

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

**SLWK 230: COMMUNICATION IN THE HELPING PROCESS
SPRING 2013**

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Course meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays
9:30am – 10:45 am
Harris Hall, Room 2137

COURSE DESCRIPTION

SLWK 230: Communication in the Helping Process. Semester course; 3 credits: Required of all undergraduate social work majors.

Communication in the Helping Process is the study of the values, knowledge, and skills of effective human communication and interpersonal relations. It includes observation, collection, and description of data, verbal and nonverbal communication, and the relevance of the above to social work practice. Issues of human diversity and cross cultural communication are integrated throughout the course content. Emphasis is placed on the demonstration and practice of communication through structured exercises and role play.

NOTE: THIS IS A SERVICE LEARNING COURSE. As part of this course you will have an opportunity to serve in the community in areas related to the content of this course. You will work with one of the following programs:

1. VCU Cultural Ambassadors
2. Crossover Health Care Ministry
3. Sacred Heart Community Center

Goals and Objectives related to the Service Learning component of this course are designed to:

- Enable you to practice concepts learned in class in real live situations
- Deepen your understanding of interpersonal communication particularly as it relates to cross cultural differences in communication
- Increase your ability to work with people from different backgrounds
- Enhance the development of communication skills in the helping process with target populations

Benefits of taking a Service-Learning course:

- A Service-Learning designation on your transcript (the course is designated “S-L”), indicating that you have been willing to participate in service to your community.

- A line item for your resume. Future employers want to see that students have engaged in a variety of worthwhile activities during their academic careers. While good grades are of primary importance on a transcript, service learning can be that extra something that makes you stand out to a future employer.
- Contacts gained through your service relationship with community partners are likely to yield recommendation letters acknowledging your contribution to that organization. Here again, such a letter is excellent supplementary documentation in your resume files.
- Moving outside of VCU's boundaries, meeting new people and gaining knowledge about the community in which you live and study, becoming a participating member of the community.
- Making a difference!

Service-Learning at Virginia Commonwealth University is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which you participate in an organized service activity that meets community-identified needs. You will at intervals *reflect* on the service activity to increase understanding and application of course content and to enhance a sense of civic responsibility. A distinctive characteristic of service-learning is that it engages you in such reflection to enable you to synthesize your service experiences by connecting hands-on learning taking place in the community to academic concepts. Reflection encourages you to develop self-assessment skills as life-long learners, to appreciate diversity of life situations, and to explore and clarify values that can foster civic responsibility (Hatcher, Julie, and Robert Bringle. "Reflections: Bridging the Gap between Service and Learning." *Journal of College Teaching* 45 (1997): 153-58.

What are the requirements for the Service-Learning component of this course? Service-learning is a system of learning that asks for you to think critically by becoming active *with* the community. Because this course is designated as a Service-Learning course, you are required to participate in Service-Learning activities and to meet all requirements associated with the Service-Learning work that you do – you'll be able to choose your community partner from the list we generate from our list of fall partners.

- You will commit twenty hours of service work during the spring semester with our community partners. Depending on your service activity, this may be a once-a-week meeting every week over the course of the semester, or it may be covered in three or four days of work, requiring something approaching a day-long stretch of service.
- You'll make an agreement for service with one of our chosen community partners.
- You'll keep a service log with your hours, to be signed by your community service contact.
- You will turn in six reflection journal entries about your service, and you will be expected to share in class about your observations and insights about course topics gained through your service work. Journal entries will ask you to draw connections between course readings and service experiences

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate awareness of the dynamics of interpersonal communication in general and of one's own style in particular.
2. Articulate the value base which undergirds both personal and professional interpersonal relationships.
3. Use appropriate self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-disclosure in interpersonal communication.
4. Demonstrate a beginning level of skill in listening, selecting and utilizing a range of response styles, clarity of expression, and the disciplined use of nonverbal behavior.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of the role and management of conflict in interpersonal relationships.
6. Demonstrate a beginning knowledge of interpersonal group dynamics and group processes and communication skills specific to leading groups.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of the elements of a professional social work interview as distinguished from informal communication.
8. Demonstrate knowledge of the styles of communication among diverse populations and a beginning skill level in the use of this knowledge in interpersonal communication.

