

Portland State University Faculty Senate Motion
3 May 2021

Designating Social Work Courses as Social Science for Area Distribution

Background, rationale, and preliminary discussions

Background: Currently courses in School of Social Work at PSU are not included in the social science distribution area. CLAS and SSW have a history of a strong, collaborative relationship, and students pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Social Work take courses for electives in the Social Science distribution area such as courses in Psychology, Conflict Resolution, and the School of Gender, Race, Nations. Due to the nature of the field of social work and the accreditation standards, the program requires students to complete a particular type of social science elective courses, a large number of hours of field work in Senior year, and a cohort and hands-on approach, putting constraints on flexibility for course options and timing. This sometimes causes SW students to delay graduation costing more money, and in some cases they need to change majors part way through the program. In order to fulfill PSU's commitment to timely graduation and affordable education, the School of Social Work with the support of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences requests that sixteen SW courses be designated as Social Science.

Rationale: In general, the Social Science designation for SW courses will enhance student success.

- There is a large overlap between PSU's description of social science and that of social work. Eastern Washington University houses their Social Work program in the College of Social Sciences; San Francisco State University has a College of Health and Social Sciences, which houses their social work department. The overlap between the two fields is not uncommon.
- The social science designation for SW courses will help SW students who need to transition out of the SW program graduate in a timely manner and avoid additional costs they would have to pay.
- Allowing SW students to use SW courses as Social Science will help maintain the accessibility of a fully online degree completion.
- Broaden the course option for Social Science students through courses that complement what is already available to them (SW electives only)
- Social Work electives that are not used to count towards a cluster could count toward the Social Sciences major.

The ARC reviewed the explanation and the descriptions of the courses submitted by the School of Social Work and supports the request to designate the SW courses listed below as the Social Science distribution area.

Motion presented by the Academic Requirements Committee

The Faculty Senate approves the designation of Social Science distribution area for the following Social Work courses:

SW310U Intro to Social Work
SW320U Intro to Child Welfare
SW340 Advocacy for Policy Change
SW341 Social Justice Practice
SW350 Human Behavior Across the Lifespan
SW351 Beginning Generalist Practice
SW384U Addictions & Recovery
SW375* Interpersonal Violence: Theory & Practice
SW399 Intro to Oppression & Privilege
SW416 Motivational Interviewing
SW430 Social Work Practice II
SW431 Social Work Practice III
SW432 Social Work Practice IV
SW450 Research & Evaluation I
SW451 Research & Evaluation II

* Pending UCC's approval.

Attachment: Memo from School of Social Work and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

To: Academic Requirements Committee

Re: Inclusion of Social Work courses in Academic Distribution Area "Social Science"

Dear Committee,

The School of Social Work, in partnership with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, is petitioning to have undergraduate Social Work courses included in the academic distribution area of "social science."

PSU's description of Social Science states; 'Social science helps us understand how we relate to others in an increasingly diverse, polarized, and multicultural society. (It) challenges you to be informed about what's going on in the world, to think about how it could be better, and the role you play. (Students) develop a broad knowledge-base about the world around (them) and gain valuable skills that will equip (them) to make an impact in a wide range of careers...' The description goes on to emphasize critical reasoning, social and environmental consciousness, research and analysis and creative problem-solving.

Social work's description at PSU states that 'social workers envision an economically, socially and racially just world in which resources and opportunities are more equitable distributed. (Social work students) engage in critical analyses of power relations, aim to dismantle inequitable social structure and work in solidarity with groups that experience poverty, oppression, and exploitation. (Graduates) assist individuals, families, groups, and communities to achieve their goals, while also working toward macro-level, policy, and institutional change.'

The common themes that intersect between Social Science and Social Work are evident beyond the basic description of the majors. Social Work courses directly reflect the values and goals of the Social Science major through content, curriculum, focus, learning outcomes and student engagement. (See Table of Courses.)

