

**Mary Baldwin University  
Susan Warfield Caples  
Department of Social Work  
SOWK 153 WA (Online)  
Introduction to Social Work  
Fall 2020**

**Instructor:** Doris Dodson, MSW, LCSW

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(Please note that I am not on campus every day; the quickest way to reach me is by email.)

**Bachelor of Social Work Program Mission**

The mission of the Mary Baldwin Social Work program is to prepare students for beginning level generalist social work practice with oppressed, at-risk, and vulnerable populations. The program provides a rigorous intellectual base and opportunity for effective skill development and an educational perspective that views human diversity as normal, desirable, and enriching for society. Students are equipped with the knowledge, skills and values appropriate to the social work profession. Students in the program are expected to develop sensitivity to human suffering and injustice. They will develop an understanding of the factors that contribute to discrimination, oppression and vulnerability; and a strong commitment to advocacy, empowerment, social change, and economic justice.

**Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for generalist social work in contemporary society. Social welfare services, policies, and their historical origins will be presented along with the unique experiences of diverse and at-risk populations affected by various social problems. This course provides an overview of the range of public and private social services available for dealing with these problems. Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to identify social work roles, values, and ethics, as well as the role of advocacy in the social work profession.

**Required Text**

Cox, L. E., Tice, C. J., & Long, D. D. 2019. *Introduction to social work: An advocacy-based profession* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

ISBN: 9781506394534

Student Study Site: <https://edge.sagepub.com/cox2e>

**Recommended Websites**

[www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)

[www.socialworker.com](http://www.socialworker.com)

[www.socialworktoday.com](http://www.socialworktoday.com)

[www.cswe.org](http://www.cswe.org)

<https://www.naswva.org/>

<https://www.nabsw.org/>

[www.naswdc.org/practice](http://www.naswdc.org/practice)

[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)

Upon the completion of the course students will be able to:	Social Work Program Competency	Instructional Strategies	Assessment Methods
Demonstrate professional behaviors that include the ability to engage in personal reflection, self-correction, management of personal values, and ethical decision-making to assure professional development and ethical practice with clients	2.1.1; 2.1.2	Written assignments, reading, lecture, class exercises, videos	Class participation, Reading Reflections, DSS visit, Short Papers, Exams
Apply critical thinking skills to inform and communicate professional decision making.	2.1.3	Readings, written assignments, mid-term exam, final exam , lecture, group discussion	Class participation, Reading Reflections, DSS visit, Short Papers, Exams
Identify ways in which cultural structures contribute to diversity and oppression and articulate methods that value difference, empower clients, and advance social and economic justice.	2.1.4; 2.1.5	Readings, experiential assignments, written assessments, mid-term exam, final exam, lecture, group discussion, videos	Class participation, Reading Reflections, DSS visit, Short Papers, Experiential Reflection paper, Exams
Respond to contexts that shape practice by working with various locations and populations	2.1.9	Experiential exercises, Mid-term exam, final exam, videos	DSS visit, Short Papers, Experiential Reflection paper Exams

### **Expectations of Students**

Students are expected to approach this course with openness and an eagerness to learn. Students are expected to communicate questions and/or concerns to their instructor in a timely manner and to be open to feedback.

Students are expected to be responsible for their learning.

#### 1. **Personal and Professional Behavior**

Students are expected to use class time to foster the use of professional behavior and practice skills used as a social worker. The course offers students the opportunity for self-reflection, experimentation with unfamiliar ways of thinking and acting, the challenge of dependability and timeliness in completing assignments, and appreciation of the mutual accountability between instructor and student. This includes your ability to uphold the requirements of the MBU Honor Code. *Please be aware that your professors will be documenting your success in these areas as you progress through the BSW program.*

#### 2. **Ethical Integrity and Honor Code**

Mary Baldwin students pledge to uphold the Honor Code. They pledge to refrain from cheating on assignments, papers and tests, to refrain from plagiarism, and always to be honest in their dealings with faculty, staff and other students. To maintain the integrity of the system, students, faculty and staff who witness Honor Code infractions are expected to report them.

Should I become aware of an Honor Code offense in this classroom, I will encourage the student(s) to self-report. If the student(s) does not self-report within 24 hours, I will submit the report myself.