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Admission Policy for Social Work Program: Introduction of Social Work (SLWK 201) and Communication in the Helping Process (SLWK 230) are pre-professional courses intended to provide students with knowledge of social work and communication processes, as well as experiences with the kinds of demands that are made upon social workers. Students admitted to the professional program must:

1. Attain Junior standing.
2. Have a cumulative GPA of 2.5 on all hours completed.
3. Have a grade of "B" or above in SLWK 201 and SLWK 230 and have completed six (6) credits of college level English.
4. Have completed all required liberal arts courses.

*NOTE: You will be required to obtain a "B" in this course to be admitted to the Social Work Program.

Email Policy:

Electronic mail or "email" is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective, and environmentally aware manner. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the University as needed. Mail sent to the VCU email address may include notification of University-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety:
<http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/3407.html>

VCU Honor System: Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

The VCU honor system policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty, and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to his policy, "members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity." In addition, "All members of the VCU community are presumed to have an understanding of the VCU Honor System and are required to:

- Agree to be bound by the Honor System policy and its procedures;
- Report suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
- Support an environment that reflects a commitment to academic integrity;
- Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System cases, and,
- Maintain confidentiality regarding specific information in Honor System cases.

Most importantly, "All VCU students are presumed upon enrollment to have acquainted themselves with and have an understanding of the Honor System." (The VCU INSIDER, VCU Honor System 131-132).

The Honor System in its entirety can be reviewed on the Web at http://www.provost.vcu.edu/pdfs/Honor_system_policy.pdf or it can be found in the 2012-13 VCU Insider at <http://www.students.vcu.edu/insider.html>

In this class, because coursework will be collaborative at times, particular issues of integrity arise. You should not copy or print another student's work without permission. Any material (this includes IDEAS and LANGUAGE) from another source must be credited, whether that material is quoted directly, summarized, or paraphrased. In other words, you should respect the work of others and in no way present it as their own.

Student Conduct in the Classroom:

According to the Faculty Guide to Student Conduct in Instructional Settings (<http://www.assurance.vcu.edu/Policy%20Library/Faculty%20Guide%20to%20Student%20Conduct%20in%20Instructional%20Settings.pdf>), "The instructional program at VCU is based upon the premise that students enrolled in a class are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other students. Accordingly, in classrooms, laboratories, studies and other

learning areas, students are expected to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner so that the faculty member can proceed with their [sic] customary instruction. Faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) may set reasonable standards for classroom behavior in order to serve these objectives. If a student believes that the behavior of another student is disruptive, the instructor should be informed." Among other things, cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom. Also, the University Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone from having "in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university..." For more information, visit the VCU Insider online at <http://www.students.vcu.edu/insider.html>

Certainly the expectation in this course is that students will attend class with punctuality, proper decorum, required course material and studious involvement.

The VCU Insider contains additional important information about a number of other policies with which students should be familiar, including Guidelines on Prohibition of Sexual Harassment, Grade Review Procedure, and Ethics Policy on Computing. It also contains maps, phone numbers and information about resources available to VCU students.

Students with Disabilities:

SECTION 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended, require that VCU provides "academic adjustments " or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must request them by contacting the Disability Support Services Office (DSS) on the Monroe Park Campus (828-2253) or the Division for Academic Success on the MCV campus (828-9782). More information is available at the Disability Support Services webpage, <http://www.students.vcu.edu/dss/>, or the at Division for Academic Success webpage, <http://www.specialservices.vcu.edu/>.

If you have a disability that requires an academic accommodation, please schedule a meeting with me at your earliest convenience. Additionally, if your coursework requires you to work in a lab environment, you should advise me or department chairperson of any concerns you may have regarding safety issues related to your disability. This statement applies not only to this course but also to every other course in this University.

