

Master of Social Work

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Mission Statement

The University of Southern Maine's School of Social Work is committed to educating culturally competent generalist social work practitioners prepared for multi-level, strengths-based practice that values the centrality of community in enhancing the well-being of diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Program Description and Requirements

The M.S.W. program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

The School of Social Work graduate program description and requirements contained in this online catalog are supplemented by two additional documents (i.e., the M.S.W. Handbook and the M.S.W. Field Work Manual) that can also be accessed online at www.usm.maine.edu/swo/manuals.htm and www.usm.maine.edu/swo/handbooks.htm. The Field Work Manual is also available for purchase at the campus bookstore. It is important to recognize that students will be held to the policies and standards in this catalog, the M.S.W. Handbook, and the Field Work Manual.

The first-year curriculum provides a broad-based introduction to the social work profession. Students take 31 credits of study. During the first semester, students complete the Multicultural Social Work course that provides a framework for integrating and centering the issue of diversity within the profession of social work. Courses taken during the foundation year are:

SWO	501	Multicultural Social Work
SWO	502	Critical Thinking about Human Behavior I
SWO	503	Generalist Social Work Practice I
SWO	504	Social Welfare Policy I
SWO	505	Social Work Research I
SWO	552	Critical Thinking about Human Behavior II
SWO	553	Generalist Social Work Practice II
SWO	554	Field Work and Field Seminar I
SWO	555	Field Work and Field Seminar II
		One Elective Course

During the second-year (i.e. concentration year), students deepen their competency for multi-level professional practice within the advanced generalist community social work curriculum. Increased emphasis is placed on the development of creativity, critical thinking, valuing diversity, social and economic justice, and leadership. Students are prepared to work with individuals and families as well as organizations and communities. During the concentration year, students complete 33 additional credits including two additional semesters of field work and three electives. In consultation with their advisor, students can select graduate electives in the School of Social Work and/or other University programs. No more than six graduate credits can be taken outside the School and elective courses should support the concentration in advanced generalist community practice and the individual student's career goals. Concentration year courses are:

SWO	603	Social Work Practice III: Organizations and Communities
SWO	604	Social Welfare Policy II
SWO	605	Social Work Research II: Social Data Analysis
SWO	651	Social Work Practice IV: Individuals and Families
SWO	652	Social Work Research III: The Research Project (or SWO 695 Thesis Option)
SWO	654	Field Work and Field Seminar III
SWO	655	Field Work and Field Seminar IV
		Three Elective Courses

Time Requirements

The graduation requirement for the M.S.W. degree is 64 credits, which can be taken in a two-year sequence or a four-year sequence. Students will be admitted as a cohort group either to the two-year or four-year sequence. In rare extenuating circumstances, an extension of the time requirement for completing the MSW program may be granted (see the MSW Student Handbook). The foundation year(s) field placement includes 500 hours and the concentration year(s) placement 600 hours.

The advanced standing program is 33 credits which is the concentration year of the M.S.W. program. Advanced standing students will be admitted either to the one-year or the two-year sequence. The field placement requirement for the advanced standing program is 600 hours.

Once enrolled in the program, a change in sequence requires approval of the M.S.W. coordinator. It should be noted that the two-year sequence and the one-year sequence in the advanced standing program are highly demanding and work other than part-time is discouraged.

Field Work

Field education is the heart of the M.S.W. program. Professional social work education provides the necessary opportunity for students to apply and integrate classroom learning with social work practice in the community. A range of challenging field work placements exists in innovative and well-established social service agencies throughout Maine. Any decision about the suitability of a proposed placement rests with the School of Social Work.

The field work component of the M.S.W. policies and procedures are detailed in the Field Work Manual that is available through the School of Social Work Web site or may be purchased at the campus bookstore. All M.S.W. students are responsible for following the policies outlined in the manual.

Application and Admission

All materials must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Admissions by February 1 for admission to the program in September. Because it takes several weeks for the scores on the GRE or MAT to be received, it is important that students plan accordingly.

The graduate program in social work seeks candidates whose baccalaureate preparation, scholastic achievement, professional experience, interest, motivation, and references are predictive of successful completion of the M.S.W. program. Only candidates who have earned a bachelor's degree are admitted to the M.S.W. program. The M.S.W. Admissions Committee's review of applications for admission will be based on a composite of the following standards:

1. Completion of a bachelor's degree with a GPA of 3.0 or above in undergraduate study and a student's major;
2. GPA of 3.0 or above in any previous graduate work in social work;
3. Personal statement of 4-6 pages following the outline provided by the School of Social Work and available through the Graduate Admissions Office;
4. Three recent letters of reference reflecting on both academic achievement and paid or volunteer work experience relating to social services;
5. Official scores from the GRE or Miller Analogy Test; and
6. For advanced standing students, applicants must submit their previous final field evaluation received from a B.S.W. program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. For students currently enrolled in accredited B.S.W. programs, mid-year evaluations must be submitted with the applications. Acceptance into the M.S.W. program will be conditional upon the receipt of the final field work evaluation.

