

## Rutgers DSW Program Syllabus

**Module Title:** Teaching Social Work Practice

**Instructor:**

**Residency:** September 2018

**Date:**

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### **Module Description:**

A myth about lecturing persists that if we speak the words our students hear, understand, value and remember what we have presented. In reality, teaching and learning is an interactional process with each student bringing a different background, experience, sense of urgency, etc. which will affect what he or she experience in the class. As soon as a class starts to meet, whether a small seminar or a lecture hall with hundreds of students, an entity is created called “the-group-as-a-whole” that is more than the sum of its parts. It (the class group) can have a powerful impact in enhancing learning or it can be an obstacle to learning. In this class we will focus on classroom dynamics, class culture and instructor skills using an organismic model in which the class has a life of its own and is capable of growth and development. This will be the process element of the course.

The content elements includes underlying theories, research, practice wisdom, etc. that we need to communicate to our students. This course on teaching practice should be helpful in thinking about issues that are central to effective teaching regardless of the practice models you present to your students.

A number of the students in this seminar are currently teaching or have taught in the past. Others are preparing to teach either as full-time or adjunct instructors. We will make use of the experiences of class members with participants having an opportunity to share their current or past teaching with a particular emphasis on those difficult moments when they had second thoughts about classroom teaching as a career. We will use these examples to help illustrate the theoretical content and the readings and bring the ideas to life as they address the real day-to-day issues we all face in teaching.

A focus on instructor skill in addressing the class group is particularly important in a practice class because of the “parallel process”. By that, I mean that the way one teaches models for students what the instructor believes about working with others. The expression “More is caught than taught” describes this well. The typical teaching issues that may emerge in our discussion include the following:

- First classes and the importance of “contracting” with students.
- The student who directly or indirectly challenges the instructor in the first classes raising “the authority theme”.

- The issues when teaching very inexperienced students as well as teaching students with significant work experience (even more than you).
- How to create a safe culture for work in the class for discussions of taboo subjects dealing with, for example, race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, etc.
- How to emphasize mutual aid in a class so that students can learn from each other as well as the instructor.
- How to deal with individual students such as a monopolizer, silent members, defensive students, etc.
- How to help the students “own” the class so that they feel they are part of the learning process.

### **Module Objectives:**

- To develop the ability to “see” the class group as a whole.
- To understand the dynamics of first classes and the skills required to make an effective start.
- To understand the classroom dynamics related to the “authority theme” (class and instructor) as well as the “intimacy them” (students dealing with each other).
- To be able to understand and apply group and learning theorists to classroom teaching.
- To be able to openly address “inter-cultural issues” (e.g., white teacher with students of color) as well as “intra-cultural issues” (e.g., gay teacher with a gay student).
- To understand the steps needed to create a “culture for work” in which students are free to say what they really think and feel rather than what they think they are supposed to say.
- To understand and address the interaction between content and process and to reject the false dichotomy between the two.

### **Required Readings:**

1. Shulman, L. (2016). *The Skills of Helping Individuals, Families, Groups and Communities*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Cengage Publishers (A link will be provided to download an electronic copy).

Chapter 13 – Working with the Individual and the Group.

### **Journal Articles:**

**Select at least one for the pre-class reading and cite it in the pre-class assignment.**

2. Holley, L. C. & Steiner, S. (2005). Safe space: Student perspectives on classroom environment. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 41(1) 49-64.
3. Shulman, L. (1987). The hidden group in the classroom. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*. 1(2), 3-31.
4. Shulman, L. (2016). Shifting the Social Work Practice Paradigm: The Contribution of the

Interactional Model. *Journal of Social Work Education*.

5. Shulman, L (2014). A Shifting Paradigm - Medical to Interactional Model: A Personal History. *Advances in Social Work*, 15(1), 207-229.
6. Shulman, L. The Skills and Dynamics of Teaching: Addressing the Hidden Group in the Classroom: Use the following link to view the session videos via the YouTube Playlist: [http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/facstaff/skills\\_dynamics.asp](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/facstaff/skills_dynamics.asp)
7. Shulman, L. Addressing Internalized Biases and Stereotypes of the Group Leader: A Life-Long Professional Task. *Journal of Social Work with Groups*.