Statement on Military Short-Term Training or Deployment:

Military students may receive orders for short-term training or deployment. These students are asked to inform and present their orders to Military Student Services and to their professor(s). For further information on policies and procedures, contact Military Services at 828-5993 or access the corresponding policies at <http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/about/?Default.aspx?uid=10096&iid=30704> and <http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/BULLETTINS/undergraduate/?uid=10096&iid=30773>.

Excused Absences for Students Representing the University:

Please be aware that students who represent the university (athletes and others) do not choose their schedules. Student athletes are required to attend games and/or meets. All student athletes will give you their schedule in the beginning of the semester. The Intercollegiate Athletic Council (IAC) strongly encourages you to treat missed classes or exams (because of a scheduling conflict) as excused absences and urges you to work with the students to make up the work or exam.

**Campus Emergency Information:
What to Know and Do To Be Prepared for Emergencies at VCU**

1. Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify>). Keep your information up-to-date.
2. Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
3. Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorizes.
4. Know where to go for additional emergency information (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>).
5. Know the emergency phone number of the VCU Policy (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

Important Dates:

Important dates for the Spring 2013 semester are available at:
http://academiccalendars.vcu.edu/ac_fullViewAll.asp?term=Spring+2013

VCU Mobile:

The VCU Mobile application is a valuable tool to get the latest VCU information on the go. The application contains helpful information including the VCU directory, events, course schedules, campus maps, athletics and general VCU news, emergency information, library resources, Blackboard and more. To download the application on your smart phone or for more information, please visit <http://m.vcu.edu>.

Class registration required for attendance:

Please remember that students may only attend those classes for which they have registered. Faculty may not add students to class rosters. Therefore, if students are attending a class for which they have not registered, they must stop attending.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

DeVito, J. A. (2013). *The interpersonal communication book* (13TH ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.

Additional readings may be assigned throughout the course.

COURSE FORMAT

Classes will consist of lectures, class discussions of reading and homework assignments, role-play and other in-class activities, videotapes, and presentations by students.

Class lectures and discussions will not necessarily cover all of the assigned readings, as the instructor will attempt to respond to the particular needs of students as a group in focusing classroom activity. Students, however, are responsible for the assigned readings and are encouraged to ask for clarification and discussion about any of the readings.

Class participation is very important in this course because social workers typically function in agencies as team members and need to develop the ability to present and defend their perspectives and challenge those of others in a spirit of collaborative learning. Students' comments should reflect sensitivity to their classmates and be supportive of open exchange and dialogue.

Instructor Availability

The instructor is available to students outside the classroom as well as during class sessions. Students are encouraged to speak with the instructor about any concerns they have regarding the course material or assignments. Students may schedule an appointment with the instructor by e-mail.

COURSE FORMAT

Classes will consist of:

1. Instructor lectures
2. Role-play and other in-class activities
3. Discussions of the readings and homework assignments
4. Service Learning presentations by students

Class lectures and discussions will not necessarily cover all of the assigned readings, as the instructor will attempt to respond to the particular needs of students as a group in focusing classroom activity. Students, however, are responsible for the assigned readings and are encouraged to ask for clarification and discussion about any of the readings.

Class participation is very important in this course because social workers typically function in agencies as team members and need to develop the ability to defend their perspectives and challenge those of others in a spirit of collaborative learning. Each student's classroom comments should reflect sensitivity to the circumstances of all classmates.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

SERVICE LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

1. You will commit to 1 to 2 hours of service work each week with your chosen organization during the spring semester. You must complete a minimum of 20 hours of service work for the semester. You may work out the hours with your organization based on your schedule and the needs of the organization. COMMITMENT is expected.
2. You will make a copy of this Service Learning section of the syllabus and give it to your supervisor so she/he will be aware of the commitment you are expected to make.
3. Your supervisor will sign your time sheet every time you work.
4. You will maintain a journal in which you do reflections about your Service Learning experience.
5. Final paper and presentation.

Course requirements, and their weight toward the final grade, are as follows:

1.	Journal	20%
2.	Mid Term Exam	20%
3.	Service Learning Presentation and Paper	20%
4.	Final Exam	20%
5.	Class attendance and participation	10%
6.	Agency Organization Paper	10%

All assignments will be discussed in class prior to their due dates.