In addition, the M.S.W. Admissions Committee will review each applicant's undergraduate coursework to determine whether any one or more of the areas specified below are under-represented:

1. At least 24 credit hours in liberal arts such as literature, math, history, philosophy, performing arts, and humanities,
2. At least 9 of the 24 credits must be in the social sciences, and
3. A statistics course.

Students who lack in the above liberal arts courses can be accepted into the program conditionally for one year, after which, the completion of a B- or better grades in all liberal arts courses will be evaluated for removal of the conditional status.

Advanced Standing

Applicants with a B.S.W. degree from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education may apply for advanced standing within 6 years of completing a B.S.W. degree. For example, a student graduating with a B.S.W. in May 2007 must be accepted into and begin the M.S.W. advanced standing program at USM no later than September 2014. Once in the program, advanced standing students are expected to follow the grade policy as delineated in the Grade Policy: Course Grades and GPA section below.

Admission Appeals

Applicants may appeal an admission decision by submitting a written appeal to the M.S.W. coordinator within 10 business days.

Graduate Assistantships and Scholarships

A limited number of graduate assistantships are available to M.S.W. students. Graduate Assistants must carry a minimum of 6 credits of course work per semester. Duties may involve research and other projects for assisting faculty. Information on various types of scholarships and financial aid is available online at the School of Social Work Web site.

Transfer Students

Matriculated students who have earned graduate credits in a Council on Social Work Education accredited M.S.W. program may transfer up to 30 credits. To transfer credits, students must enroll in the graduate program at USM within 7 years of initially earning credits from another M.S.W. program. In order to transfer credits, the student must have received a grade of B or above.

Program Policies

The following academic policies supplement and clarify academic policies detailed in the beginning of this catalog.

Advisement

Each student will be assigned a faculty advisor upon admission to the program. Students are encouraged to maintain regular contact with their faculty advisors throughout their course of study. Additionally, students are required to meet with their advisors each semester before registering courses for a new semester. The advisement session includes discussion of career goals, progress in the program, elective course selection, and change of student status.

Grade Policy: Course Grades and GPA

All students must achieve a minimum of a B- grade for all prerequisites and all graduate courses. If students earn a grade lower than a B-, they may retake the course one more time to earn a passing grade. Students who earn a grade lower than a B- in more than one course may not progress in their studies without permission of the director of the School of Social Work. Students are required to earn a grade of B or above in social work practice and field work courses. If satisfactory completion of social work practice and field work courses is not achieved, an academic review process will be initiated according to the M.S.W. Student Handbook. Advanced standing students who receive a B- or lower grade in a social work practice course will be withdrawn from field placement and advanced standing status. The student may be permitted to continue in the program as a regular two-year student. A grade of F in a field work course will result in withdrawal from the University (see USM Withdrawal Policy).

If the cumulative GPA falls below a 3.0 (i.e. B average) in any semester, the student will be placed on probation. The student on probation will have the following semester to raise the GPA. A student on academic probation may not begin a field placement. If, after one semester the student's GPA has not improved to a 3.0, the student will be withdrawn from the program. A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation. Students may count only 3 credits of C in an elective course toward graduation. A cumulative GPA below 2.0 will result in withdrawal from the University (see USM withdrawal policy). Additionally, any advanced standing student whose GPA drops below 3.0 will not be able to register for field work until they raise their GPA to 3.0 or above. Students who receive a grade lower than B- or whose GPA drops below a 3.0 must contact their advisor or the School's director (if advisor is unavailable) within one week of receiving their grades.

Grade Policy: Incompletes

An incomplete grade must be changed to a full grade prior to progression to the next sequential course, unless an arrangement involving the student and the faculty has been agreed upon in writing. Students who do not complete the required work by the designated time will be ineligible for field practicum placement in September.

Academic Grade Appeal Policy

Refer to USM Grade Appeal Policy.

Leave of Absence and Deferment

Graduate students in the School of Social Work must be continuously enrolled in the M.S.W. program, with at least 6 credits every semester. Students who have completed all coursework and have opted to complete a thesis are required to register for GRS 601, a non-credit course that carries a fee and entitles the student to continued access to USM computers, library, and recreational facilities. In extenuating circumstances, a student may petition for a waiver of the continuous enrollment policy; the petition must obtain the approval of the student's advisor and M.S.W. Coordinator. A waiver notification will then be sent to the Office of Graduate Admissions. Students who have been accepted into the program may apply to the M.S.W. Coordinator to defer the admission for one year and one year only. A deferment notification will be sent to the Office of Graduate Admissions. In order to maintain student status, all students must be enrolled in at least 6 credits toward the degree program, be enrolled in GRS 601, or on a formal approved leave of absence in each semester.

