Anthony J. Hill, PhD, LICSW, CFSW, ACSW

Associate Professor

Department of Social work

Delaware State University

1200 N DuPont Hwy

Dover, DE 19901

(302)857-6790

ajhill@desu.edu

The Social Work Shout Out: Engaging Students in Policy Practice

**OVERVIEW AND DURATION:**

In 2011, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), social work faculty and leaders developed the concept of the Social Work Shout Out. During National Social Work Month, schools of social work and local chapters of NASW organized Social Work Shout Out events. The initial purpose of the Social Work Shout Outwas to elevate the professional status of social workers, visibility, and positive public perceptions. I re-purposed the Social Work Shout Out as an instructional tool in which to engage students in policy practice. The Social Work Shout Out activities take place during the month of March to commemorate National Social Work Month.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

* Utilize social work values, ethics, and perspectives to critically analyze a social policy or program, and the social, political, and economic factors that contributed to its development.
* Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze the dimensions of a social policy or program from a value critical approach.
* Understand the importance of creating an advocacy campaign which includes leadership, values, and diversity of the individuals affected by policy decisions.
* Understand the importance of the Black Perspective\* when developing an advocacy campaign for and with historically oppressed or marginalized populations.

***\**** *A Black Perspective for Social Work Practice is prototype for understanding the unique experiences and worldviews associated with being of African genetic origin in the United States that can be used in practice with other oppressed client systems*

**TARGET SOCIAL WORK COURSE:**

SCWK 460 – Senior Seminar

This course is the last in a five-course social work practice sequence and is designed to integrate the experiences of class and field. Students are given an opportunity to (1) assess prior learning, and (2) assess and define their learning needs, practice skills, and theoretical background. In addition, the students plan and implement structured learning experiences.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES:**

Overview

The Social Work Shout Out is a month-long class experience in which students work in groups, based on their cognitive strengths, to develop an advocacy campaign that raises public awareness of a social problem and offers possible policy solutions, as well as increases the public’s positive perceptions of professional social work.

The instructional activities are grounded in Howard Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences. The theory posits that individuals learn, understand, remember, and perform in different ways based on a set of cognitive strengths or intelligences. Gardner proposed in *Frames of Mind* (1983) the existence of at least seven basic intelligences; since then an eighth and ninth have been added (1999). Individuals differ in their strengths of these intelligences (preferred learning styles), as well as in the ways in which intelligences are combined to perform different tasks and solve diverse problems in various settings. Gardner’s original intelligences include:

* **Verbal/linguistic intelligence**: the production of language, abstract reasoning, symbolic thinking, conceptual patterning, reading, and writing.
* **Logical/mathematical intelligence**: the capacity to recognize patterns, work with abstract symbols (e.g., numbers, geometric shapes), and discern relationships or see connections between separate and distinct pieces of information.
* **Visual/spatial intelligence**: visual arts, navigation, mapmaking, architecture, and games requiring the ability to visualize objects from different perspectives and angles.
* **Bodily/kinesthetic intelligence**: the ability to use the body to express emotion, to play a game, and to create a new product.
* **Musical/rhythmic intelligence**: capacities such as the recognition and use of rhythmic and tonal patterns and sensitivity to sounds from the environment, the human voice, and musical instruments.
* **Interpersonal intelligence**: the ability to work cooperatively with others in a small group, as well as the ability to communicate verbally and nonverbally with other people.
* **Intrapersonal intelligence**: the internal aspects of the self, such as knowledge of feelings, range of emotional responses, thinking processes, self-reflection, and a sense of intuition about spiritual realities.

The Social Work Shout Out activities are designed to heighten both learners’ motivation for and skill mastery of policy practice by appealing to a variety of learning styles.

Activities

The class chooses a social problem (in January/February) that impacts the community surrounding the university, clients at a field practicum, or the larger society, and develops an advocacy campaign which targets the identified social problem. The culminating event is the Social Work Shout Out, a public event which highlights the social problem, offers alternative policy solutions, and showcases professional social work. The event is held during the last week of March in conjunction with National Social Work Month.

Students volunteer to work in one or more groups (in February) which speak to their preferred learning styles. The groups work interdependently in order to perform the tasks needed to launch a successful advocacy campaign. The groups include:

* **Problem Analysis Group** - is designed for students with verbal/linguistic intelligence and logical/mathematical intelligence preferences. This group is tasked with critically analyzing a problem from a social work perspective, including social work values and ethics. The group considers the scope and prevalence of the problem, the epistemology of the problem, consequences related to not addressing the problem, as well as previous attempts to address the problem.
* **Stakeholder Engagement Group** – is designed for students with interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence preferences. This group is tasked with developing and implementing strategies which encourage stakeholder engagement in the advocacy campaign. Specific tasks include interacting with individuals who are directly or indirectly impacted by the problem, have the power and influence to help address the problem, and who may be potential allies or opponents in addressing the problem. The group also engages stakeholders in identifying solutions to the problem.
* **Public Awareness Group** – appeals to those students with visual/spatial intelligence, bodily/kinesthetic intelligence, or musical/rhythmic intelligence preferences. The purpose of this group is twofold: (1) to raise awareness of the identified problem and suggest alternative policy solutions to the problem through strategic communication and (2) to develop strategies to increase public positive perceptions and visibility of the social work profession on campus and in the larger community. This group is responsible for managing the logistics for the Shout Out event (e.g., reserving space in the student center, making signs for the event, and creating handouts to distribute to the public), developing a social media campaign, and developing creative strategies for delivering the message (e.g., songs, skits, puppet shows, spoken word, and other forms of creative expression.)

