SWK6134 – Values and Ethics

Course Outline

I. Course Description

This course builds upon the content covered in Jewish Social Philosophy. Whereas the themes in the Jewish Social Philosophy course were philosophical, in this semester they are practical, encompassing specific values. The focus of this course is on value conflicts and ethical dilemmas in social work practice. Value conflicts emerge when the values of society, the social work profession, clients, agencies, religion and personal values are juxtaposed. The value conflicts are identified, converted into ethical dilemmas, illuminated through ethical theory, and resolved through ethical decision-making models.

As a culmination of the introduction to values and ethics of other courses, this course formalizes the study of values and ethics into models of value analysis and ethical decision-making. The models are applied to concrete issues and cases, thus combining theory with practice in ethics. Students learn how to discern value conflicts and ethical dilemmas in their work with clients, in social policy and social welfare, and engage in the process of making ethical decisions.

The study of values and ethics reinforces the school’s commitment to prepare social workers, regardless of ethnic and religious persuasion, to learn how to reason and deal with the complexities of moral and ethical issues in practice, policy, and society. Ethical dilemmas arise when there are value conflicts when working with culturally diverse groups, populations at risk, clients of different ethnic or religious backgrounds, ages, genders or pathologies. Appreciating the pervasiveness of value and ethical conflicts in social policy and practice is the prime learning achievement in this course.

II. Linkages

The study of values and ethics is a required course for all second year students. Students should have worked with clients and client systems for a year and been exposed to a range of value conflicts and ethical dilemmas in their practice. Students will learn how to identify an ethical dilemma and how to resolve it. The course reinforces and develops further the discussions on values and ethics in the Foundations courses. It continues the focus on the development of the professional self that began in the Human Behavior and the Social Environment course. It connects to the second year practice courses, as students share their practice experiences that evoke ethical concerns. The values of different ethnic and religious groups and populations at risk discussed in the Cultural Diversity course are explored. Other topics that are included in the content of this course are the feminist ethic of care, substance abuse, AIDS, battered women, child abuse, the elderly and end-of-life decisions.

III. Course Structure

This course is divided into two parts: 1) a theoretical analysis of values and value conflicts, ethics and ethical dilemmas, accompanied by models of analysis and decision-making, and 2) their application to social problems and conflict situations with clients.

Initially, the teacher guides the theoretical discussions in Part I of the course. The students then take responsibility for Part II of the course.
IV. Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will demonstrate knowledge and skill related to:

1. Enhancing their self-discovery by confirming, confronting, and articulating their own values and philosophical beliefs.
2. Understanding the nature and function of values.
3. Discerning the values underlying conflicts in practice and social policy.
4. Developing ways of dealing with personal and professional value conflicts.
5. The role of religious and spiritual values with clients.
6. Understanding the connection between values and ethics.
7. Identifying and resolving ethical dilemmas in practice.
8. Discerning the differences between professional values and ethics and religious values and ethics.
9. Developing a philosophy of helping through the application of value and ethical models to professional practice.
10. Respecting differences with regard to each other's religious/ethnic values.

V. Instructional Methods

Learning will occur through a variety of methods and experiences such as presentations and questions and answers - seminar style.

VI. Course Expectations and Grading

Students are expected to attend all classes and to be on time. Class participation is essential for learning and testing one's ideas. Students are expected to do the required readings. Grades will be based primarily on written assignments and class participation. Attendance will also be considered. Students are evaluated through 1) the first paper on applying Levy's model of values classification to a conflict between parties concerning a client (20%); 2) the final paper on applying both the Levy model and the Beauchamp and Childress model of ethical decision-making to an ethical dilemma (50%); and 3) participation in class discussion (30%).

VII. Assignments

First Assignment
Select a situation from your practice where there is a conflict between you and a colleague, agency, parent or supervisor, over a client or group.

1. Describe the conflict and summarize it in one sentence.
2. Enter the values of each of the parties to the conflict in a chart, using Levy's values classification model.
3. Explain the entries in the chart.

This assignment fulfills objectives #1, 2, 3. It is due at the fourth class session.
Final Assignment
For the final assignment, there is a choice between a class presentation or a final paper. Both fulfill objectives # 1, 3, 6, 7, 9.

Class Presentation
Students may opt to make a class presentation by themselves or in conjunction with another student, usually beginning with the ninth class session. The outline for the class presentation is an abbreviated form of the final paper. Presenters meet with the teacher several weeks prior to the scheduled presentation to review the topic, discuss the literature, and the mode of presentation.

One week prior to the scheduled presentation, presenters distribute a 5-page outline of the topic that includes its value and ethical dimensions, along with a case illustration, questions for class discussion, and a bibliography. An article may also be appended. The purpose of this outline is to provide the class with background information on the topic, so that discussion can focus on the value and ethical dimensions in practice. Presenters utilize different programmatic devices such as role-plays, small group discussions, debates, videos, etc. In the outline, presenters describe only the ethical dilemma; the students do the analysis in class.

Outline for Class Presentation
"An Ethical Dilemma"

1. Briefly describe the agency.
2. State the topic and why you chose it.
3. Locate the topic in a context of values that include societal, religious, client, agency, and personal values.
4. Present the conflict situation for class discussion without any analysis.
5. Questions for class discussion.
6. Bibliography

Class discussion
In the class discussion, your goal is to elicit your classmates’ understanding of Levy’s values classification model and Beauchamp and Childress’ ethical decision-making model. You are required to apply both models to the case in writing. This is not to be distributed to the class but to the teacher at the end of the presentation.

Final Paper
“An Ethical Dilemma”

The final paper is an alternative to the class presentation. The purpose of this paper is to achieve the main objectives of the course: to identify an ethical dilemma and detail the process of its resolution.

