

SOCIAL WORK

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St. Olaf students prepare for lives of service as responsible and knowledgeable people. Those who study social work are committed to enhancing human well-being and promoting social justice. Social work, a major in the Department of Social Work and Family Studies, builds on students' liberal education by enabling them critically to examine need, illumine inherent human strengths, reflect on their ethical conduct, and explore policies and programs that address social problems. The social work mission is to prepare students ethically to serve diverse populations and to promote a lifelong commitment to a just global community. Completing a bachelor of arts degree in social work prepares students for beginning professional generalist practice with diverse clients, both rural and urban. The Council on Social Work Education has accredited the program since 1990. Graduates meet educational requirements for the national BSW licensure examination at the baccalaureate level and are eligible to apply for advanced standing in social work graduate programs.

Courses are appropriate for students who are interested in social welfare policy and practice and/or related areas like family studies/therapy, education, and human resources. Level III and some level II courses are reserved for majors only.

Overview of the Major

Social work education builds on the liberal arts with professional foundation courses. It prepares students for generalist practice, students who understand scientific approaches to knowledge building and practice, are reflective of and responsible for their own ethical conduct and are committed to lives of service and leadership in the global community. Courses are sequential, culminating with the 400-hour field practicum - SWRK 380 Field Practicum (3.0) and a capstone professional development course - SWRK 381 Social Worker as Professional. Students gain experience with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities in settings as diverse as child welfare, health, and corrections. Practicum sites are in local communities; placement elsewhere can be arranged with advance preparation.

Intended Learning Outcomes for the Major

Distinction

Throughout the spring of 2024 the Social Work faculty discussed the department process of distinction, and in the fall of 2024 decided to discontinue the awarding of distinction beginning the 2024-2025 school year. This decision was brought on by many discussions around equity and anti-racist practices that the department desires to reflect, and which also better reflect Social Work values. In making this decision, the Social Work Department joined several other St. Olaf departments and programs that do not offer distinction.

See Academic Honors

Special Programs

The St. Olaf social work program encourages student participation in study abroad and away programs. Majors can conveniently schedule a January term abroad, as there are no required social work courses during January. To participate in a semester program abroad or away and complete the major requirements in four years, students must plan in the first year with the help of social work faculty. St. Olaf co-sponsors Social Work in a Latin American Context (Mexico) for social work majors, which fulfills major requirements, in the spring semester of the junior year.

Students often count social work courses for other interdisciplinary majors and concentrations including family studies, race and ethnic studies, and gender and sexuality studies. Social work majors are eligible for student-rate membership in the National Association of Social Workers and to receive its publications.

Social work faculty occasionally supervise students doing independent study/research in social welfare and social service after the student has completed at least one social work course. Completing the social work major is possible only through regular coursework, however.

Recommendations for Graduate Study

Students considering social work graduate school are strongly encouraged to consult faculty about appropriate undergraduate courses. Human biology and statistics are usually required for admission to social work graduate programs. Department offerings provide preparation for graduate study in marriage and family therapy, non-profit management, public policy, ministry, special education, law, and related fields. Students who excel in the social work major are often eligible for advanced standing in Master of Social Work (MSW) programs.

Requirements

Admission to and Retention in the Social Work Program

The program actively seeks and encourages students from diverse backgrounds to consider a social work major and provides one-to-one advising.

First- and second-year students interested in social work are encouraged to meet with a faculty member and consult the department website. The major application, admission requirements, requirements to remain in good standing in the program, processes for petitioning reinstatement, and grievance procedures for redress of any adverse decision are also there. The program does not discriminate against any student on the basis of age, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, geographic location, immigration status, physical or mental ability, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, or sexual orientation. Students are formally notified in writing of admission to the major by January of the junior year.

Students who transfer to St. Olaf at or before the beginning of the junior (third) year may be considered for admission to the major, provided they have completed equivalent prerequisite courses in sociology, psychology, and human biology. Field practicum and practice

courses must be completed while enrolled at St. Olaf. No credit or waiver is given for previous internship, work, or life experience.

For approvals for courses other than SOAN 121 or BIO 123 or BIO 243 please see the Social Work Program Director/Chair of Social Work and Family Studies.