CLAS and SSW have a history of a strong, collaborative relationship. The BSW program is already interwoven with CLAS due to students often taking courses for electives that are in the Social Science distribution area. The BSW program requires students to take elective courses in specific categories. Students meet this requirement through a variety of options including courses in Psychology, Conflict Resolution, and all courses in the School of Gender, Race, Nations. The cross-department exposure for students reflects the values and pedagogical approach of degree attainment at PSU.

Partnership and alignment between Social Work and Social Science degrees is not uncommon at other institutions. Eastern Washington University has a College of Social Sciences, which houses their Social Work program, and San Francisco State University has a College of Health and Social Sciences, which includes their social work department. A brief review of other state schools in Washington and California (Eastern Washington University, University of Washington, and San Francisco State University) reveals that they don't have direct equivalents of PSU's Social Science degree, making comparisons of general education and major requirements difficult.

This proposal is aligned with the commitment PSU has made to support students in obtaining their degree in a timely and affordable manner. The largest impact of this change would be for BSW students who find that they need to change majors part way through the program. The BSW program's core

coursework is organized to scaffold and in the Senior year students complete 16 hours of field placement (parciticum), in addition to coursework, that is standard for any accredited social work program. The intentional cohort and hands-on approach builds strong learning communities but limits flexibility on the occasions students experience unexpected health, family or employment challenges. Having Social Work credits count as Social Science would allow a seamless transition for students into an accessible major that would not delay their progress towards graduation. This is especially important for our fully online cohorts, which will total 120 students by Fall 2021. In addition, the course material they had already covered would compliment whatever requirements they had left to complete the Social Science major.

It is unlikely that this change will impact enrollment in the social science departments; rather, it provides flexibility to students leaving the Social Work major. Currently it is a small number of students a year who find they need to transition out of the program but once this option is formalized there could be an increase. This proposal would not change the restriction for core Social Work courses to remain open solely to Social Work majors but would create a supportive alternative option for students needing to make a change in their academic path. All Social Work electives are already open to non-majors and all but one are or will be designated as junior cluster classes, making them accessible to all PSU students.

This proposal would allow Social Science majors to count those courses toward their major when they are not being used to satisfy a cluster requirement.

Table 1. PSU Social Work classes and justification for “social science” distribution requirement.

Course number	Course title	Description
SW 301U	Intro to Social Work	Introduces the student to foundational language, principles, and evolution of social services through a historical lens. Includes overview of various settings, populations served, common social issues and employment opportunities in social service.
SW 339	Intro to Oppression & Privilege	Exploration of diversity, oppression and privilege frameworks; intersectionality regarding the dynamics of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, (dis)ability status, and class. Focuses on theory, knowledge, values, and beginning skills to work with individuals in the area of social justice. The course will have relevant knowledge, values, and skills pertaining to common roles in social services.
SW 340	Advocacy for Policy Change	Current structures and history of social welfare policies and services are examined. Students are engaged in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being of families, groups and communities.

SW 341	Social Justice Practice	Engages in generalist social policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social services through the lens of social justice.
SW 350	Human Behavior Across the Lifespan	Theoretical and conceptual foundations of working with individuals and families throughout the lifespan in professional and community settings. Historical and socio-political issues integrated with theory to prepare for effective work in a variety of contexts.
SW 351	Beginning Generalist Practice	Based on generalist social work practice principles, this course prepares students to begin practice with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations. The course focuses on helping students to develop beginning engagement skills with particular attention to social work values and ethics, self reflection, and the development of a professional self.
SW 430	Social Work Practice II	Students develop assessment and intervention skills for working with client, organizational, and community groups. Students learn how to assess group dynamics, facilitate a group, and navigate a variety of situations that may arise in a group setting.
SW 431	Social Work Practice III	Based on trauma informed, decolonizing and healing, and culturally and contextually responsive practices as well as ecological, strengths, and empowerment perspectives students develop engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, endings (termination), and follow-up skills. Special attention is given to anti-oppressive, non-discriminatory, liberatory practice with diverse populations. Theories for practice are examined with an emphasis on critical thinking about their application, integration with effective practices, and usefulness across differing populations, environments, and practice contexts.
SW 432	Social Work Practice IV	Specific emphasis on preparing students to work with communities and organizations within a community context. Focuses on helping students to develop assessment and intervention skills for working with organizational and community groups.