Select a topic, preferably from your practice, that has wider social import. Obtain prior approval of the topic from your teacher.

1. Discuss the values underlying the topic from the perspectives of society, religion, the agency, the client, and your own.

2. Present a case in which the social worker is in conflict with the client, family, agency, group, or community. Describe the conflict situation and then summarize it in one sentence without any analysis.
3. In your analysis, use Levy's classification of values in chart form to present the values of the different parties to the conflict. Levy's classification can only be applied when the conflict is between two or more parties concerning the client, not if the client is a central party to the conflict. Discuss the entries in the chart.

4. Levy's model should be followed by discussion of the ethical considerations that are evoked by this conflict. Portray the conflict in a chart, using the Beauchamp and Childress ethical decision-making model. Then explain your entries in narrative form. Discuss how to go about resolving the ethical dilemma.

5. Present your resolution of the dilemma and your rationale for it.

6. Throughout the paper, cite relevant literature on the topic and on the value and ethical considerations.


**Paper is due on April 28.**

**Plagiarism**

Students should remember that the school does not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else’s work as his or her own is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another’s work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another’s work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as one’s own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else’s work. However, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of the assignment in this course will FAIL the course, and will be referred to the Associate Dean automatically for disciplinary action that may include expulsion.

**VII. Required Text**


**Recommended texts**


VIII. COURSE OUTLINE

Part I – Theoretical Framework (Sessions 1-3)

I. The nature of values
Covers learning objectives 1 and 2

Learning Themes
1. Definition of values
2. Values in contrast to preferences
3. The functions of values
4. Values classification model

Readings * denotes required reading


II. Value Conflicts Between Social Worker and Client (Session 4)
Covers learning objective 3

Learning Themes
1. Moving from the nature and function of values, this unit focuses on the nature of value conflicts between social worker and client.
2. Client resistance to change may be due not only to psychological factors, but also to traditional, cultural values.

Readings


Linzer, N. Ethical dilemmas in Jewish communal service, Chapters 4, 13.

Linzer, N. Resolving ethical dilemmas, Chapters 1, 11, 12.

III. Conflict Between Personal and Professional Values (Session 5)
Covers learning objectives 4, 5

Learning Themes
1. Factors that influence personal values, with a particular emphasis on religion.
2. What is the social worker to do with personal values in the professional context?
3. Dealing with personal values and ethics and their interface with professional values and ethics.

Readings

Linzer, N. Ethical dilemmas in Jewish communal service. Chapters 3, 6, 7.

Linzer, N. Resolving ethical dilemmas, Chapter 3.


IV. Ethics (Session 6-8)
Covers learning objectives 6, 7, 8

Learning Themes
Session #6
1. Values and ethics
2. Nature of ethics
3. Sources of ethics

Session #7
1. Identifying ethical dilemmas
2. Three ethical theories - deontology, utilitarianism, the ethic of care.

Session #8
The process of ethical decision-making.

Readings (The readings encompass the themes of the three sessions)


Case examples are presented throughout.

Part II – Applying Theory to Practice

Using the theoretical perspective of values and ethics as a base, the course proceeds to focus on value and ethical conflicts in social work practice.

Sessions #9 - 14 are devoted to presentations by students and teacher of ethical dilemmas in practice. Covers learning objectives 7, 8, 9, 10,

The students and the teacher decide upon the content of Part II of the course. The social problem or conflict situation selected for analysis usually derives from the population served by the student in field placement.

Over the years, topics have included AIDS, child abuse, confidentiality, DNR (do not resuscitate), euthanasia, marriage, divorce, homosexuality, substance abuse, domestic violence, Jewish communal service, managed care, welfare policy, teen pregnancy, the role of women, poverty, and homelessness. These topics are studied from societal, social work, religion, agency, client and student values and the ethical dilemmas that they produce. Case illustrations abound, so that theory and practice are integrated.
Bibliography

A selection of readings on specific topics from major books:

Beauchamp, T.L. and Childress, J.F. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics.*
Chapter 3: Respect for autonomy
Chapter 5: Beneficence
Chapter 6: Justice

Congress, E.P. *Social Work Values and Ethics*
Chapter 5: Mental health
Chapter 6: Child welfare
Chapter 7: Health care
Chapter 8: Group and family care
Chapter 9: Aging
Chapter 12: HIV/AIDS

Linzer, N. *Ethical Dilemmas in Jewish Communal Service.*
Chapter 8: Circumventing the waiting list
Chapter 9: Fund-raising
Chapter 11: Resettling Soviet Jews
Chapter 12: Serving homosexuals in the Jewish community center
Chapter 14: Intermarriage

Linzer, N. *Resolving Ethical Dilemmas in Social Work Practice.*
Chapter 5: Confidentiality
Chapter 6: Domestic violence
Chapter 7: Child welfare
Chapter 8: Welfare reform
Chapter 9: Managed care
Chapter 11: Autonomy and paternalism
Chapter 12: Refusal of services
Chapter 13: Assisted suicide
Chapter 14: Spirituality, ethics and social work in long-term care

Loewenberg, F.M. *Religion and Social Work Practice in Contemporary American Society.*
Chapter 5: Practice issues and dilemmas

Chapter 4: Confidentiality and informed consent
Chapter 5: Client rights and professional expertise
Chapter 7: Equality, inequality, and limited resources
Chapters 8: Professional-client relationships
Chapter 12: Social work with selected client groups

A selection of readings on specific topics from journals:

Aging


**AIDS**


**Child Abuse**


**Confidentiality**


**End-of-Life Decisions**


Ethics


Managed Care