*If the Honor Code offense is related to a course assignment, the assignment will not receive an official grade until the Honor Council investigation (and, if necessary, hearing) is complete. I will not assess a grade penalty for an Honor Code infraction unless a student is found responsible by (or admits responsibility to) the Honor Council.*

Plagiarism, cheating, and all other forms of academic misconduct are not only considered a violation of the MBU honor code, but are also a serious breach of the ethical code of conduct for the social work profession. You, as social work students, are expected to abide by the ethical standards of the profession. The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics is available on the NASW website ([www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)).

**In most instances, the first incidence of such failure to properly cite and/or use a reference list will require that the assignment be revised making corrections as necessary. Failure to redo the assignment will result in “0” points for the assignment. An additional incident will result in a referral for investigation of an Honor Code violation. History of infractions will be taken into consideration.**

3. **Writing**

Good writing skills are crucial for social workers. Being able to organize thoughts in clear sentences, using proper English is essential in professional communication. All written materials submitted for the class will be evaluated on content as well as sentence construction, grammar, spelling and usage. The use of “person-first language” (e.g., *people with disabilities* rather than *the disabled*) in all written and verbal aspects of the class is mandatory. Please adhere to the style guidelines of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Edition)*. Please pay careful attention to assignment guidelines and corresponding rubrics for formatting and content requirements. (Competencies 2.1.1 and 2.1.3c)

4. **Learning Styles**

You are responsible for your learning. I am cognizant of our varying learning styles and abilities and will do my best to accommodate this in class. However, if you have a documented learning disability and need additional accommodations in learning, please let me know at the beginning of the semester so that I can best meet your needs. **Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and documentation must be provided each semester.** For additional information see below:

**Accessibility Services:** Any student with documented accessibility needs who feels they may need academic accommodations while taking this course, should first contact Dr. Carey Usher, Associate Provost ([cusher@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:cusher@marybaldwin.edu), 540-887-7064) or [Accessibility@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:Accessibility@marybaldwin.edu).

See below for student support services:

**The Academic Resource Center:** The ARC is your one-stop-shop for writing, math, and all other subject and studentship tutoring. Residential students can meet with tutors virtually or face-to-face in the Center for Student Success, on the first floor of Grafton Library. Online and remote students can work virtually with tutors on papers, assignments, and test-taking strategies. Appointments are scheduled through TutorTrac ([tutortrac.marybaldwin.edu](http://tutortrac.marybaldwin.edu)). For more information, contact Dr. Carey Usher, Associate Provost ([cusher@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:cusher@marybaldwin.edu), 540-887-7064) or [ARC@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:ARC@marybaldwin.edu).

**Special Instructions for Online Courses**

**Class Feedback:** I will begin reviewing all class assignments following the deadline for submission. Additionally, I will be monitoring class activity, checking for questions, etc., at a minimum of twice per week. However, at least initially for the first several weeks, I will more likely be checking in with the class daily (Monday through Friday).

**Please note that I will not be checking the class or providing feedback on questions, assignments, etc., on the weekends and/or holidays for MBU.**

**Please note that, if at any point, throughout the course you need to contact me, I can be reached by phone during office hours unless I am in conference with another student. I would also be available to meet with you, if that would work. However, it would be best to schedule a time in advance. If electronic communication works best for you, posting your question within the course on the discussion page or email are the best options.**

Please note that timely participation in the class and completion of the assignments will allow for the most optimal learning experience. Therefore, it is my expectation that assignments, reading and written, will be completed by their due dates. **If assignments are late, a 5% penalty will be deducted for each additional day and assignments submitted more than two weeks after their due date will not be accepted.** You are strongly encouraged to communicate with me in advance of a due date if you are having difficulty completing an assignment.

**No extensions are permitted for quizzes, tests, exams (exception: verifiable emergency) and extra credit.**

### **Class Participation**

"Come" to class! I want to know that you are "attending" the class and are ready to learn as well as share your thoughts about social work. You can demonstrate your "attendance" through your participation in discussion board posts, questions, and exchanges with your fellow students. I invite you to bring your ideas, questions, and whole selves to the class each and every week!