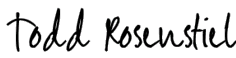
SW 450	Research & Evaluation I	Qualitative and quantitative research, critical consumption of research, and conducting evaluations. Focuses on research that promotes social and economic justice and that encourages respect for diversity. Includes experimental designs, single system designs, focus groups, and interviews. Covers early phases of the research process: conceptualization, design, sampling, measurement, and data collection. Emphasizes ethical issues.
SW 451	Research & Evaluation II	Teaches next phases of the research and evaluation process: data analysis, formulation of implications of findings, and dissemination. Critical consumption of research findings as well as conducting data analysis. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis, including descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, data analysis of single system designs, and thematic analysis.
SW 320U	Intro to Child Welfare (elective)	Overview of the child welfare systems. Introduction to the identification, treatment of child abuse and neglect. Historical and current development of child welfare systems in the United States, discussion of the key practice considerations human service professionals working with maltreated children and their families address.
SW 384U	Addictions & Recovery (elective)	The impact of addictions addressed through the literature and practices of psychology, sociology, medicine, and social work. Explores the definitions of substance abuse and paths to recovery mediated by the influence of social, cultural, and political forces impacting individuals, families, and communities.
SW 416	Motivational Interviewing (elective)	Hands on practice intensive course teaches the central theoretical and empirical tenets of Motivational Interviewing (MI), as well as skills necessary to deliver the intervention to a wide range of clients in diverse settings. Students will learn and practice both the spirit and techniques of motivational interviewing. Prerequisite: Upper division or Post-bac standing. Motivational Interviewing is a use diverse settings in social services and is highly regarded as a valuable and effective intervention.

SW 410 (375)	Interpersonal Violence: Theory & Practice (elective)	Introduces theories, interventions, research, and complex issues associated with intimate partner violence (IPV). Surveys popular and unpopular theories used to understand and explain IPV. Explores a range of interventions targeting individuals and communities used by diverse stakeholders. Students are asked to explore the intersections of micro and macro violence to better understand the influence of state and structural violence on the lives of individuals and communities, particularly those from racialized groups.
SW 410 (TBD)	Trauma Informed Mental Health (elective)	Provides epigenetic sequelae of historical trauma like slavery, colonization, and geopolitical violence for marginalized communities and peoples; biomedical and recovery models; social determinants and risk/protective factor models; engagement and relationship-building; DSM-5 diagnostic categories; and assessment/treatment strategies. Case discussions, exploration of selected best practices, and critical analysis of the ways in which mental health and mental illness are historically specific phenomena, shaped by culture and society; biology and neuropsychiatry; and psychopharmacology or its absence. Emphasis placed on strengths- based assessment, the recovery model, and trauma informed practice.

Allowing Social Work courses to count as “Social Science” distribution credits will enhance student success in the following ways:

- Provide a direct path to graduation for Social Work students who need to change their major that is closely aligned with their original focus
- Allow students exiting the SW program to utilize credits they have earned
 - Keeps students on track for graduation and retains them at PSU
 - Avoids additional costs students would have to pay if SW credits can't be used, keeping students from increased costs/debt
- Maintain the accessibility of a fully online degree completion
- Provide continuity of general content for students transitioning from Social Work to Social Sciences
- Broaden the course options for Social Science students through courses that complement what is already available to them (SW electives only)
- Social Work electives that are not used to count towards a cluster could count towards the Social Sciences major

Thank you for your time and consideration. If further information is needed please contact Mollie Janssen at the SSW (mjanssen@pdx.edu).

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School of Social Work