Each group adopts *rules of conduct* (in February) which detail how group members communicate and the frequency of communication, ground rules for group member interactions, and member accountability to the group. The groups also develop (in February) detailed work plans which delineate each member’s role, desired deliverables, and due dates. These documents are submitted to the instructor for feedback and approval.

**COMPANION STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS:**

Bobo, K., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). Organizing for social change: Midwest academy

manual for activists (4th ed.). Santa Ana, CA: The Forum Press.

**Chapters:** 2-5, 9 & 15

Chambers, D., & Bonk, J. F. (2013). *Social policy and social programs: A method for the*

*practical public policy analyst* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

**Chapters:** 1-2

[John McKnight ABCD 101](http://www.abundantcommunity.com/home/videos/abcd_101.html)

A four-part video series of John McKnight introducing ABCD principles. Video posted on his website, the Abundant Community

<http://www.abundantcommunity.com/home/videos/abcd_101.html>

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES**:

Bobo, K., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). Organizing for social change: Midwest academy

manual for activists (4th ed.). Santa Ana, CA: The Forum Press.

Chambers, D., & Bonk, J. F. (2013). *Social policy and social programs: A method for the*

*practical public policy analyst* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Hill, A. J**.**, & Donaldson, L. P. (2012). We shall overcome: Promoting an agenda for integrating spirituality and community practice. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, *31*(1-2), 67-84.

Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. N. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path*

*toward finding and mobilizing a community’s assets.* Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research.

Weil, M., & Gamble, D. (1995). Community practice models. In R. Edwards (Ed.), Encyclopedia

of social work (19th., pp. 577–593). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

**STUDENT ASSESSMENT METHOD:**

The class as a whole is assessed on the successful planning and implementation of the Social Work Short Out. Specifically, the class is accessed on how well the class analyzed a social problem from a social work perspective, offered viable policy solutions, engaged key stakeholders, and executed a public event which raised public awareness about the social problem, as well as increased visibility and positive public perceptions of professional social work.

Students are also graded individually based on meeting their targets on the groups’ detailed work plans. Each student completes the Self and Group Members’ Assessment Form (see below) and submits it to the instructor. The instructor reviews the forms and considers the feedback when assigning individual grades.

**Social Work Shout Out**

**Self and Group Members Assessment Form**

Please complete the following questionnaire. Your feedback will be considered when assigning individual grades for this group assignment.

**Name of Student Completing Form**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Check the box that best describes your efforts with the group assignment.

(1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3= Disagree; 4= Strongly Disagree)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Criteria** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| I was actively involved in the planning of the group assignment |  |  |  |  |
| I met mutually agreed upon deadlines |  |  |  |  |
| I carried my fair share of the work |  |  |  |  |

My contribution to the group assignment was:

Given your responses to the above questions, what grade would you give yourself, and why?: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Now consider the efforts of your group members on the assignment.**

II. Check the box that best describes the efforts of each group member with the group assignment. (1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Strongly Disagree)

Name of Group Member 1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Evaluation Criteria | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| He/She was actively involved in the planning of the group assignment |  |  |  |  |
| He/She met mutually agreed upon deadlines |  |  |  |  |
| He/She carried his/her fair share of the work |  |  |  |  |

Given your responses to the above questions, what grade would you give the group member, and why?: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Group Member 2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Criteria** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| He/She was actively involved in the planning of the group assignment |  |  |  |  |
| He/She met mutually agreed upon deadlines |  |  |  |  |
| He/She carried his/her fair share of the work |  |  |  |  |

Given your responses to the above questions, what grade would you give the group member, and why?: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Group Member 3: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Criteria** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| He/She was actively involved in the planning of the group assignment |  |  |  |  |
| He/She met mutually agreed upon deadlines |  |  |  |  |
| He/She carried his/her fair share of the work |  |  |  |  |

Given your responses to the above questions, what grade would you give the group member, and why?: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Group Member 4: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Criteria** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| He/She was actively involved in the planning of the group assignment |  |  |  |  |
| He/She met mutually agreed upon deadlines |  |  |  |  |
| He/She carried his/her fair share of the work |  |  |  |  |

Given your responses to the above questions, what grade would you give the group member, and why?: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

III. **Additional Comments.** In the space below, please feel free to provide any additional comments about this assignment or your satisfaction with your group.