TO ACCOMPANY PROPOSAL FOR ADDITION OF COURSE TO AN EXISTING UNST CLUSTER

Name of proposing faculty member: Joy Rhodes
Title of proposed course: Introduction to Social Work
From which department(s): Graduate School of Social Work
For which cluster: Family Studies
Name of cluster coordinator: Kathleen Smith

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COURSE APPROVED FOR CLUSTER INCLUSION BY

DEPARTMENT CHAIR(S): [Signature] DATE: 4/12/00

CLUSTER COORDINATOR: [Signature] DATE: 4/12/00

CHAIR, CLUSTER COORDINATORS: [Signature] DATE:

CHAIR, UNST COMMITTEE: [Signature] DATE:

Copies of completed document are to be filed with appropriate cluster coordinator(s) as well as sent to appropriate department chair(s), UNST Scheduling, and Chair, Cluster Coordinators.

University Studies: March, 1999
A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

(Course description from attached course outline)

B. COURSE DEVELOPMENT

This course, SW 301 Introduction to Social Work is an existing 3 credit undergraduate course that has not been taught for many years. It is proposed as an addition to the Focus on Families cluster because it offers students interested in family studies an overview of the service delivery system and the historic and contemporary social concerns of families that are reflected in the social service system. It is an excellent entry for Child and Family Studies majors or for any student who is thinking of pursuing a career in one of the helping professions. This course can work equally well for a general studies or undecided student because it describes contemporary social issues and engages students around personal values and political ideologies and can assist in clarifying those values and making those beliefs more explicit. It can be a good introduction to democratic participation in social policy debates or a survey of good citizenship volunteer opportunities. For anyone, as a family member, the course can discuss and review the options, avenues and issues related to needing and acquiring services throughout one’s own lifetime.

This course is being revised and updated as well as being converted to the 4 credit curricular model.

C. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS

Teaching methods in this course will address the Goals of University Studies in the following ways:

Inquiry and Critical Thinking

This course can easily be taught on two different levels: to the career track beginner in the human services disciplines and to the general citizenry at the same time. When both type of students enroll, the seminar format and the reaction papers with discussion can actually aid the goal of critical thinking because there will probably be an increase in the different viewpoints expressed in the classroom. To encourage debate, panel presentations from guest speakers will be arranged for topics that lead to debate such as end of life decision-making, child safety versus family preservation, involuntary commitment or civil rights, etc.

Communication

The “use of self” as the major intervention tool is a core concept with the helping professions and the ability to effectively communicate on numerous levels is a major instrument of change in the professional helper’s toolbox. For an introductory course the intent is to offer skill-building exercises in a variety of formats: self reflection, individual
interview, group reporting, verbal and written critical feedback, group discussion and task roles and oral presentation to small groups. This is important for students to develop self awareness of their interests and strengths as well as assist the career minded individual in strengthening their foundation skills.

Human Experience

Through on-site visits to programs and speakers from human service organizations, students will be exposed through personal observation and from key informants about the nature of social issues and struggles that families must face. This direct experience heightens students’ understanding of reading and theoretical lecture and provides a catalyst for integrating knowledge with experience.

Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility

This course will explore the origins of our Western definitions of personal and social responsibility, how this has evolved historically and how our values are manifested within social programs and political movements. Personal ethical decisions can be explored through some independent writing and the shape of individual student’s choices as explored in class discussion and reflective writing. The counterpoint between dominant cultural norms and the challenge of insuring culturally appropriate service responses to a diverse, pluralistic democracy provoke serious rethinking of ideological assumptions.

D: COURSE OUTLINE

(See attached.)
Introduction to Social Work

I. Course Description

This course introduces the student to the wide array of human services that have developed in response to the developmental needs and the social concerns of individuals, groups and families within the United States. The course will take a family-centered focus and explore service responses, both historically and currently, throughout the life span and within multiple, interdisciplinary settings: health and behavioral healthcare, education, child welfare, law and corrections, workplace services, and services for older adults. The need for social work services to be appropriate for the cultural diversity of our society will be critically examined along with current topical issues of social policy debate that impact families.

II. Student Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Describe the fundamental dynamics of the most pressing social concerns and challenges confronting contemporary families, especially those families most at risk due to personal and environmental stress factors.

2. Discuss how the needs and issues of a family evolve throughout the life span and are shaped by multiple environmental factors and prevailing political norms.

3. Critically evaluate the historical and contemporary need for a social welfare service system and describe the basic social values and environmental influences that shape the service system in this country.

4. Describe how to access the appropriate service system that addresses a particular family-centered issue or need and explain the most salient features of the system.

5. Understand some of the major issues and policy debates represented within each of the service systems introduced.
II. Vulnerable Populations

The historical influence of the dominant culture on the development and the delivery of services to individuals and families will be made explicit and current understanding of diverse cultural traditions and beliefs will be studied. A cultural “lens” will be applied to critically examine the current structure of service and to consider the how alternative models inform and expand the dominant perspective on services. Health care is an example of a social service area that has multiple pathways of radically differing viewpoints depending on a family’s cultural background, beliefs and practices. Readings and empirical studies will provide opportunities for students to discuss, debate and critically evaluate the appropriateness of service responses to human needs based on understanding cultural differences.

III. Disabilities

Students needing special consideration in completing the work of this course should talk to the instructor and/or contact the PSU office of Disability Services for Students, located in Smith Memorial Center Room 118, 725-5664.

VI. Texts


Reading packet with journal articles and web site references.

IV. Course Assignments and Grading

There will be a variety of writing assignments of varying lengths and varying emphasis on different writing styles. There will be regular reaction papers that will relate to all guest speakers and field trips, video presentations and some in class exercises. To complete these written assignments, class and site visit attendance and participation will obviously be necessary. Attendance and participation is also necessary to enrich the seminar discussions and reflections on readings and presentations so attendance will be taken and factored into the course grade.

There will be one paper, approximately 8-10 pages in length on an area of social work service of interest to the student that will allow the student to pursue the service area in more depth and will involve additional reading and exploration outside of class.

Two quizzes will be given covering the core concepts of the course introduced in the texts and in class lectures.

Grades will be based on quizzes (30%), service area paper (30%) reflection/reaction writing (25%) and attendance (15%).
VII  Teaching Methodology

The course will utilize a variety of teaching modalities, including seminar and lecture but also featuring guest speakers from the various service sectors, field trips collectively and separately depending on student preferences and scheduling logistics, simulations and small group exercises, role plays and possibly some computer-based interactions.

VIII. Topical Outline

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>An Overview of the Social Welfare Service System</td>
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<td>An historical perspective on the role of the welfare state</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Definition(s) of Family and of Family-centered services</td>
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<td>Site Visit to a shelter for homeless families or Transition School</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Children and Youth Services-Issues and Programmatic Responses</td>
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<td>Panel Presentation-SCF, Juvenile Court, SEI, Phoenix Rising, etc</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Families and Violence-Intimate and Community Violence</td>
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<td>Video/Speaker</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Health and Mental Health-A Multicultural Perspective</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>The Culture of Poverty</td>
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<td>Site visit(s) to Greenhouse, Sisters of the Road, etc.</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Legal Interventions, Illegal Substances and Families at Risk</td>
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<td>Quest speakers-Project Network, Volunteers of America</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Gerontological Issues and Service Spectrum</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Career and “Good Citizenship” Opportunities</td>
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<td>Possible use of Strong-Campbell Inventory and Career Center</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Summary of Themes/Evaluations</td>
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