The course grading scale is based on ten percentage points, so that: 90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, 70-79% = C, 60-69% = D, and below 60% is failing.

In scoring assignments, the instructor uses the following guidelines:

- A: All or most aspects of the work are outstanding, in that the student not only responds fully to all parts of the assignment but goes beyond the required work in some substantial way.
- B: All content requirements are met and the overall quality is good.
- C: Most (or even all) content requirements are met but some aspects of the assignment are not adequately developed.
- D-F: Major content areas of the assignment are not addressed, and/or many of them are not adequately developed.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation account for **10%** of the course grade. It is expected that students will attend each class session, remain for the entire class period in order for attendance to count, participate in role plays and other class activities, and be prepared to discuss the scheduled topics and assigned readings. Please notify the instructor in advance if you are unable to attend class and provide a valid explanation. Each unexcused absence lowers the grade two points.

The **quality** of your participation will be assessed. Evaluation will be based on behaviors which indicate students' willingness to communicate in class for the purpose of advancing their knowledge and that of fellow students. Demonstration of effective communication skills is essential to successful completion of the course.

Exams

Two exams will be given. The first will be given February 28. The exam will cover reading assignments and course content up to mid term. The final exam will take place during the last class on April 28.

Journal

Purpose: To provide a systematic approach to help students integrate the readings, lectures, and other class content with service in the community.

Process:

1. Each student is to keep a journal about the service learning experience and related materials (readings, discussions) from the class.
2. Journal entries will be based on structured questions provided by the instructor during the semester. The questions will challenge you to respond to the readings and will help you to explore the connection between the theories we discuss in class and the real world experiences you have at your service learning site. Journal entries will include:
 - Information about the organization including your supervisor's name, phone number, and email; address of the organization, background history of the organization and its stated goal; funding sources for the organization and how it is governed; and the organization's policy regarding volunteers
 - Personal reflection that addresses the following questions:
 1. *What?* Tell what you did at your session; what was the most significant thing happened during the session?
 2. *So What?* Reflect on the experience you had at the session; What new insights did you develop about the individuals you served? About your abilities to work with this population? Can you relate the experience to some of the issues discussed in class or from the text?

3. *Now What?* What insights did you gain about yourself and the organization or people with whom you worked? Can you apply your new understandings to commitment or action?

3. Journal entries will be due at designated times and will be returned the following week with feedback. Late journal entries, as with any assignment, are subject to a reduction in grade.

Evaluation: The following will be taken into account in assigning a grade for journal entries:

1. Quality of response to questions related to the readings, class discussion, and service learning experience.
2. Ability to address the Personal Reflection questions.
3. Explicit mention of the course materials (readings) and class content (discussions, class exercises etc.)
4. **CRITICAL THINKING.** Your comments should go beyond simple description and should demonstrate how you thought critically about the readings, exercises, experiences with communication in your life. Use your critical thinking to raise questions (i.e. do you see any patterns; what would you like to change in how you communicate, what is realistic?) It is essential that you are thinking and reflecting on your interpersonal communication and service.
5. Organized, clearly expressed thoughts. Please use complete sentences and maintain a logical flow of your ideas. You need not type (you may if you wish), but I must be able to easily read your work... or we will not be communicating! **Remember, the focus should be on demonstrating your understanding of the class materials and the service learning experience as they apply to your lives.**
4. Length: each entry should be the equivalent 1-2 typewritten, double-spaced pages.

Please keep your writings in a folder. This will serve as a major resource for your final paper.