**Participation in class is required within the first week to avoid being dropped from the course due to financial aid requirements.**

**This year I will also be teaching SOWK 153 Introduction to Social Work on campus; and as a result of COVID safety precautions, half of the class will meet in person while the other half "joins" us virtually. The next class the attendance will be "flipped". I will be recording my classes and posting them in Canvas. You are not required to watch them, but they will be there if you would like to supplement your reading with in class discussions. The on campus students will be enrolled with you in the same Canvas course; therefore, there might be some interactions between the two groups. In my experience, this has only enriched the class experience. You will be responsible for completing all work in Canvas unless an activity/assignment is labeled "MBCW Only".**

### **Assignments:**

- 1) **Class preparation and participation** 8 points  
Each week class will involve readings, discussions about readings and opportunities to practice or demonstrate some of what you have learned. You will be graded on timeliness, participation, willingness to learn, and attitude. Students are responsible for completing the coursework and assignments according to posted timeframes. Refer to professional behavior expectations in Blackboard as they relate to course work and demeanor.  
(Competency 2.1.1)
- 2) **Introduction Discussion Posts** (counts toward class participation)  
Post an introduction of yourself to the class following the instructions in Canvas and then respond to the post of **each** one of your classmates. This is a great way to get to know your classmates in both classes and build a sense of community.
- 3) **Professional Journey Assignment** 8 points

This paper should comply with APA (7<sup>th</sup> edition) format (excluding an abstract) to include a title page and reference list (if applicable), double-spaced, Times New Roman size 12 fonts, 1-inch (normal) margins, and use a running head and page numbers (including the title page). Citations must be used where appropriate within the body of the paper and all references cited at the end of each paper (if applicable). This paper should be two to three full pages in length. *No references needed for this paper.*

The purpose of this paper is to describe your journey to taking an Introduction to Social Work course. Please include the following:

- 1) Discuss your interest in taking this class and the social work profession. Do you feel 'called' to the profession or believe this course would be helpful to you in an alternate profession? If so, please explain.
- 2) What experience(s) have you had with impoverished, disadvantaged or minority populations? Include volunteer experiences and/or individuals in your community or family who may be or have been impoverished, disadvantaged or who belong to a minority population. Describe these experiences including when and where they occurred. Did this experience(s) lead to your interest in social work?
- 3) If you personally are or have been impoverished, disadvantaged or belong to a minority group, how do you think this experience will impact your interest in social work (i.e., you'll have a greater sense of empathy, there may be potential triggers).
- 4) Are you interested in a particular field within social work? What are your long-term goals?  
(Competency 2.1.1)

**You will be required to submit the appropriate rubric with the assignment with your assessment of the work (circling, highlighting, etc.). Failure to submit the rubric will result in a loss of 1 point from the final assignment score.**

4) **Core Values Assignment** 8 points

This paper should comply with APA (7<sup>th</sup> edition) format (excluding an abstract) to include a title page and reference list (if applicable), double-spaced, Times New Roman size 12 fonts, 1-inch (normal) margins, and use a running head and page numbers (including the title page). Citations must be used where appropriate within the body of the paper and all references cited at the end of each paper (if applicable). This paper should be two to three full pages in length. *No references needed for this paper.*

The purpose of this paper is to gain an increased self-awareness as it relates to the social work profession's core values. You will be required to review the NASW Code of Ethics paying particular attention to the Ethical Principles. Please address the following:

- 1) How did you develop your value system?
- 2) What are the three most important values in your life?
- 3) What was your family's influence on your values?
- 4) Are there specific experiences or events in your life that helped shape your value system?  
Please describe.
- 5) How do your values compare/contrast with the values in the NASW Code of Ethics? Critically evaluate your values and thoughtfully give examples of areas of compatibility with your values as well as areas of incompatibility.

(Competencies 2.1.1, 2.1.2)

**You will be required to submit the appropriate rubric with the assignment with your assessment of the work (circling, highlighting, etc.). Failure to submit the rubric will result in a loss of 1 point from the final assignment score.**

5) **Participant observation in a social services office** 16 points

This paper should comply with APA (7<sup>th</sup> edition) format (excluding an abstract) to include a title page and reference list (if applicable), double-spaced, Times New Roman size 12 fonts, 1-inch (normal) margins, and use a running head and page numbers (including the title page). Citations must be used where appropriate within the body of the paper and all references cited at the end of each paper (if applicable). This paper should be four to five full pages in length.

In preparing to be a social worker, it is important to understand the barriers, challenges and issues facing our future clients. This assignment asks that you take some time to visit your local welfare office and seek assistance. This opportunity will allow you to begin to build on your professional training by both observing your local office and the people who utilize and work in this office.

Please remember three important things:

- a. The public assistance office is a public space financed by tax dollars. Anyone has a right to go there.
- b. The people you see at the public assistance office may be in a vulnerable position. Be sure to conduct yourself in a *respectful and sensitive* manner.
- c. This experience is a part of your professional training. Remember that you are doing this as part of a program to prepare yourself for competent social work practice.

