I. Course Prerequisites

Acceptance to the doctorate in social work program.

II. Catalogue Description

Doctoral students will be introduced to discipline specific and interdisciplinary ideas and approaches for innovation and change as they address the Grand Challenges for social work. Students will leave the course with the ability to respond to the fast-paced and changing organizational environment and with a skill set that supports new strategies and approaches for targeting “wicked problems” and managing change.

III. Course Description

The 12 Grand Challenges of Social Work initiative focuses on improving the well-being of individuals and families, strengthening the social fabric, and helping to create a more just society. Students will learn the ways that interdisciplinary experts are applying innovation and using scientific intervention to address critical social issues. In addition, students will select and discuss the Grand Challenge that they will be focusing on during the semester, as well as assess current research, best practices, and gaps in the literature. Students will examine strategies that they will pursue to find innovative solutions to specific intractable (“wicked”) problems embedded within the Grand Challenges of Social Work. Following their selection of these intractable problems, students will continue to design and propose innovative solutions in concurrent and subsequent DSW courses. Lastly, students will investigate and identify a wide array of possible techniques and tools to put their innovative ideas into action.
IV. COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Introduce students to the Grand Challenges of Social Work to refine their focus on a specific problem. [DSW #1]

2. Facilitate the analysis and discussion of current research, best practices, and gaps in the literature related to their Grand Challenge. [DSW #1]

3. Examine, produce and defend an innovative strategy of change that identifies clear goals, target population, and resource appraisal to address the wicked problems embedded in students’ Grand Challenge. [DSW #3, 4]

4. Develop and refine students’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes to lead and motivate a diverse workforce to be innovative in a rapidly changing global corporate or human service work environment. [DSW #6]

V. COURSE FORMAT / INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This doctoral course will employ lectures, interactive discussions, experiential exercises, videos, presentations, public speaking, and guest lectures from experts across a wide variety of leadership positions. Individual and group in-class activities will be used to provide application of content, theories, and concepts.

The course will be taught from the perspective that doctoral students will be engaged throughout their professional lives in innovation and change as they strive to influence social and organizational contexts. Appearances of guest experts, lectures, discussions, and activities highlight interdisciplinary perspectives. The intent is to extend, provide insight, employ actual examples, and generate innovative ideas from guest experts and students’ experiences.

VI. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Analyze how changes in the global macro system are relevant to human service management and leadership. [DSW #5, 6]

2. Apply one of the theories of change (e.g. Black swan event, disruptive innovation, systems theory, conflict theory, or anti-fragile theory) to explain why the wicked problem is occurring and identify an innovation to achieve one of the 12 Grand Challenges of Social Work. [DSW #6]

3. Analyze and prepare for disruptions inherent in social innovation practice. [DSW #3]

4. Demonstrate leadership in adapting and teaching others how to respond to rapidly changing environments. [DSW #5]
5. Apply the concepts, theories and principles on managing change, creativity, and innovation for corporate and/or human service organizations to have a competitive business advantage. [DSW #5]

**VII. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES & GRADING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment 1: Researching the Grand Challenges</strong> Annotated Bibliography Paper</td>
<td>Week 4 Due: [SLO #1]</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2: Grand Challenge Selection Paper</td>
<td>Week 6 [SLOs # 1-3]</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 3: Team Collaboration and Power Point Presentations</td>
<td>Presentations take place during Weeks 9 &amp; 10 [SLOs #1-4]</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 4: Final Paper and Presentation</td>
<td>Due Week 15 [SLOs #1-5]</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegial Contributions:</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</table>

Each of the major assignments is described below.