SLWK230 Service Learning Presentation and Paper

Presentation

During the final classes students will make presentations about their Service Learning experiences. Presentations should be at least 10 minutes in length and should include the following:

- A description of the agency where you served
- The population served by the agency
- Your role in the agency
- What services you offered

- How you believe your service made a difference
- What course content helped prepare you for the service and how you integrated the coursework with your service
- What you learned about the people with whom you worked
- What personal insight you gained that resulted directly from your service
- What future actions will you take on behalf of the people you served as a result of your service experience
- Ways in which you were effected by the service experience

Paper

A five page paper is due at the time you make your presentation. The paper will comprise a summary of your Service Learning experience and should incorporate the areas identified above in the presentation and also:

- A description of the agency where you served including the staffing of the agency, the funding source, populations served by the agency, services provided by the agency and any other pertinent information
- A written explanation of how you applied course concepts in your service work
- What you found to be the greatest challenges
- Areas in which you feel you performed very well
- What you learned about yourself
- Influence of culture and cultural differences you discovered in communication
- What cultural practices and beliefs posed ethical issues in communication for you
- Describe how you experienced the role of culture in developing an understanding of cross cultural communication in an interpersonal context

Agency Organization Project

The purpose of at this assignment is twofold. The first objective is to have you become aware of the organizational structure within which you are working. The second objective involves exploring how the agency serves needs in the community. Through observation and discussion with agency staff, you will write a 3-5 page paper which includes the following information about your sites:

Mission: What is the mission of the agency? What is it trying to accomplish?

Population Served: Who are the people receiving services from the agency? How are they identified for services? Are there eligibility requirements to receive services?

Funding: How is the agency funded and by whom?

Volunteers: In what ways does the organization utilize volunteers? How many volunteers does the agency utilize? Interview one volunteer and describe the duties performed by the volunteers and discuss their reasons for selecting this agency to perform volunteer work.

Personnel: Interview one person whose job you find particularly interesting. Include the following information in your interview: describe each person's responsibilities, how long they have been in this position, their educational background, what they like best and least about their job, what motivated them to work in this area, and how they manage stress associated with their work.

COURSE LEARNING UNITS: SLWK 230

(NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to change the course calendar as is necessary.)

WEEK # DATE

1	Jan. 15	Introductions and Orientation To each other To course, assignments, and text
	Jan. 17	Introduction to Service Learning Partners
2	Jan. 22	Communication Processes READINGS: Chapters 1
	Jan. 24	Communication Processes
3	Jan. 29	Culture and Communication READINGS: Chapters 2 Bring in something that communicates something about you to share with class Journal Assignment # 1 due
	Jan. 31	Culture and communication

- 4 **Feb. 5** **Perception and Communication**
 READINGS: Chapter 3
 Journal Assignment # 2
- Feb. 7** **Perception and Communication**
- 5 **Feb. 12** **Active Listening Skills and Responsive Listening**
 READINGS: Chapter 4
 Journal Assignment # 3
 Agency Organization Paper due
- Feb. 14** **Active Listening, cont.**
- 6 **Feb. 19** **Verbal Communication**
 READINGS: Chapter 5
 Journal Assignment # 4
- Feb. 21** **Non Verbal Communication**
 READINGS: Chapter 6
- 7 **Feb. 26** **Mid Term Exam Review**
- Feb. 28** **Mid Term Exam**
- 8 **March 5 and 7** **Spring Break**
- 9 **March 12** **Self Awareness as a Building Block of Communication**
 Journal # 5 due
- March 14** **Conversational communication**
 READINGS: CHAPTERS 8 and 12
- 10 **March 19** **Conversational Communication**
- March 21** **Personal and Professional Relationships**
 READINGS: Benjamin: The Helping Relationship, Chap.3
 Kadushin: The Social Work Interview
 Journal Assignment #6
- March 22** **LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW**
- 11 **March 26** **Personal and Professional Relationships**
 READINGS: Kadushin: The Social Work Interview

	March 28	Personal and Professional Relationships
12	April 2	Conflict Resolution READINGS: Chapter 11
	April 4	Conflict Resolution
13	April 9	Service Learning Presentations
	April 11	Service Learning Presentations
14	April 16	Service Learning Presentations
	April 18	Service Learning Presentations
15	April 23	Service Learning Presentations
	April 25	Review for Final Exam
16	April 30	Final Exam

If the last class is needed to complete presentations the Final Exam will take place during exam week according to the University schedule.

SLWK230 Service Learning Presentation and Paper

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