


**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY**

	<b>Social Work and the Law (Forensic Social Work)</b>	
<b>SWRK 671</b>	<b>(3 credit hours)</b>	<b>Spring 2018</b>
<b>W. Jay Gabbard, Ph.D., MSW</b>		<b>Office: 211 Academic Complex</b>
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<b>Phone: (270) 745-8749</b>		
<b>Astrological Sign: Aquarius</b>		
<b>Class Meeting Times/Dates: January 22-May 11</b>		
<b>Location: Online</b>		
<b>Prereq: Good standing in MSW Program</b>		

**Course Description:**

Forensic social work is an exciting, emerging practice specialization concerned with the relationship between **social work and the law**. More specifically, it is “social work practice which in any way is related to legal issues and litigation, both criminal and civil” (National Organization of Forensic Social Workers, 2016).

Due to the increasingly litigious nature of society, it is critical that professional social workers are sufficiently equipped to effectively interact with the legal system. They also need to be cognizant of how legal issues impact their practice, including issues of malpractice, risk management, case recording, written contracts, professional credentials, and professional review.

Forensic social workers work with a variety of client populations, including victims and perpetrators of: child abuse and neglect, hate crimes, domestic violence, serial crimes, gang violence, adult abuse and neglect, and crimes of person and property. The common bond these client groups share is the extensive role of the legal system plays in resolving their respective situations.

Some primary job duties of forensic social workers include: conducting psychosocial histories with forensic clients, testifying in court (representing both agencies and as expert witnesses), conducting child abuse and neglect investigations, assisting forensic psychiatrists and

psychologists with competency and criminal responsibility evaluations, linking clients to legal resources, advocating for greater legal protection for vulnerable client populations, and serving as expert witnesses in civil and criminal trials.

The primary purpose of this course is to afford students an initial exposure to the practice of forensic social work/social work and the law. Students in the course will examine the following topics:

- History and Current Status of Forensic Social Work in the U.S.
- Social Work and the Law/Testifying in Court/Expert Witness Testimony
- Preparing for Litigation
- Malpractice and Risk Management
- Juvenile and Adult Justice Services/Corrections & Women in the Correctional System
- Issue with Criminal Defendants-Competency and Responsibility
- Case Recording, Written Contracts, Professional Credentials
- Forensic Interviewing
- Ethics and Social Work Practice
- Victim/Offender Relationships
- Working with Victims of Hate Crimes and Violence
- Civil Liberties and Civil Rights of Forensic Clients
- Working with Members of Street Gangs (Adult and Juvenile)
- Etiology, Nature, and Treatment of Serial Criminal Offenders

The course will be conducted in an **all online seminar format**. On most weeks of the course (specified on the syllabus), the professor will post a video lecture on the assigned topic for that week, which will reinforce and supplement assigned readings. Lectures by the instructor will be

supplemented by guest lectures by experts on various forensic topics, websites, articles, discussion board topics, external links, and other resources.

In terms of **course readings**, the primary texts for the course are Barker and Branson (2000) and Rome (2013). In addition to the primary texts, students may be required to read handouts or other supplementary materials on specific forensic topics. Students will also view websites pertinent to course topics, as well as videos that put more of a “face” to forensic issues.

In terms of **specific assignments** (see later section for more specifics), students will complete one take home essay final, 10 discussion board exercises, one substantive paper on a forensic topic of their choice, and be assessed for online professionalism and participation in the course. Students are expected to watch all video lectures, complete all assigned readings, view all pertinent course documents and websites, and respond (by the deadline) to any discussion board topics posted by the professor.

### **Required Texts:**

Barker, R., & Branson, D. M. (2000) *Forensic social work: Legal aspects of professional practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Haworth.

Rome, S. (2013). *Social work and the law: Judicial policy and forensic practice*. Boston: Pearson.

### **MSW Mission Statement:**

In keeping with the tenets of the program, the purposes of social work, constituent needs, and the regional characteristics of south central and western Kentucky, the mission of the MSW program at WKU is to educate and prepare students for professional social work practice to meet the needs of increasingly diverse rural populations. The program is particularly dedicated to addressing the work force needs of agencies working with Kentucky’s families and communities. In addition, the program emphasizes professional and scholarly service to the community, the state, and the nation

### **Academic Support**

Most of us find that we need some academic support and direction during our time in the university. WKU offers many resources that can help you be successful in this course. These are listed below.

- **STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES**

In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in DUC A-200 of the Student Success Center in Downing University Center. The phone number is 270-745-5004.

Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services. Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

- **WRITING CENTER ASSISTANCE**

The Writing Center is located in Cherry Hall 123 on the Bowling Green campus and also offers online consultations for students who live at a distance or who cannot visit during our operating hours. Our writing tutors have been trained to provide helpful feedback to students at all phases of a writing project: they can help you brainstorm ideas, structure your essay, clarify your purpose, strengthen your support, and edit for clarity and correctness. But they will not revise or edit the paper for you. See instructions of the website [www.wku.edu/writingcenter](http://www.wku.edu/writingcenter) for making online or face-to-face appointments. Or call (270) 745-5719 during our operating hours (also listed on our website) for help scheduling an appointment.

- **LEARNING ASSISTANCE AT WKU**

The Alice Rowe Learning Assistance Center (LAC) is located on the South Campus, SC 238. This facility is open between MSW classes 12:30 – 1:30 for writing assistance, computer access or a quiet place to study.

- **OFF CAMPUS LIBRARY SUPPORT** The Extended Campus Library Services Office will copy citations and pull library books for students at extended campuses and send them through the mail. There is no cost to students (although you do have to pay to return the library books). WKU also has a courier service to extended campuses. For further information, go to: [http://www.wku.edu/library/dlps/ext\\_camp.htm](http://www.wku.edu/library/dlps/ext_camp.htm)  
Turn-around time can be anywhere from a few days to two weeks, so plan ahead!

**Policy:**

Students are expected to adhere to all policies contained within the MSW Handbook (<http://www.wku.edu/socialwork/msw/handbooks.php>) and the Code of Student Conduct at Western Kentucky University (<http://www.wku.edu/judicialaffairs/student-code-of-conduct.php>).

**Professionalism:**

The NASW Code of Ethics (<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>) is a guiding framework and source for identifying professional performance. Students are expected to practice in an ethical manner while in the classroom or completing assignments pertaining to this course in accordance with the MSW Student Handbook, WKU Student Code of Conduct and the NASW Code of Ethics Behaviors especially under consideration are those related to professional practice, mental illness and/or substance use, illegal activity and classroom behavior. Concerns in any of these four circumstances will be documented in a Professional Concerns Form and referred for a Student Professional Concerns Review. Students are expected to understand the policy, in its entirety, found in the MSW Student Handbook.

**Social Media:**

Privacy, confidentiality and professional boundaries must be examined as professional social workers especially in the age of technology. Professional standards found in the NASW Code of Ethics must be strictly followed concerning social media. Students using social media sites are expected to use the highest privacy settings on their social media profiles, so field agency personnel and/or clients cannot access photographs and private information. Students are not permitted to link to or view the social media profiles of clients or employees of the field placement agency. In the event that a student's social media profile or linkage is considered a poor professional practice or an ethical violation, the student issue will be documented in a Professional Concerns Form and referred for a Student Professional Concerns Review.

**Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:**

Plagiarism and cheating are prohibited. Academic dishonesty is prohibited by the MSW Handbook, the University Code of Student Conduct and is also counter to social work values and ethics included in the NASW Code of Ethics. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and ethical guidelines and to follow them at all times. Any instances of academic dishonesty will mean a grade of "zero" for the assignment and/or course failure. Student should review the "Academic Offences" section of the WKU Student Handbook at: <http://www.wku.edu/handbook/> and the "Ethical Principles" and "Acknowledging Credit" sections of the 1999 Code of Ethics, National Association of Social Workers found at: <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

**APA:**

Students are expected to use APA style (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) for writing, citing, and listing references. This is primarily for the paper, as discussion board exercises and the final can be less formal (more details on this later).

**Participation:**

Students are expected to participate in developing a **positive online learning environment** with the desire to learn. Regular visits to the course Blackboard site will enhance your learning experience. Students will predominantly work on their own in this course; however, some from time to time the instructor will ask students to comment on other's postings on the Discussion Board.

**Assignment Completion:**

Students are expected to turn all assignments in on time. Assignments which are late will be reduced at a rate of one letter grade per day. Discussion Board Assignments submitted late will be subject to a penalty of 3 points per day late. After one week, late assignments will no longer be accepted for credit but must be turned in to complete the course. It is up to the professor whether students will be granted extensions on assignments due to documented emergencies. No incompletes will be given unless with emergencies and documentation and approved by the professor.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

**Knowledge**

1. Articulate the field of forensic social work and its role in contemporary society.
2. Define essential concepts pertaining to social work and the law.
3. Select one area of forensic social work to specialize in and develop advanced knowledge in this area.

**Values**

4. Describe what is ethical forensic social work practice is.

5. Discuss areas of social work and the law that pertain to social work practice, including: malpractice considerations, scope of practice, licensure laws, lawsuits against social workers, and steps to reduce the likelihood of unethical practice.

**Skills**

6. Evaluate forensic social work research and discern quality inquiry from less substantiated evidence.
7. Produce a high quality final paper on a specialized topic pertaining to social work and the law.

