coordinated Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) workshop focused on **Teaching in Tumultuous Times**. Six faculty (67%) attended.
- **Piloted new assignments** in one course section and a **hybrid course delivery** in another section.
- Met with the School of Social Work Curriculum Committee to share our revisions to SW530 and learn more about this course may be impacted by a comprehensive curricular review and overhaul that is in progress.

Participants

- SW530 Instructors, including LEO faculty and tenure-track faculty:
 - Colleen Crane, LCSW, LMSW
 - Sean De Four, LMSW
 - Heather Knauer, PhD
 - Shawna J. Lee, PhD
 - Lydia Li, PhD
 - Kristin Seefeldt, PhD
 - Karen Staller, PhD, JD
 - Monica Sampson, LMSW
 - Addie Weaver, PhD

Next Steps

- Continue collaboration among instructors, providing feedback on new core readings and piloted innovations.
- Maintain and update instructor Canvas site to ensure new ideas are shared and accessible.
- Review student feedback to identify areas for further development.