Then, go to your local public assistance office, USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ONLY, ask for the necessary paperwork, sit in the reception/waiting area and observe for one half hour. **NOTE: If you live in a rural area where there is no public transportation, imagine how difficult a task it might be getting to the public assistance office and reflect on those thoughts in your paper. In this case, you are permitted to use your own or whatever transportation resource you have available.**

Your paper should include the following:

- d. How do you feel about asking for public assistance? Explain.
- e. How did you go about finding the office? Was it easy to locate? Was it accessible? Was public transportation difficult or easy to use?
- f. What did you observe when you were there? What were your thoughts and feelings?
- g. What were your expectations before you went? Where did these expectations come from? Did the experience 'match' the expectations?
- h. How are social myths regarding poor people and people on public assistance reflected in what you observed and your reactions to what you saw?
- i. What have you learned about the public assistance system through this exercise?
- j. What have you learned about yourself through this experience? How does this experience challenge your personal values?

(Competencies 2.1.1-2.1.5, 2.1.9)

**Please note: If COVID-19 makes this assignment unrealistic, please see other alternative assignments below.**

**Alternate Assignment: Social Work Practitioner Interview Paper** 80 points

This paper should comply with APA format (excluding an abstract) to include a title page and reference list, double-spaced, size 12 fonts, 1-inch (normal) margins, and use a running head and page numbers (including the title page). Citations must be used where appropriate within the body of the paper and all references cited at the end of each paper to include personal communication, agency brochures/literature, etc., referenced in the paper. This paper should be four to five full pages in length.

You will be responsible for making an appointment with a BSW, MSW or LCSW practitioner and conduct a 30-45 minute face to face interview. **(Please note: If COVID-19 makes meeting face-to-face unrealistic, you may "meet" by phone or virtually through Skype, Google Hangout or some other platform.)** You will be required to email the interviewee's name, agency, and credentials to the instructor for approval prior to

conducting the interview. The data collected in this interview will be used to write a paper focusing on the perceptions of this social worker regarding the profession and her/his practice. Relate how this person's perceptions differ or reinforce what has been discussed and read for this class. Also, indicate what new issues were introduced that enhanced your understanding of the social work profession.

The following will help guide the interview and should be covered in the paper:

- 1) The social worker's education (degrees they hold, college(s)/university they attended).
  - 2) Name of agency and job title.
  - 3) What does a typical "social work day" look like?
  - 4) What population does the social worker work with?
  - 5) Identify whether the social worker is engaged in prevention, service delivery (helping people cope with a problem that already exists), social change (examining the root of the problem and seeking to eliminate the problem altogether), or a combination.
  - 6) What skills are needed to do this job?
  - 7) How is the NASW Code of Ethics used on a daily basis?
  - 8) What are some of the continuing education opportunities?
  - 9) How the social worker deals with various clients in their respective environments?
  - 10) How the social worker and/or agency is committed to social and economic justice?
  - 11) What new perspectives have you gained?
  - 12) What are your thoughts about what you learned?
  - 13) How did this experience influence your decision for further pursuance of a BSW degree?
- (Competencies 2.1.1-2.1.5, 2.1.9)

**COVID-19 Alternate Assignment: Community Resource Assessment 80 points**

This paper should comply with APA format (excluding an abstract) to include a title page and reference list, double-spaced, size 12 fonts, 1-inch (normal) margins, and use a running head and page numbers (including the title page). Citations must be used where appropriate within the body of the paper and all references cited at the end of each paper to include personal communication, agency brochures/literature, etc., referenced in the paper. This paper should be four to five full pages in length.

You will be responsible for identifying a specific population for whom you will complete an informal resource assessment. Use the following diverse categories to identify a population: race, age, socioeconomic status, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disabilities. Then, you will research online, by word of mouth or other means what resources are available for this specific population in your community. For MBU Online students, this would be your geographic community. For MBCW on campus students, this could be the MBU campus or the Staunton/Augusta community. See below for

The following will help guide the interview and should be covered in the paper:

- 1) Identify the specific population chosen and rationale for choice.
- 2) Describe any demographics about the population. For example, what percentage of the community studied consists of the specific population. Describe how you gathered this data.
- 3) Research community resources for the specific population. Describe the process for conducting this research. Did you conduct it online, by word of mouth, a combination of the two? Describe whether this was a difficult or easy process.
- 4) What resources did you identify? Name them and provide a brief summary of the services provided. Describe eligibility criteria and factors that might affect access. For example, is a face-to-face meeting required to access services; if so, is public transportation available?
- 5) In your opinion, are there sufficient resources for the specific population? Are there gaps? If so, describe. If there are gaps, provide recommendations and rationale for addressing them.
- 6) Provide a brief summary of your findings.