## Course Outline

**Please follow the order suggested each week for optimal learning during this online course.**

**Week 1:** January 22-January 28

**Topic: Introduction to Course and Introductions**

Reading: Syllabus

Review: Course Blackboard Site

Watch: Intro to Course Video Lecture

**Assignments: Procure Textbooks, Read Syllabus, Review Blackboard Site**

**Discussion Board Exercise 1 due by 11 pm (CST) on 1/29**

**Week 2:** January 29-February 4

**Topics: Introduction to Forensic Social Work**

Readings: Barker & Branson (B & B) Chapters 1, 2, 3; Rome Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4

Watch: Introduction to Forensic Social Work Video Lecture

**Assignment: Discussion Board Exercise 2 due by 11 pm (CST) on 2/5**

**Week 3:** February 5-11

**Topics: Malpractice and Litigation**

Readings: B & B Chapters 5, 7, 8; Rome Chapter 5

Watch: Malpractice and Litigation Video Lecture

**Assignment: Discussion Board Exercise 3 due by 11 pm (CST) on 2/12**

**\*Students should Email Professor Proposed Paper Topic by 2/12 at 11 pm (CST)**



**Week 4:** February 12-18

**Topics: Criminology, Criminal Justice, & Juvenile Delinquency**

Readings: Rome, Chapter 12, 15

Watch: “An Interview with a Criminologist” Video Lecture-Dr. Holli Drummond-WKU Department of Sociology

**Assignment: Discussion Board Exercise 4 due by 11 pm (CST) on 2/19**

**Week 5:** February 19-25

**Topic: Serial Crime: Etiology, Nature, and Treatment Issues**

Readings: TBA

Watch: Video Lecture on Serial Crime and Working with Serial Criminals

**Assignment: Discussion Board Exercise 5 due by 11 pm (CST) on 2/26**

**Week 6:** February 26-March 4

**Topic: Incarceration and Correctional Social Work**

Readings: Rome Chapter 11, 13

Watch: Video Lecture: “The Road to Incarceration” Randy Johnson, MCJ

**Assignment: Discussion Board Exercise 6 due by 11 pm (CST) on 3/5**

**Week 7:** March 5-11

**Topic: Case Recording, Written Contracts, Social Work Credentials, & Title Protection**

Readings: B & B Chapters 9, 10

Watch: Video Lecture: "Case Recording, Written Contracts, Social Work Credentials, & Title Protection"

**Assignment: Work on Forensic Paper**

**Week 8:** \*WKU Spring Break March 12-18-Work on Forensic Paper

**Week 9:** March 19-25

**Topic: Testifying in Court and Judicial Proceedings**

Readings: B & B Chapters 3, 4

Watch: Video Lectures on Testifying in Court and "A Conversation with Trevor Webb, JD"

**Assignment: \*Forensic Critical Analysis Paper due to Professor via email by 11 (CST) on 3/26 (see separate assignment description for additional details)**

**Week 10:** March 26-April 1

**Topic: Forensic Social Work with Gang Members**

Readings: TBA Materials & Gang Related Websites

Watch: Video Lecture on Social Work with Gang Members

**Assignment: Discussion Board Exercise 7 due by 11 pm (CST) on 4/2**

**Week 11:** April 2-8

**Topic: Legal and Ethical Aspects of Social Work Practice & Forensic Work with Children**

Readings: B & B Chapter 6, Rome Chapters 6, 7, 8

Watch: Video Lecture on Legal and Ethical Aspects of Social Work Practice

**Assignment: \*None due to PRE Exam on Monday, April 9**

**Week 12:** April 9-15

**Topics: Forensic Interviewing (Guest Lecture by Denise McMillian)**

Readings: TBA

Watch: Video Lecture on Forensic Interviewing

**Assignment: Discussion Board Exercise 8 due by 11 pm (CST) on 4/16**

**Week 13:** April 16-22

**Topic: Civil Liberties Civil Rights in Forensic Social Work Practice**

Reading: Rome Chapters 16, 17, 18, 19, 20

Watch: Video Lecture on Civil Liberties & Civil Rights in Forensic Practice

**Assignment: Discussion Board Exercise 9 due by 11 pm (CST) on 4/23**

**Week 14:** April 23-29

**Topic: Victimology & Victim/Offender Relationships**

Readings: Rome Chapter 9 & TBA

Watch: Video Lecture-“Victim/Offender Relationships”-Dr. Jerry Daday-WKU Department of Sociology

**Assignment: Discussion Board Exercise 10 due by 11 pm (CST) on 4/30**

**Week 15:** April 30-May 7

**Topic: Final Exam**

**Assignment: Take Home Final Exam will be posted by noon on 4/30 and due back to the professor by 11 pm (CST) on 5/7. More details about the final exam will be distributed later in the semester.**

### **Description of Course Assignments/Requirements:**

#### **Professionalism and Participation (10 percent of grade)**

Social workers traditionally serve marginalized populations. Thus, social work professors have an obligation to teach students appropriate professional behavior. Within the classroom setting, both face –to- face and online, professionalism is defined as attendance, preparation, and appropriate behavior with the professor and peers in all communications relative to this course.