**Assignment 1: RESEARCHING THE GRAND CHALLENGES ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY PAPER:**

Students will develop a 5 to 6 page paper, not including title page and reference pages. Students will begin a search of the academic literature, which should be limited to peer-reviewed journal articles and/or government research reports relevant to the 12 Grand Challenges. Students will develop an annotated bibliography for each of the 10 to 12 peer-reviewed articles related to one of the Grand Challenges. Each citation will be followed by a brief descriptive and evaluative paragraph for the annotation. **This assignment is worth 10% of the grade. This assignment is Due Week 4.**

**Assignment 2: GRAND CHALLENGE SELECTION PAPER:**

Students will develop a 4 to 5 page paper, not including title page and reference pages, to identify a particular element of a Grand Challenge that they plan to address in this class. Subheadings for the Assignment 2 paper are the following: (a) summary of the Grand Challenge; (b) trends that have contributed to the development of problems embedded in the Grand Challenge; and (c) the intractable (i.e., “wicked”) problem related to the Grand Challenge that will be examined in the final paper. **This assignment is worth 20% of the grade. This assignment is Due Week 6.**
Assignment 3: TEAM COLLABORATION AND POWER POINT PRESENTATION:

As part of a team, students will have the opportunity to collaborate to understand, identify, and apply differences and similarities in their selected Grand Challenge and “wicked problem” focus. Students will be randomly assigned to groups by their instructor, regardless of their selected Grand Challenge. The PowerPoint and presentation must include: the following content:

a. Identify the similarities and differences related to the intractable “wicked problems” embedded in your group members’ multiple Grand Challenge focus.

b. Identify the emerging societal forces or shifts linked to all of your group members’ Grand Challenges that will have a major impact on social work and human service organizations over the next 20 years.

c. Apply two of the theories of change (e.g. black swan event, disruptive innovation, systems theory, conflict theory, or antifragile theory) to demonstrate how group members can use a theory to create change for your multiple Grand Challenges.

d. Apply and examine social work ethical issues related to how your individual group members’ strategies and innovations will affect multiple stakeholders.

e. The group presentations will be in class, should be 20 to 30 minutes in length, and should include all group members.

f. Include reference list of all sources cited in the PowerPoint.

g. E-mail the presentation the day before the presentation to the professor. Do not post this assignment on the VAC.

Evaluation:

This assignment will be assessed in terms of adherence to the assignment guidelines and students’ use of current and scholarly literature from social work and other relevant disciplines. The final presentation will take place in Week 9 or Week 10. Requirements for the presentation include the following: (a) adherence to assignment guidelines mentioned earlier; (b) a PowerPoint presentation that includes a reference list of research from the social work and interdisciplinary literature; (c) a compelling visual presentation; and (d) a presentation style that reflects the skills of engagement, professionalism, and knowledge. The group presentations will be led by the student/s, followed by Q&A sessions and discussions.

This assignment is worth 20% of the final grade. The students’ Team Collaboration PowerPoint presentations will be assigned by the instructor to present in Week 9 or Week 10.

Assignment 4: FINAL PAPER. This assignment is worth 40% of the grade. Percentages are 30% for the paper, and 10% for the oral presentation.

This is an individual assignment. Each student will produce an 16-17 page paper not including title page and reference pages, that gives an interdisciplinary perspective of the development and current state of a specific intractable problem aligned with the student’s chosen Grand Challenge. The paper should reflect the scientific method (i.e., vertical thinking) as well as the creative process (i.e., lateral thinking).

Specifically, the student will:
1. Introduce to the problem by providing current data reflecting the incidence and prevalence of the problem, along with a review of the scholarly literature that includes an interdisciplinary perspective, theoretical framework, and a critical assessment of the problem. In terms of format and writing style, this section should be written in the tone and style of a journal article (5 pages). (20%)

2. Describe two current attempts to address this intractable problem via policy, program, and/or research. This section should reflect literature, research, and promising practices (4 pages). (20%)

3. Building on Point 2, suggest a prototype within an organizational setting to address this wicked problem. Demonstrate how your prototype is new and builds on what has come before (4 pages). (20%)

4. Generate a list of potential collaborators. Discuss how your understanding of generational differences, social justice, and diversity will minimize unhealthy conflicts and guide your work with your partners (2 pages). (10%)

5. Provide a summary and conclusion (1-2 page) (5%)

6. References (20-30) in APA format (2-4 pages) (10%)

7. Your writing must meet the standards expected of students in a doctoral program. The paper should be a high-quality, and proofread/edited document that complies with the expectations for publication. The paper must be organized per current APA style (15%).