Non-Matriculated Status

Students may take up to 9 credits at USM on a non-matriculated basis. Non-matriculated students must register for SWO 501 as their first course. Other courses non-matriculated students can select from are SWO 502, SWO 504, SWO 505, SWO 552, or an elective course with permission of the instructor.

It is especially important to note that non-matriculated students who are accepted into the M.S.W. program at a later date can receive credits for a total of 9 credits from USM and/or graduate schools including the School of Social Work. The School of Social Work also reserves the right to approve all courses taken outside of the USM School of Social Work to be counted toward the M.S.W. degree.

Program Scheduling

While the School of Social Work will make every effort to maintain consistency in its course offerings, it is important to note that the scheduling of courses are subject to change at any time without advance notice.

SWO 501 Multicultural Social Work

This introductory course provides content on culturally diverse populations and serves as the basis for the infusion of cultural diversity issues throughout the graduate curriculum. The premise of this course asserts that the United States is a multicultural society in which social work cannot function effectively unless there is an understanding of how diversity strengthens and enriches us all. Open to non-matriculated graduate students. Cr 3.

SWO 502 Critical Thinking about Human Behavior I

This course examines the theories which address human behavior in mezzo and macro systems. The cultural context of behavior at all levels is an integral and underlying theme of the course. Systems theories, conflict theories, and social constructionist theories are presented. Open to non-matriculated graduate students. Cr 3.

SWO 503 Generalist Social Work Practice I

This course provides the student with an opportunity to acquire beginning generalist practice knowledge and skills in working with individuals, families, groups, and communities. Emphasis is placed on the development of basic practice, interpersonal, self-reflection, and communication skills. Corequisite or prerequisite: SWO 501. Cr 3.

SWO 504 Social Welfare Policy I

This introductory policy course provides an overview of the history of social welfare as well as an introduction to current social policy issues and dilemmas. Emphasis is placed on historical continuities in analyzing the American system of social welfare provision and lack of provision. Corequisite or prerequisite: SWO 501. Open to non-matriculated graduate students. Cr 3.

SWO 505 Social Work Research I

This course introduces a body of knowledge, skills,

and attitudinal perspectives designed to produce a high level of competence in the use of social scientific methods of knowledge building. Structured, analytical processes of inquiry are introduced, as well as a rigorous adherence to social work values and ethics. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry are discussed. Prerequisite: SWO 501. Open to non-matriculated graduate students. Cr 3.

SWO 552 Critical Thinking about Human Behavior II

The course is designed to locate the interplay of biological, psychological, and sociological influences on human behavior within the broader context of culture. Cultural diversity and oppression are seen as central to understanding human behavior and evaluating human behavior theories. The course explores a range of psychological theories such as psychodynamic, narrative, cognitive, and behavioral to understand the person within the complexity of his/her life circumstances. Prerequisites: SWO 501, SWO 502. Open to non-matriculated graduate students. Cr 3.

SWO 553 Generalist Social Work Practice II

The knowledge, values, and skills for community social work are integrated throughout this course. Ecosystems and social construction theories provide the overarching framework. Within this context, methods for intervening with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities are introduced. Prerequisite: SWO 503, Cr 3.

SWO 554 Field Work and Field Seminar I

A graduate internship in an approved community agency, designed to relate social work theory to practice under professional supervision. Fall semester. Corequisite or prerequisite: SWO 503. Cr 3.5.

SWO 555 Field Work and Field Seminar II

A continuation of SWO 554. Spring semester. Corequisite or prerequisite: SWO 553. Cr 3.5.

SWO 561 Sexual Diversity and Gender Identity in Social Work Practice

This course examines the sensitivity and skills needed to achieve constructive interaction between the social work professional and persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning their sexual identity. This course will explore the many controversial theoretical and practice issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and human sexuality. This course is an elective in both the undergraduate and graduate social work programs. Cr 3.

SWO 563 Social Work with Groups

This course incorporates knowledge building regarding the conceptual base and practice skills of social group work. There is a focus on the uses of groups to bring about change in the individuals, change in the social environment, or change in the larger social system. The range of group models from treatment/growth oriented to task/action oriented groups are addressed. Prerequisite: SWO 553. Cr 3.

SWO 575 Gender and Aging

A theoretical and practical course that informs students about aging issues affecting women and men differentially. Students will analyze the manifestations of aging and apply concepts drawn from the behavioral and social sciences. Service learning experience may be available. This course is an elective in both the undergraduate and graduate social work programs. Cr 3.