**You will be required to submit the appropriate rubric with the assignment with your assessment of the work (circling, highlighting, etc.). Failure to submit the rubric will result in a loss of 1 point from the final assignment score.**

6) **Poverty Simulation and Practice Application Assignment** 16 points

Complete the poverty simulation “game” at [www.playspent.org](http://www.playspent.org), noting your reflections (thoughts and feelings) as you progress through the game. What did you learn that was a surprise? What preconceived ideas were challenged as a result of the experience?

After completing the exercise, write a paper consisting of four to five full pages. This paper should comply with APA (7th edition) format (excluding an abstract) to include a title page and reference list, double-spaced, Times New Roman size 12 fonts, 1-inch (normal) margins, and use a running head and page numbers (including the title page). Citations must be used where appropriate within the body of the paper and all references cited at the end of each paper to include personal communication, agency brochures/literature, etc., referenced in the paper. This paper should be four to five full pages in length. You are required to use a minimum of 3 scholarly references.

The following should be included in your paper:

- 1) reflect upon your experiences as a result of the exercise
  - 2) research rural versus urban social work, paying particular attention to the appropriate option for your residence
  - 3) describe how the simulated exercise would be impacted by living in an urban versus rural area
  - 4) if you were working with someone whose situation was similar to that of yours in the simulation, how would you utilize strengths-based perspective and empowerment to assist the client?
  - 5) what remnants of social Darwinism, blaming the victim, and just world beliefs persist in welfare policies and in the attitudes of the general public about social welfare clients? and
  - 6) consider one idea that would help promote more efficient, quality services given your experience of trying to access services and/or resources in this simulation.
- (Competencies 2.14, 2.15. and 2.1.9)

**You will be required to submit the appropriate rubric with the assignment with your assessment of the work (circling, highlighting, etc.). Failure to submit the rubric will result in a loss of 1 point from the final assignment score.**

7) **MBU Social Work Community Assignment** 4 points

Sometime during the semester, you will be expected to participate in one MBU Social Work Club sponsored community event. This could include an event on campus or in the surrounding community (or for MBU Online students, participate in a meeting if held virtually). Kylie Stottlemeyer ([stottlemeyerkj0566@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:stottlemeyerkj0566@marybaldwin.edu)) is the club president and can provide information about the semester’s events. In the event that COVID-19 precludes the club from hosting any events, you could attend the Virginia Social Work Education Consortium (VSWEC)’s annual Rally in the Valley 10/1 which will be virtual this year and only requires a minimal fee (a portion of the fee will be donated to a non-profit organization focused on social justice issues). The consortium consists of social work programs across the state and would be a great opportunity to learn more about social work and “attend” some interesting and timely topical presentations as well as a graduate school fair. A third alternative: participate in virtual event (approved by the instructor) relevant to social work.

After the event, submit a brief (4 – 6 sentence) discussion post about the event following the prompts in the discussion board.

8) **Chapter Assignments** 10 points/1point each



There will be an assignment for each chapter which might include a quiz, essay, activity, etc.

**NOTE: You may submit your draft papers at least one week in advance of their due date to receive feedback.**

### GRADING

Class preparation and participation	8 points/8%
Chapter Assignments	10 points/10%
Professional Journey Assignment	8 points/8 %
Core Values Assignment	8 points/8%
Participant observation of social services office (or alternate assignment)	16 points/16%
Poverty Simulation Assignment	16 points/16%
Social Work Community Assignment	4 points/4%
Mid-Term exam	15 points/15%
Final exam	15 points/15%

A total of **100** points is possible

Grades are earned in the following way:

A	=	93 - 100	B-	=	80 - 82	D+	=	67 - 69
A-	=	90 - 92	C+	=	77 - 79	D	=	63 - 66
B+	=	87 - 89	C	=	73 - 76	D-	=	60 - 62
B	=	83 - 86	C-	=	70 - 72	F	=	under 60 points

**NOTE: This course is a prerequisite for many of the social work major courses. You must complete this course with a minimum of C- before taking these other courses. Failure to do so will require that the course be retaken. Failure to submit the Final Exam will result in a failing grade for the course, per academic policy.**