

Certificate in Social Justice and Anti-Oppressive Social Work Phyllis and Harvey Sandler School of Social Work

Proposal: To develop a social work certificate for the BSW and MSW programs which will focus on the larger macro aspect of social work practice. Specifically, the certificate will focus on social work practice aimed at addressing current issues of social justice and injustice through the process of anti-oppressive practice and policy change within our larger societal systems. Students may complete the certificate in either their BSW program at FAU or in their MSW, but not in both.

Introduction and Background Information: The Sandler School of Social Work's BSW and MSW program currently has a clinical social work specialization, focusing on clinical practice with individuals, families, and groups. The current curriculum prepares graduates with the course and field education requirements that they need to apply for licensure as clinical social workers in the State of Florida. The MSW program currently offers three certificate programs: Child Welfare, Healthy Aging, and Addictions. In South Florida, there are currently no BSW or MSW programs with certificate programs focusing on social justice and macro practice (practice with larger social systems). The closest programs that offer macro-oriented programs are provided at Florida State University in "Leadership in Executive and Administrative Development" (<https://csw.fsu.edu/academics/certificate-programs/lead-social-work-certificate>) and Florida A & M University in "Administration and Community Development" (http://catalog.famu.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=4&poid=907) .

Purposes and Rationale for the Certificate Program: The primary reasons for developing this certificate program are:

1. **Demand** – Each year, many current and prospective students from both the BSW and MSW program desire and request additional coursework in advanced macro social work including courses in policy analysis, policy advocacy, community organizing and in anti-oppressive social work practice. In October 2020, the Sandler School of Social Work conducted a survey of BSW students and MSW students to elicit feedback on their interest in the proposed certificate program. The survey found that of 122 students who completed the survey, 89 indicated they were interested (16 were about to graduate, so wouldn't qualify for the certificate now but would have wanted to participate), 27 wanted more information before making a decision and six were not interested. Clearly, there is interest in additional course work in these areas.
2. **Need** – The COVID-19 epidemic and current events related to racism have highlighted social injustices in our society, including disparities in health and mental health care, employment, income, access to care and services, and the impacts of stress on mental health and wellbeing. Recent incidents of police violence against African Americans and other People of Color have highlighted the need to address institutional racism and other forms of oppression in society. Although clinical social work practice is designed to help individuals, families, and small groups cope with these types of issues, change at the community, national, and global levels requires social workers who are prepared with the skills, knowledge, and experiences to work with larger systems while focusing on current systemic injustices and addressing disparities, particularly among people of color.

3. **Ethics and Mandate** – The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics suggests that social workers have an ethical responsibility to promote social justice and address broad social issues such as discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, immigration status, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and gender identity and expression. The Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education (our accrediting body) also support the inclusion of social justice knowledge, skills, and learning opportunities within the BSW and MSW curricula. Social Work also has a professional mandate to advocate on behalf of the most vulnerable populations in society. To fulfill these ethical obligations and mandate, it is imperative that our MSW program provides an opportunity for graduates to develop advanced-level macro competencies.
4. **Program Growth** – The MSW program has grown to over 330 registered students in the Fall 2020 term. Although this program is already one of the largest graduate programs at FAU, further growth can be facilitated by developing a macro program. With more universities around the USA offering online MSW programs, competition for students is growing and FAU cannot afford to lose MSW students interested in macro practice and social justice to other universities. There are over 600 undergraduate social work majors at FAU that are currently enrolled in our program making it the largest program in the state. By offering this program, we may be capturing BSW students who are interested in macro areas of social work who would otherwise have left FAU for other schools that offer these kinds of programs.
5. **Field** - All of our students participate in macro practice activities in their field placements. These activities may become the basis for their capstone project. We are not, however, requiring a macro field placement.
6. **Uniqueness** – This program would be the only BSW and MSW program in Florida with a certificate program specifically focusing on “Social Justice and Anti-Oppressive Policy and Practice.”
7. **Community Engagement** – One of FAU’s primary goals in its strategic plan is “community engagement and economic development.” A Social Justice and Anti-Oppressive Policy and Practice Certificate Program will enhance the opportunities for students, faculty, and community partners to work together and have a broader impact on a broad range of community issues while attracting, training, and supporting the development of new social work leaders of tomorrow, particularly students of color. The final capstone projects may be community based projects.
8. **Value for Professional Growth and Development** – The proposed certificate program will enhance students’ ability to address social justice issues within communities, organizations, states, nations, and internationally. Students will link social justice and anti-oppressive theories with real-life issues, including the opportunity to develop and implement a strategic intervention.

Goals for the Certificate Program

1. To prepare students for evidence-based practice in assessing and addressing issues related to social justice and oppression through community development, advocacy, policy formation, and other social work strategies.
2. To provide students with community-engaged learning and reflective practice with regard to social justice and anti-oppression.