Requirements for the Major

Those interested in the major should contact a department faculty member in their first year or as early as possible. Students in good standing at the college who have satisfactorily completed prerequisite courses and SWRK 221 are eligible to apply for admission to the major. Students are granted major status only after satisfactory completion of SWRK 221, SWRK 246, SWRK 254, and a program application. Students should achieve a passing grade for Psychology 125 and a grade of C- or better in all other prerequisite courses. Students must receive a C or better in required social work courses to progress in the major. Details are specified in the program manual available from faculty or the department website.

Code	Title	Credits
Prerequisite Courses Required for the Major		
SOAN 121	Introduction to Sociology ¹	1.00
PSYCH 125	Principles of Psychology	1.00
PSYCH 241	Developmental Psychology	1.00
BIO 123	Human Biology ²	1.00
or BIO 243	Human Anatomy and Physiology: Organs and Organ Systems	
Foundation Social Work Courses Required for the Major		
SWRK 221	Social Work and Social Welfare	1.00
SWRK 246	Human Behavior in the Social Environment	1.00
SWRK 254	Inclusive Practice: Individuals and Families	1.00
SWRK 258	Social Policy	1.00
SWRK 261	Inclusive Practice: Groups, Organizations and Communities	1.00
SWRK 274	Research Methods in Social Work	1.00
SWRK 373	Just Practice ³	1.00
SWRK 380	Field Practicum (3.0) ^{3, 4}	3.00
SWRK 381	Social Worker as Professional	1.00

¹
Or another sociology course approved by the BSW Program Director

²
Or another biology course approved by the BSW Program Director

³
SWRK 373 and SWRK 380 together constitute a full semester's work (4.0 credits)

⁴
A field practicum of at least 400 clock hours, professionally supervised in an affiliated agency, is required during fall semester of the senior year.

Students must be admitted to the social work major and in good academic standing to register for all level III courses. Field practicum experience may be completed while living on- or off-campus. Statistics is strongly recommended, especially for students who anticipate graduate study.

**By completing this major, the student also satisfies the OLE Core Writing in the Major requirement.*

Courses

SWRK 120: I Want to Help People

Students explore service to human beings as a profession, both vocation and avocation. Who needs help? Who helps? Where? How? What motivates people to help? Using the liberal arts as a foundation for helping people, students study opportunities in areas such as health care, social services, ministry, youth work, and the arts. The class includes lectures, discussions, speakers, and field visits. Open only to first-year students. Offered annually in January Term. Does not count toward social work major.

SWRK 122: Global Challenges

Students explore seven major challenges affecting the world's people including population, resource management, economic integration, information, technology, conflict/security, and governance with an emphasis on their relation to global citizenship and human rights. This course examines issues from social science and global problem-solving perspectives with particular attention to how culture and place affect human experience. Students engage in discussions, forums, a global village activity, and an action project. Offered periodically during January Term. Does not count toward social work major. Counts toward international relations concentration.

SWRK 221: Social Work and Social Welfare

Students study the progression of the U.S. social welfare "system" from English Poor Laws through the Social Security Act to contemporary reforms. They examine how its components (public, private, faith-based) interrelate to serve diverse individuals, families, and communities. The development of social work, its foundational knowledge, values, and skills, and its relationship to fields of social welfare are included. Students shadow a social worker for four hours. Offered each semester. Also counts toward race and ethnic studies major and family studies and race and ethnic studies concentrations.

SWRK 246: Human Behavior in the Social Environment

Humans relate to one another in diverse families, groups, organizations, and communities. Through traditional and alternative theoretical perspectives on human behavior, students apply prerequisite and advanced material from biology, sociology, psychology, and social work to assess situations encountered by social workers. Diverse examples are drawn from literature, social work research, and from students' autobiographies. Offered annually in the fall semester. Also counts toward business and management studies concentration.

Prerequisites: SOAN 121, PSYCH 241, and BIO 123 or BIO 243; open to non-majors by permission of chair only.

SWRK 254: Inclusive Practice: Individuals and Families

Social work majors study the methods and skills of social work practice, particularly intercultural communication. They describe strengths and problems of diverse individuals and families; frame goals and plans for change utilizing the planned change process and the systems perspective; and use ethical decision-making, informed by the scientific method, grounded in the liberal arts, and concerned with social justice. Students demonstrate learning in recorded role playing and have an academic civic engagement experience. Offered annually in the fall semester.

Prerequisites: SWRK 221 and concurrent enrollment in SWRK 246.