This is a scholarly paper so your ideas must be supported by the literature. Your references must be cited throughout the paper per current APA style. This paper will provide a springboard for your Capstone Project.

Student Presentations on Assignment 4: The student presentations on Weeks 14 and 15 (assigned by the instructor) must include the following content:
An individual in-class presentation that will be in class and should be approximately 10 minutes in length. This is not a Ted-type talk; rather, it is more like an executive summary that you would present at a professional meeting. Each presentation must include the following content:
   a. An introduction to the problem that includes current data.
   b. A brief description of two current attempts to address this intractable problem.
   c. Suggestion for a prototype to resolve the selected “wicked problem.”
   d. Identification of potential collaborators.
   e. Engagement in a Q & A session of 5 minutes, depending on time available, with other students.
   f. Students can use PowerPoint, but it is not required.

Collegial Contributions (10% of Course Grade)

Students will be expected to engage in collegial contributions by providing answers to questions embedded in the asynchronous sessions and by asking questions and providing commentary during the synchronous sessions. Students are especially encouraged to read and evaluate other students’ work.

Class grades will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-point scale</th>
<th>100-point scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.85 – 4.00</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.60 – 3.84</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>93–100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 – 92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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Within the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, grades are determined in each class based on the following standards which have been established by the faculty of the School: (1) Grades of A or A- are reserved for student work which not only demonstrates very good mastery of content but which also shows that the student has undertaken a complex task, has applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or has demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to the assignment. The difference between these two grades would be determined by the degree to which these skills have been demonstrated by the student. (2) A grade of B+ will be given to work which is judged to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-competent understanding of the material being tested in the assignment. (3) A grade of B will be given to student work which meets the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done adequate work on the assignment and meets basic course expectations. (4) A grade of B- will denote that a student’s performance was less than adequate on an assignment, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and/or expectations. (5) A grade of C would reflect a minimal grasp of the assignments, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement. (6) Grades between C- and F will be applied to denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in all aspects of a student’s performance on the assignment.

As a professional school, class attendance and participation is an essential part of your professional training and development at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. You are expected to attend all classes and meaningfully participate. For Ground courses, having more than 2 unexcused absences in class may result in the lowering of your grade by a half grade. Additional absences can result in additional deductions. For VAC courses, meaningful participation requires active engagement in class discussions and maintaining an active screen. Having more than two unexcused absences in class may result in the lowering of your grade by a half grade. Additional absences in the live class can result in additional deductions. Furthermore, unless directed by your course instructor, you are expected to complete all asynchronous content and activities prior to the scheduled live class discussion. Failure to complete two asynchronous units before the live class without prior permission may also lower your final grade by a half grade. Not completing additional units can result in additional deductions.
VIII. TEXTBOOKS AND SUPPLEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Required Textbooks:


Recommended Textbooks:


**On Reserve:**

All additional required readings that are not in the above-required texts are available online through electronic reserve (ARES). DSW 704 VAC readings will be posted under instructor Dr. Harry Hunter. Readings not posted on ARES can be located at the websites identified in the course outline. The textbooks have also been placed on reserve at Leavey Library.
# Brief Course Overview

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<tr>
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<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Managing and creating planned change in light of tectonic shifts</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Theories of change</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thinking critically about social innovation</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The process of social innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Leveraging social innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Three Traditional Domains</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Culture of collaboration and mutual responsibility</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Team presentations</td>
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<td>Team presentations cont’d, Consolidation and continuity in turbulent times</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Student Presentations and Interactive Class Feedback</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Student Presentations and Interactive Class Feedback</td>
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**STUDY DAYS / NO CLASSES**

**FINALS WEEK**
Course Overview

Unit 1: Innovation and change: Addressing shifts, Grand Challenges, and intractable problems