SWO 585 Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents

This course introduces the specialized knowledge and skills needed for social work practice relative to child sexual abuse, with a strong focus on understanding the dynamics when sexual abuse occurs in trusted relationships within families, organizations, and institutions. The course provides students the opportunity to integrate current research and theories around etiology, impact, and treatment within issues of resiliency, family strength, social support systems, diversity, value dilemmas, and social justice. This course stresses the need to base a practice approach on the holistic strengths-risks-based assessment of the child and the family and highlights the collaborative roles various providers play at all levels of the response systems including investigation, validation, intervention, and prevention. Cr 3

SWO 590 Mind/Body/Spirit Connections in Social Work Practice

Examines mind/body/spirit connections in social work practice with regard to stress and its management (meditation, breath-control, other relaxation techniques), stress-related illnesses and personalities; complementary therapies (mainstream and culturally specific); and spirituality. This course is an elective in both the undergraduate and graduate social work programs. Cr 3.

SWO 596/696 Topics in Diversity

A variety of elective courses under this title are offered to facilitate students' development of competency in working with different population groups such as those oppressed by race and ethnicity, language, nationality, social class, gender, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, spiritual and religious affiliation, and other factors. Prerequisite: SWO 501 or equivalent as determined by the instructor. Additional prerequisite may be required for some elective courses. Cr 3.

SWO 597 Independent Study

This is an individualized course of study, during the foundation year, on some aspect of social work or social welfare to be selected as a result of consultation between a student and a faculty member. Cr 1-3.

SWO 598/698 Topics in Community Social Work Practice

A variety of elective courses under this title are offered to cover a wide spectrum of micro and macro practice issues. These courses facilitate stu-

dents' exploration of new practice areas or enhancement of advanced practice skills. Prerequisite: SWO 503 or equivalent as determined by the instructor. Additional prerequisite may be required for some elective courses. Cr 3.

SWO 603 Social Work Practice III: Organizations and Communities

This course builds on the concepts presented in Practice I and II. This course further develops students' generalist values, knowledge, and skills for planned change with a particular focus on work with populations of special concern to social work. The course content emphasizes practice within communities and organizations. Prerequisites: SWO 553, SWO 555. Cr 3.

SWO 604 Social Welfare Policy II

This course provides a theoretical and critical model of analyzing policy processes. It contains an overview of policy analysis with particular emphasis on social conflict theory and social constructionist theories of policy formation. Prerequisite: SWO 504, SWO 554, SWO 555. Cr 3.

SWO 605 Social Work Research II: Social Data Analysis

This course provides an interactive learning environment in which students learn to analyze quantitative and qualitative existing social data. The goal of this course is to increase the analytical competencies of students in the planning, and eventual execution, of a community-based research project. Prerequisite: SWO 505. Cr 3.

SWO 651 Social Work Practice IV: Individuals and Families

This course contextualizes the facilitation of change with individuals and families within organizations and communities. Approaches to social work practice are taught within an ecosystems, strengths-based framework that reflects a commitment to the values of social and economic justice, cultural diversity, and individual and collective self-determination. Corequisite or prerequisite: SWO 603. Prerequisite: SWO 555. Cr 3.

SWO 652 Social Work Research III: The Research Project

This course involves the utilization of the research

knowledge and skills learned in SWO 505 Social Work Research I and SWO 605 Social Work Research II, and their application to selected social problems or issues of relevance to the needs of special populations or to the social work profession. Prerequisite: SWO 605. Cr 3.

SWO 654 Field Work and Field Seminar III

A graduate internship during the concentration year at an approved community agency, designed to relate social work theory to practice under professional supervision. Fall semester. Corequisite or prerequisite: SWO 603. Cr 4.5.

SWO 655 Field Work and Field Seminar IV

A continuation of SWO 654. Spring semester. Corequisite or prerequisite: SWO 651. Prerequisite: SWO 654. Cr 4.5.

SWO 660 Advanced Biopsychosocial Assessment

This course is designed to facilitate the acquisition of practice skills specific to in-depth biopsychosocial assessment. Assessment is viewed as the process of understanding a person in order to formulate a practice approach rather than a fixed descriptive category. This course relies heavily upon theories presented in SWO 502 and SWO 552. Consideration of persons within a cultural context is emphasized throughout. Cr 3.

SWO 695 Thesis Option

In lieu of SWO 652, students may apply to the Research Sequence Curriculum Committee for permission to take the Thesis Option. This option provides structure and assistance to students wishing to complete a formal thesis rather than a research project. Upon completion, the student will present a verbal summary of the thesis at a formal thesis defense meeting. This option may be especially attractive for those students contemplating advanced doctoral-level education in social work or in other social sciences. Cr 6.

SWO 697 Independent Study

This is an individualized course of study, during the concentration year, on some aspect of social work or social welfare to be selected as a result of consultation between a student and a faculty member. Cr 1-3.