SWRK 258: Social Policy

Social welfare policies exemplify how society's values and needs translate into policies and programs. Social workers create, implement, and evaluate policies in all areas of social policy. Students study policy formation and analysis that reflect interests and powers of diverse groups as well as economic and social realities of certain populations at risk of poverty and discrimination. The course emphasizes policy impact on women, people in poverty, people of color, and empowerment in policy practice. Offered annually in the spring semester. Also counts toward business and management studies concentration.

SWRK 261: Inclusive Practice: Groups, Organizations and Communities

Social work majors continue to study the methods and skills of generalist practice. They assess strengths and problems of diverse groups, organizations, and communities and use the systems perspective to help client systems frame goals and plans for social change. Students assess macrosystems and develop plans for implementing change that are reflective, scientific, just, and grounded in the liberal arts. This course includes an academic civic engagement community project. Offered annually in the spring semester.

Prerequisite: SWRK 254.

SWRK 274: Research Methods in Social Work

Social work majors study scientific philosophies and approaches to ethical knowledge building for social work practice. The course includes an overview of the research process using both quantitative and qualitative methods, with special attention to how research knowledge informs generalist social work practice. Open to non-majors by permission of instructor. Offered annually in the spring semester. Also counts toward business and management studies and public health studies concentrations.

Prerequisite: social work major.

SWRK 294: Academic Internship**SWRK 298: Independent Study****SWRK 373: Just Practice**

This course immediately precedes SWRK 380. The course provides an overview of how structural oppression across cultural positions (e.g. race, sexuality, ability, class) may affect client systems. Students integrate awareness, knowledge, and skills for engaging in anti-oppressive, inclusive practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. This includes role plays assisting clients who are challenged by oppression as part of their presenting problems and brief immersions with diverse communities. Offered annually in September. Also counts toward race and ethnic studies major and concentration. For senior majors only.

Prerequisite: SWRK 261.

SWRK 380: Field Practicum (3.0)

In this experience, social work majors complete at least 400 hours in a rural or urban agency with structured learning about generalist practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities from diverse backgrounds. Students engage in professional responsibilities with careful guidance and supervision from the field supervisor and the field coordinator. Students attend a weekly evening seminar to integrate classroom learning, share experiences, and obtain support. Offered annually in the fall semester.

Prerequisite: majors who have satisfactorily completed PSYCH 241, SOAN 121, BIO 123 or BIO 243, and all required courses with numbers below 380.

SWRK 381: Social Worker as Professional

This capstone course is for senior majors. Students begin a professional web presence to illustrate their readiness to begin practice as a generalist social worker. Classes emphasize auxiliary knowledge and skills in leadership. Students discuss emerging social work issues and provide peer assistance with professional development strategies. Evaluation includes oral presentation, ethics case analysis, professional development reflection assignments, and self-evaluation of achievement of program competencies. Also counts toward business and management studies concentration.

Prerequisite: SWRK 380.

SWRK 394: Academic Internship**SWRK 396: Directed Undergraduate Research**

This course provides a comprehensive research opportunity, including an introduction to relevant background material, technical instruction, identification of a meaningful project, and data collection. The topic is determined by the faculty member in charge of the course and may relate to their research interests. Offered based on department decision. May be offered as a 1.00 credit course or .50 credit course.

Prerequisite: determined by individual instructor.

SWRK 398: Independent Research

Plan of Study

Social Work Major - Plan of Study

Please see the planning guide on the Social Work department's website.

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Faculty

Program Director, 2024-2025**Kimberly Doran**

Visiting Assistant Professor of Social Work and Family Studies

Department Chair, 2024-2025**Erica Kanewischer**

Associate Professor of Practice of Social Work and Family Studies

Gwendolyn (Wendy) Anderson

Associate Professor of Social Work and Family Studies

Hillary Lamberty

Visiting Assistant Professor of Social Work and Family Studies

Susan E. Smalling

Professor of Social Work and Family Studies; Associate Dean for Social Sciences; Director of Faculty Inclusion and Belonging
anti-oppressive research and practice; indigenous populations; family and child welfare

Thomas A. Williamson (on sabbatical 2024-25)

Kenneth Bjork Distinguished Professor of Sociology/Anthropology
Southeast Asia; theory; globalization; medical anthropology

Beth Winterfeldt

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Social Work and Family Studies