



USC | School of Social Work

Social Work 589a

Applied Learning in Field Education

3 Units

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”
Mohandas Gandhi

Fall Semester, 2016

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Office hours:	By appointment	EBI Practice Lab	VAC

I. COURSE PREREQUISITES

This course is a Foundation Year master’s level Field Education course. Students are required to take this course concurrently with SOWK 543 Social Work Practice with Individuals.

II. CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

Supervised field education activities to develop practice skills in working with individuals and/or families, groups, communities and organizations. Graded CR/IP/NC.

III. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is the first semester direct practice portion of the MSW program. It provides students the opportunity to practice social work skills under the supervision of professional social workers and apply evidence-informed interventions in their work with individuals and/or families, groups, organizations, and communities. The School of Social Work prepares students to enter their Field Education by engaging them in Field Orientation and evidence-based intervention (EBI) trainings. Continuing support and simulated practice is provided to students through weekly “Practice Labs” with Field Faculty Instructors who serve as educators, consultants and coaches for the internship experience while emphasizing the Four C’s of Field Education at USC: 1) collaboration, 2) communication, 3) creativity, and 4) critical thinking. In these two-hour in-class labs, students will be coached and guided to develop practical skills in collaborative processes and apply elements of critical thinking to assess and analyze vignettes, role plays and classroom discussion.

For students in the MSW program on the ground (OTG), agencies will provide learning opportunities and resources for an effective educational experience for students. Field Instructors who are professional social workers will guide and teach students how to apply social work practice, values and ethics in a professional setting. Field Instructors also collaborate with students to create and approve learning

agreements, discuss and give feedback on Reflective Learning Tools, complete and sign end-of-semester evaluations, and ensure paperwork is finished on time. Students in 589A Applied Learning in Field Education have the opportunity to implement research-influenced practices in multidisciplinary and/or virtual settings, thereby contributing to the direct application of EBIs and influencing the capacity of the social work profession to provide EBIs. Infusing USC School of Social Work Field Education with EBIs provides a translational link between research and practice, further solidifies a developing science of social work, and underscores Field Education as the “signature pedagogy” of social work. At semester end, the Field Faculty Instructor is responsible for assigning students a grade of Credit, In Progress, or No Credit.

IV. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Objective #	Objectives
1	Integrate classroom theories and concepts with direct practice in laboratory settings and/or with vulnerable communities where the effects of poverty, discrimination and oppression are pervasive in an effort to bring about both individual and societal change
2	Develop critical thinking skills to learn, apply, and creatively adapt evidence-based interventions (EBIs) such as Motivational Interviewing and Problem-Solving Therapy (PST), and/or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in internship settings
3	Enhance collaboration and communication skills across the spectrum of culturally appropriate social work services, from engagement to assessment, goal-setting, intervention, evaluation, and termination
4	Develop professional use of self through consultation with professional social workers, self-reflection, understanding of social work values, and creative implementation of those values in internship settings
5	Increase proficiency in the required Council on Social Work Education’s (CSWE) Core Competencies as indicated in the Comprehensive Skills Evaluation

V. COURSE FORMAT / INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Field Education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program competencies (Brooks, 2010). These competencies are articulated in the CSWE EPAs and make up the Comprehensive Skills Evaluation for Field Education. To prepare students for successfully achieving those competencies, a variety of instructional methods are utilized by both USC Field Faculty and agency Field Instructors.

Instructional methods in the Practice Lab and field experiences consist of university-led trainings, field activities, and supervision from a designated Field Education Instructor. Field activities could include direct client interactions, observation of professional social workers, shadowing opportunities, trainings, individual field instruction, group supervision, guidance on proper documentation, crisis management responses, didactic instruction, and experiential exercises. Students in the ground program may also develop a collaborative relationship with site-based employees, known as Preceptors, who help guide them in day-to-day operations with many of the activities listed above.

All incoming students will be trained in Motivational Interviewing at the beginning of 589a. They will also be trained in at least one additional EBI. The process of training students on EBIs will include the use of:

- Case vignettes
- Videos
- Role plays
- Structured small group exercises

USC Field Education instructors are assigned to oversee the progress of the students in their field experiences, including consultation for students’ field assignments. The instructors meet in-class with students in weekly Practice Labs to reinforce their developing skills, facilitate feedback and processing of field experiences, and engage students in creative exercises to improve EBI implementation.

For students in the MSW program on the Virtual Academic Center (VAC), the virtual teaching platform will provide learning opportunities and resources for an effective educational experience for students. A combination of videos, interactive virtual media, and written and/or oral assignments will provide students with opportunities to apply social work practice, values and ethics in various virtual practice settings. Field faculty instructors will collaborate with students to create and approve learning agreements, discuss and give feedback on Reflective Learning Tools, complete and sign end-of-semester evaluations, and ensure assignments are finished on time.

Reflective Learning Tools are used to describe students' client interactions, improve critical thinking skills, provide an opportunity for instructor input, and influence future client contacts. A teaching plan known as the Learning Agreement will be developed collaboratively between students and their instructors. At the end of the first semester, the Comprehensive Skills Evaluation will be completed for each student and a grade will be assigned by the USC instructor.

As discussion and participation are an integral part of the learning process, students are expected to prepare for supervision and fully participate in lab and field activities. The quality of written communication and the professionalism of presentations will be assessed as part of the grade for this course. The number of weekly hours required for 589a is a minimum of 14 hours per week.

Students are expected to take an active role in their experiences through the use of three core learning processes: self-reflection, interaction, and risk-taking. This teaching method draws on Transformative Learning Theory which asserts that students develop integrative knowledge about self and others in a dynamic, multicultural society from multiple perspectives (Lee & Greene, 2003). A primary goal is to help students understand their own and others' cultural experiences, to challenge their preconceptions and stereotypes, and to develop an attitude of openness and flexibility in cross-cultural interactions. As students explore their burgeoning professional role and identity, they will also be applying critical thinking skills to assessment, documentation, and the informed application of EBIs.

VI. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The following table lists the nine Social Work core competencies as defined by the Council on Social Work Education's 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards:

Social Work Core Competencies	
1	Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior*
2	Engage in Diversity and Difference in Practice*
3	Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
4	Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
5	Engage in Policy Practice
6	Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*

7	Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8	Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9	Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

* Highlighted in this course

The following table shows the competencies highlighted in this course, the related course objectives, student learning outcomes, and dimensions of each competency measured. The final column provides the location of course content related to the competency.