Topics:
- Intractable, “wicked” social problems
- Recognizing and responding to the societal shifts and/or the Grand Challenges for Social Work.
- Re-imagining solutions

Required Readings:

12 Challenges
- Ensure healthy development for all youth
- Close the health gap
- Stop family violence
- Advance long and productive lives
- Eradicate social isolation
- End homelessness
- Create social responses to a changing environment
- Harness technology for social good
- Promote smart decarceration
- Reduce extreme economic inequality
- Build financial capability for all
- Achieve equal opportunity and justice
Unit 2: Managing and Creating Planned Change in Light of Tectonic Shifts

Topics
- Overview of concepts: Change, creativity, and innovation
- Interdisciplinary perspectives: Innovations and shifts that are changing the world
- Impact of said changes on current and future social work practice
- Exemplars: Apple computers; CNN; Starbucks, Substance abuse.

Review the NASW Code of Ethics document located in the Tool Box on the VAC. Prepare to apply and share in class social work ethical issues related to your proposed Grand Challenge and how they will affect multiple stakeholders.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

Unit 3: Theories of change

Topics
- Review of systems theory
- Review of conflict theories
- Emerging theory: Disruptive innovation theory
- “Black Swan” events

Required Readings:


Unit 4: Thinking critically about social innovation

Topics
- Certainty, uncertainty, ambiguity and the iterative change process
- Creative thinking methods (e.g. “Six Thinking Hats”)
- Inductive and deductive approaches
- Comparing vertical thinking to lateral thinking
Required Readings:


Unit 5 The process of social innovation

Topics
- From inception to impact
- Sustainability vs. disruption
- Framing/reframing
- Imagining solutions
- Design Thinking
- Creating Prototypes

Required readings:


Unit 6 Leveraging social innovation

Topics
- Traditional social change models: Community organizing and community development
- Civic and social entrepreneurship.
- Social media and innovation-forecasting
- Data driven and consumer-driven change

Required readings:

Recommended Readings:


Unit 7: The Three Traditional Domains
The three traditional domains for addressing US societal needs

Topics
- Public
- Private, non-profit
- Private, for-profit
- Hybrid organizations as the wave of the future?

Required readings:


Unit 8: Culture of collaboration & mutual responsibility

Topics
- Creating a culture in which each employee is a partner for change
- Collaborating for best interest of the social service agency is a challenge for all managers.
- Forming a culture of inter-structural collaboration: partnerships
- Avoiding cliques and niches
- Enhancing organization commitments

Required readings:

NY Times series on Amazon
Unit 9 Team presentations

Topics
- Researching emerging societal forces
- Building linkages to interdisciplinary perspectives (using scholarly literature and practical experiences)
- Leading class discussions

Required readings:
TBA

Unit 10 Team presentations cont’d, consolidation and continuity in turbulent times

Topics
- Creating new perspectives and solutions to “wicked problems”
- Sustaining and building on “what works”
- Unexpected change and unintended consequences

Required readings:


Recommended reading:

Unit 11 Culture of conflict
Topics
- Recognizing different world views
- Egos and expertise
- Conflict vs. “group think”
- Creative tension vs. destructive work culture

Required readings:


Unit 12 Diversity

Topics
- White supremacy and male patriarchy
- Impact of societal racism and sexism on innovation
- Intersectionality
- Practical Steps for Creating an Inclusive Workplace

Required readings:

Permanent link to this document:
http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17542411211199246


**Recommended readings:**

### Unit 13 Diversity between generations

**Topics**
- Generational awareness in the work place
- Boomers, Gen-X, and Millennials

**Required readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


### Unit 14 (Weeks 14-15) Putting it all together – Student presentations
University Policies and Guidelines

IX. ATTENDANCE POLICY

At the doctoral level, attendance and interaction around ideas are essential. Students are expected to notify the instructor by telephone or email of any anticipated absence.

Students are expected to attend every class and to remain in class for the duration of the unit. Failure to attend class or arriving late may impact your ability to achieve course objectives which could affect your course grade. Students are expected to notify the instructor by email (xxx@usc.edu) of any anticipated absence or reason for tardiness.

