



DEPARTMENT Humanities and Social Sciences

COURSE OUTLINE – Winter 2026

SW1010(A3): Ethics in Social Work - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

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CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: In this introduction to the ethical principles of social work practice, students will explore the theoretical foundations of the codes and frameworks which inform social work professionals as they navigate ethical dilemmas and issues. Students will also reflect on the diverse value systems in Canadian society and the interactions between personal and professional values.

PREREQUISITE(S):

None

COREQUISITE(S):

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Spencer, E., Massing, D., & Gough, J. (2020). *Social work ethics: Progressive, practical, and relational approaches*. Oxford University Press.

Wilson, D. B., Solomon, T. A., & McLane-Davison, D. (2020). Ethics and Racial Equity in Social Welfare Policy: Social Work's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Social Work in Public Health, 35*(7), 617–632. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2020.1808145>

Reamer, F. G. (2023). Moral Disengagement in Social Work. *Social Work, 68*(3), 183–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swad014>

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Explain the theoretical foundations, principles, and codes guiding ethical social work practice.
- Integrate ethical codes of conduct and apply ethical decision-making models to address complex dilemmas in social work
- Incorporate cultural humility and inclusion into ethical decision-making, with particular attention to marginalized communities.
- Examine the interplay between personal, cultural, and professional values in ethical practice.
- Assess how diverse value systems and cultural perspectives influence ethical decisions.
- Demonstrate ongoing ethical awareness, self-reflection, and professional development.

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.alberta.ca>

**** For courses with alpha (letter) grading, a grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

EVALUATIONS:

Assignment	Description	Grade	Due Date
Assignment 1	In Class Case Studies x4 Each case study will be worth 5%	20%	On-going
Assignment 2	Ethical Story Rewrite - Presentation	30%	Feb 25/27 th Mar 4 th
Assignment 3	Ethical History	30%	April 1 st

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most institutions will not accept your course for transfer credit IF your grade is less than C-.

Grading Chart

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100	C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94	C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84	C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79	D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76	D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72	F	0.0	00-49

Note: A minimum grade of C- in SW1010 is required as a prerequisite for SW2500. The Social Work Diploma program requires a minimum grade of C- in all SW courses to successfully complete the program.

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Jan 7/9	- Social Work Practice- Everyday Ethics	Ch. 1	
Jan 14/16	- Everyday Ethics continued- Snapshots of Social Work's Ethical History	Ch. 2	
Jan 21/23	- Snapshots of Ethical History continued- Is Critical, Anti-Oppressive Social Work Still Possible?	Ch. 3	
Jan 28/30	- Is AO/CSW still possible? cont.- New Tools for Ethical Practice in an Era of Fiscal Restraints	Ch. 4	
Feb 4/6	- New Tools cont.- Progressive Ethical Social Work Administration	Ch. 5	
Feb 11/13	- Progressive Ethical SW Administration cont.- Ethics of Progressive Community Organizing	Ch. 6	
Feb 18/20	Winter Break – No Classes	—	—
Feb 25/27	- Ethics of Community Organizing cont.- Does Social Work Have the Guts for Social Justice & Reconciliation?	Ch. 7	Presentations
Mar 4/6	- Social Justice & Reconciliation cont.- Immigrant Integration Practice	Ch. 8	Presentations
Mar 11/13	- Immigrant Integration Practice cont.- Do Children Really Have Rights? Ethics of Working With Children	Ch. 9	
Mar 18/20	- Ethics of Working with Children cont.- Insider Social Work Ethics: Working With Your Own Community	Ch. 10	
Mar 25/27	- Insider Ethics cont.- Rational Ethics and the Third Space	Ch. 11	
Apr 1/3	- Rational Ethics cont.- West Meets East: Gandhian Ethics in SW Practice - Ethical Decision-Making	Ch. 12-13	Assignment 3

Apr 8/9	- The Ethical Professional- Social Work Ethics Within Interdisciplinary Mental Health Teams	Ch 14-15	
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Assignment Instructions

Assignment 1: In-Class Case Study Assignments 20%

Throughout the semester, students will complete four in-class case study assignments designed to help them apply ethical principles, values, and decision-making frameworks to real social work scenarios. These assignments support the development of critical thinking, professional judgment, and culturally responsive practice. Each case study activity is completed in class and is worth 20 points (20%).

Students must be present to participate unless prior arrangements have been approved.

Assignment 2: Ethical Story Rewrite Presentation 30%

10 - minute presentation (PowerPoint, Google Slides, Prezi, Canva, or equivalent)

Critically and creatively analyze a well-known story (e.g., *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, *Three Little Pigs*) through a trauma-informed, anti-oppressive, and social work ethical lens. Identify structural and ethical issues, examine power dynamics, and present a justice-oriented rewrite. Presentations should be engaging, reflective, and can sometimes be humorous.

- Choose a familiar story for analysis and critically analyze:
 - o Structural issues (e.g., systemic bias, oppression)
 - o Power dynamics (who holds power, who is marginalized)
 - o Ethical issues (CASW Code of Ethics, ACSW Standards of Practice)
- Present a justice-oriented, anti-oppressive version. Consider changes to characters, outcomes, or systems that demonstrate social work values.
- Briefly summarize:
 - o How your rewrite addresses ethical issues and power imbalances
 - o Why trauma-informed and anti-oppressive approaches matter in social work

Presentation Guidelines:

- 10 minutes in length
- Clear, professional, and engaging delivery; may include visuals, skits, or storytelling
- Individual assignment 1 page reference page and power point need to be submitted at the end of presentation

Assignment 3: Ethical History + Critical/AOP Social Work Timeline – Paper 30%

Written paper, 6-7 pages (excluding title page and references) APA

Minimum 3 references

Analyze key ethical milestones, examine how they reinforced or challenged anti-oppressive practice, and identify whose histories have been excluded.

- Identify 2-3 major ethical events in social work history.
- For each:
 - o Description: Brief overview including time, key actors, and context
 - o Ethical Significance: How the event shaped social work ethics (codes, debates, regulations)
 - o Critical/AOP Analysis: How it reinforced or challenged oppressive structures, affected marginalized communities, or reflected dominant power dynamics
- Gap Analysis – “What’s Missing?” Identify at least three missing or excluded perspectives (e.g., Indigenous, disability, queer, rural/remote, global South). Explain why they were historically minimized and how including them strengthens anti-oppressive practice.
- Summarize key insights and why a critical, inclusive understanding of social work ethics matters today.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Students are expected to attend all classes and actively participate. Being prepared means completing assigned readings and tasks in advance and coming ready to contribute to meaningful discussions that value diverse perspectives and ideas.

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is permitted, but it must be used responsibly. AI should be a tool to support and enhance your learning, not replace it. For example, AI may be used to help brainstorm, organize, or edit your work, but it must not be used to generate full assignments or bypass the learning process. Improper use of AI may have academic consequences.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/polytechnic-leadership/policies-directory>.

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: