

The MSSW program focuses on an advanced generalist practice model within a rural context, allowing graduates to serve in multiple capacities within this largely rural region. Amarillo, Texas, where the program is housed, is the largest city in the Texas Panhandle with a population of approximately 200,000. All of our classes meet at the WTAMU facility in Amarillo, housed in Chase Towers. Dotted throughout the Panhandle, however, are many small towns that have great difficulty finding qualified masters level social workers. The foundation and advanced generalist curriculum is designed to educate our MSSW students to work in varied capacities throughout the Texas panhandle.

The advanced generalist curriculum builds on the generalist curriculum which is the focus of the Foundation courses in the first year of the MSSW program. The generalist practice foundation teaches students to serve diverse client systems using a systems perspective that focuses on the person-in-environment fit and addresses individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities within our rural context. This broad focus is varied enough that the problem as well as the strengths, capacities and resources determine the practice approach which is best suited to the specific situation. The generalist practice foundation uses a strengths-based, approach that allows for problem-solving focus relying on a broad base of knowledge and skills grounded in the values of the social work profession.

Based on this foundation, the advanced generalist practice model in a rural setting is the focus of the second, or concentration year of the MSSW program. This focus provides a greater depth, breadth and level of independence as the student gains specialized knowledge across problem areas and practice settings. Students learn to use a larger selection of diverse interventions across multiple practice levels and are better able to apply theoretical perspectives that are appropriate to their client and setting. The advanced generalist practice model uses a variety of advanced assessment skills and helps the student learn to differentially assess more complex problems with a variety of systems, and then to use specialized, evidence-based interventions within these systems. Students learn to evaluate their interventions at all levels and to share the knowledge they gain through this evaluation with other professionals. Finally, students are prepared to take leadership roles in their rural communities using skills gained in areas such as program development; administration and supervision; policy analysis, creation and implementation; research development and utilization; and professional development and mentoring.

The MSSW program relies heavily upon experiential education at all levels. The program at WTAMU has integrated experiential education far beyond the final internship; students are required to gain hands-on experience in all practice classes as well as in several others. Foundation year first-semester courses include SOCW 5383 (Social Work Micro Practice); SOCW 5381 (Social Policy and Planning); and SOCW 5380 (Human Behavior in the Social Environment) for a total of 9 hours. These courses provide a solid underpinning for the courses to be offered in the second semester of the three-

semester foundation year. These include SOCW 5310 (Groups and Organizations); SOCW 5362 (Social Research); and SOCW 5488 (Field Instruction I) for a total of 10 hours. Finally, the third semester foundation-year courses include SOCW 5321 (Practice Methods with Diverse Populations); and SOCW 5498 (Field Instruction II) for a total of 7 hours. Because of the rural nature of our area, some of these courses may be offered through online instruction or through video-conferencing. The 26 hours of foundation courses are designed to be offered across three semesters, at night and online, allowing students to work while pursuing their MSSW.

The advanced standing, or second-year curriculum, offers the following courses: SOCW 6380 (Human Behavior in the Social Environment - Theory); SOCW 6321 (Critical Social Work); and SOCW 6331 (Practice I: Direct Practice [Individuals]), for a total of 9 hours. Courses for the second semester include SOCW 6341 (Practice II: Community & Organizational Practice); SOCW 6362 (Program Evaluation); and SOCW 6397 (Applied Social Work Practice I) for a total of 9 hours. Third semester courses include SOCW 6310 (Advanced Policy); SOCW 6398 (Applied Social Work Practice II); and a free elective to be chosen by the student in conjunction with their academic advisor. These courses total 9 hours. The final semester of the second-year courses include SOCW 6399 (Applied Social Work Practice III); SOCW 6305 (Integrative Seminar); and a free elective for a total of 9 hours. Therefore, the second year totals 36 hours and spans four semesters. These courses will offer many opportunities for experiential learning.

Students in field focus on individuals and families, group work, and macro or community-based practice, rotating through these experiences during their field internship courses. A student may spend their field internship in one agency, focusing on each of these areas during a given semester, or may be placed in two or three agencies in order to gain the most experience.