University of Southern California policy permits students to be excused from class, without penalty, for the observance of religious holy days. This policy also covers that scheduled final examinations which might conflict with students’ observance of a holy day. Students must make arrangements in advance to complete class work that will be missed or to reschedule an examination due to observance of holy days.

Please refer to Scampus and to the USC School of Social Work Student Handbook for additional information on attendance policies.

X. ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

XI. SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/

Sexual Assault Resource Center
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: http://sarc.usc.edu/

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. https://equity.usc.edu/

Bias Assessment Response and Support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/)

**Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710**
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/)

**Diversity at USC – [https://diversity.usc.edu/](https://diversity.usc.edu/)**
Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

**USC Emergency Information**
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

**USC Department of Public Safety** – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

**XII. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Students enrolled in the Virtual Academic Center can access support services for themselves and their families by contacting Perspectives, Ltd., an independent student assistance program offering crisis services, short-term counseling, and referral 24/7. To access Perspectives, Ltd., call 800-456-6327.

**XIII. STATEMENT ABOUT INCOMPLETES**

The Grade of Incomplete (IN) can be assigned only if there is work not completed because of a documented illness or some other emergency occurring after the 12th week of the semester. Students must NOT assume that the instructor will agree to the grade of IN. Removal of the grade of IN must be instituted by the student and agreed to be the instructor and reported on the official “Incomplete Completion Form.”

**XIV. POLICY ON LATE OR MAKE-UP WORK**

Papers are due on the day and time specified. Extensions will be granted only for extenuating circumstances. If the paper is late without permission, the grade will be affected.

**XV. POLICY ON CHANGES TO THE SYLLABUS AND/OR COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

It may be necessary to make some adjustments in the syllabus during the semester in order to respond to unforeseen or extenuating circumstances. Adjustments that are made will be communicated to students both verbally and in writing.

**XVI. CODE OF ETHICS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (OPTIONAL)**


**Preamble**

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession’s focus on individual well-being in a social context.
and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. "Clients" is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. Social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals' needs and social problems.

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective:

- Service
- Social justice
- Dignity and worth of the person
- Importance of human relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

This constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession. Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience.

XVII. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY SANCTION GUIDELINES

Some lecture slides, notes, or exercises used in this course may be the property of the textbook publisher or other third parties. All other course material, including but not limited to slides developed by the instructor(s), the syllabus, assignments, course notes, course recordings (whether audio or video) and examinations or quizzes are the property of the University or of the individual instructor who developed them. Students are free to use this material for study and learning, and for discussion with others, including those who may not be in this class, unless the instructor imposes more stringent requirements. Republishing or redistributing this material, including uploading it to web sites or linking to it through services like iTunes, violates the rights of the copyright holder and is prohibited. There are civil and criminal penalties for copyright violation. Publishing or redistributing this material in a way that might give others an unfair advantage in this or future courses may subject you to penalties for academic misconduct.

XVIII. COMPLAINTS

If you have a complaint or concern about the course or the instructor, please discuss it first with the instructor. If you feel cannot discuss it with the instructor, contact the chair of the [xxx]. If you do not receive a satisfactory response or solution, contact your advisor and/or Associate Dean and MSW Chair Dr. Leslie Wind for further guidance.

XIX. TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN THIS COURSE (OPTIONAL)

- Be mindful of getting proper nutrition, exercise, rest and sleep!
- Come to class.
- Complete required readings and assignments BEFORE coming to class.
- BEFORE coming to class, review the materials from the previous Unit AND the current Unit, AND scan the topics to be covered in the next Unit.
- Come to class prepared to ask any questions you might have.
- Participate in class discussions.
✓ AFTER you leave class, review the materials assigned for that Unit again, along with your notes from that Unit.
✓ If you don't understand something, ask questions! Ask questions in class, during office hours, and/or through email!
✓ Keep up with the assigned readings.

Don’t procrastinate or postpone working on assignments.