Further, it is expected that each student completes **all assignments** and readings in accordance with the course schedule. Students should complete discussion board exercises in a timely manner and after completing pertinent readings and watching assigned video lectures and links. In a nutshell, the professionalism and participation grade will be also on students' *active* participation in the online classroom milieu, their timeliness in submitting assignments, and their professional decorum in how they conduct themselves online.

#### **Discussion Board/Short Exercises (30 percent of grade)**

These 10 critical thinking assignments involve various discussion board topics and writing exercises designed to further assess mastery of material gleaned from course readings and video lectures. A high level of quality and critical synthesis of information is expected on these discussion board/short exercises. **A strong suggestion:** do not wait until the last minute to do these exercises and make sure you have done the required readings/watched the required Tegrity lectures before attempting them. If most students are performing exceptionally on these exercises, the professor may cut them a break from time to time on postings.

#### **Forensic Paper/Critical Analysis (30 percent of grade)**

Students will select one aspect of forensic social work that is of interest to them (e.g. social work malpractice, working with gangs, working with crime victims, serving as an expert witness, forensic interviewing, serial crimes, hate crimes) and write a ten-page (minimum) critical paper on this topic. All paper topics must be approved by the instructor-the deadline for topics to be submitted is **2/12**. This paper will be due to the professor by **11:00 pm (CST) on 3/26**. **More specific details** regarding this paper will be provided to students during the first week of class.

#### **Final Exam (30 percent of grade)**

Students will complete **one take home final** at the end of the course. It will be all essay, open book and notes, and based on readings, class Tegrity lectures, and other class activities.

Students are **not to consult with each other** when writing/working on the exam. Responses to the final should be submitted in Microsoft Word format, double-spaced, typed, and grammatically correct. Students do not have to use a cover page or abstract (e.g. as per APA

format) on the exam. However, please remember to cite all outside sources (other than the primary texts and video lectures) on a reference page, in APA 6 format.

The take home final will be posted on Blackboard by noon **(CST) on April 30** and will be due back to the professor via email by 11 pm **(CST) on May 7**. This exam will be on all material covered in the course and additional information will be provided regarding the take home final later in the semester.

### **Evaluation and Grading**

Course grading is based on the following criteria, using a **weighted mean formula** (total grade for each assignment is multiplied by its respective worth, and then points summed for score).

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Grade Percentage</u>
Discussion Boards	30%
Final Exam	30%
Forensic Paper	30%
Professionalism/Participation	10%
Total	100%

### **Grading Scale:**

90-100=A  
 80-89=B  
 70-79=C  
 60-69=D  
 0-59=F

## References

- Barker, R. L., & Branson, D. M. (2000). *Forensic social work: Legal aspects of professional practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Haworth.
- Barsky, A. E., & Gould, J. W. (2002). Clinicians in court: A guide to subpoenas, depositions, testifying, and everything else you need to know.
- Canter, D. (2012). *Forensic psychology for dummies*. West Sussex: Wiley.
- Green, G., Thorpe, J., & Traupmann, M. (2005). The sprawling thicket: Knowledge and specialization in forensic social work. *Australian Social Work*, 58(2), 142-153.
- Guin, C., Noble, D., & Merrill, T. (2003). From misery to mission: Forensic social workers on multidisciplinary mitigation teams. *Social Work*, 48(3), 362-371.
- Maschi, T., & Leibowitz, G. (Eds.) (2017). *Forensic social work: Psychosocial and legal Across diverse populations and settings* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York: Springer.
- Neighbors, I., Chambers, A., Levin, E., Nordman, G., & Tutrone, C. (Eds.). (2000). *Proceedings of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work*. New York: Haworth.
- Roberts, A. R., & Brownell, P. (1999). A century of forensic social work: Bridging the past to the present. *Social Work*, 44(4), 359-369.
- Rome, S. H. (2013). *Social work and the law: Judicial policy and forensic practice*. Boston: Pearson.

Samenow, S. (2004) *Inside the criminal mind*. New York: Crown.

Schroeder, J., Guin, C., Pogue, R., & Bordelon, D. (2006). Mitigating circumstances in death penalty decisions: Using evidence-based research to inform social work practice in capital trials. *Social Work, 51*(4), 355-364.

Sinclair, S. (2002). Sam Peckinpah's forensic social work blues: Will the tin star keep shining? *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry 13*(3), 499-501.

Slater, L., & Finck, K. (2012). *Social work practice and the law*. New York: Springer.

Wormer, K. V., & Roberts, A. R. (2000). *Teaching forensic social work: Course outlines on criminal and juvenile justice and victimology*. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.

**Disclaimer:**

All class schedules and activities are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.