How the Certificate Program Differs from the Degree Program

1. **Intended Audience:** The certificate will be open to all BSW and MSW students who express a desire to focus upon macro social work with their elective courses.
2. **Relationship between Certificate Program and Degree:** Students who participate in the certificate program will also complete their BSW or MSW degree. The certificate program is not available to students outside of the BSW or MSW programs. Because the students will be using two of their BSW or MSW program electives toward the certificate program, the certificate program will simply complement their degree.
3. **Admission Requirements:** BSW and MSW students who have been admitted to the BSW or MSW program are automatically eligible to participate in the certificate program. Students who express interest in the program will speak with the director of the certificate program who will explain the requirements of the program and ensure that the students register for the appropriate courses. The GPA requirements for the certificate program are the same as those for students in their regular BSW or MSW programs.
4. **Academic Content and Structure of the Certificate Program:** The structure of the certificate program will be similar to the structure of the existing certificate programs in the School of Social Work. Students will take their required courses in their BSW or MSW program. MSW students will fulfill their requirements for eligibility for clinical licensure by the State of Florida.

The course requirements for the certificate shall be:

- SOW 3232/6235: Social Welfare Policy (3 credits)
- SOW 4343/6306: Practice with Communities and Organizations (3 credits)
- SOW 6387: Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice (3 credits)
- SOW 6286: Social Justice and Social Work: Current Issues and Responses (3 credits, including the capstone project)

The first two courses (Social Welfare Policy and Practice with Communities/Organizations) are already required courses in the BSW and MSW programs.

The “Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice” and “Social Justice and Social Work” courses will be offered as electives that count toward the elective requirements of the BSW and MSW programs. When students complete all four of these courses, including their capstone project which will be completed in Social Justice & Social Work course, they will qualify for the Certificate.

Description of the Two New Course for the Certificate (Pedagogy and Program Expectations):

Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice

This course is designed to provide students with knowledge, skills, and strategies required to promote social change from an agency and community level using an anti-oppression, anti-racist framework. In this course, students will explore the oppressive experiences of people from various backgrounds in terms of color, ethnicity, culture,

national origin, class, gender, age, religion, physical or mental ability, gender identity and expression, and sexuality. Students will have the opportunity to explore their own values, beliefs, cultures, and practice reflexivity. Students will learn how to employ an anti-oppression framework to address issues of discrimination, institutional racism and economic deprivation by starting within their own agencies and communities. Students will learn how to evaluate programs, conduct community needs assessments, locate and apply for project funding, and manage reflexivity and teamwork as part of their social justice approach and anti-oppressive practice.

Social Justice and Social Work: Current Issues and Responses

This course is designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and strategies required to promote social justice in an effective and ethical manner. Students will examine social work's historical and current commitment to social justice and the role of social workers in the responses to these challenges.

Social justice is a type of justice rooted in the idea that all people should have equal rights, opportunities, and treatment. Social injustices arise when actions are taken that infringe upon a group's rights, marginalize their opportunities, or treat them unfairly. Using a social justice lens, students will reflect on the current challenges facing the lives of individuals, families, and communities and examine ways to advocate for and effect needed changes.

Topics will emphasize best practices to effect transformative actions and may vary from year to year in response to the trends, crises, and topics dominating our larger social environment. Topics may include racial violence in our criminal justice system, socioeconomic disparities impact on health and mental health, or gun violence and safety in our schools. Students will examine each issue in relation to its historical roots, current social conditions, and corresponding social movements. Students will develop an advocacy plan that highlights leadership skills and takes aim at proposing changes to clinical practice, research, or policy.

In this course, students will complete a **final capstone project** as a requirement of this certificate. The project may be community-engaged, participatory, and based on projects in their field education agencies, course work, or participation extracurricular activities such as the "Legislative Education and Advocacy Days" sponsored by the National Association of Social Workers. Students will present their project to their peers, social work faculty, and/or other designated community forums determined by the professor each year in consultation with the students.

Monitoring Student Performance: Students who participate in the certificate program will meet with their advisor to plan out the completion of the four courses. The student will notify the certificate coordinator of their plans to pursue the certificate. Professors who teach the required courses for this certificate will inform the certificate coordinator if there are any concerns regarding the students' progress so that corrective action may be taken as soon as possible.

Catalog Language

Graduate Certificate in Social Justice and Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice

A graduate certificate in Social Justice and Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice will prepare graduates to address current issues of social justice and injustice through the process of anti-oppressive practice and policy change within our larger societal systems. The certificate will:

3. Prepare students for evidence-based practice in assessing and addressing issues related to social justice and oppression through community development, advocacy, policy formation, and other social work strategies.
4. Provide students with community-engaged learning and reflective practice with regard to social justice and anti-oppression.

Program Requirements:

A student enrolled in the Masters of Social Work degree program at FAU may earn the graduate certificate by completing the following course requirements:

- SOW 3232/6235: Social Welfare Policy (3 credits)
- SOW 4343/6306: Practice with Communities and Organizations (3 credits)
- SOW 6387: Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice (3 credits)
- SOW 6286: Social Justice and Social Work: Current Issues and Responses (3 credits, including the capstone project)