



SOCW 2371: Critical Thinking in Social Work

Spring 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor:

Rich Kenney, LMSW
Professor of Practice in Social Work

Office:

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Faculty Profile:

Office Hours: Tue:10-11 AM & 4-5 PM; Fri: 10-11 AM & 4-5 PM (Other appointment times available by appointment or via video conferencing)

Course Information

Credit Hours: 3 Credit Hours

Course Format: Face-to-Face

Time and Place of Class Meetings: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:30pm – 3:55pm, CAS 104

Description of Course Content: Explores critical thinking skills and how to apply those skills to help better serve individuals, groups, communities, and organizations. We will also learn about the evolution of opinions and how they contribute to the betterment and detriment of the above-listed categories. Students will engage in such activities as reading, analyzing, discussing, and writing the following: opinion columns, documentary film reviews, and social problems perspectives. Students will also read, listen to, discuss, write, and record personal philosophy essays.

Prerequisite: 2361

Course Overview: The purpose of this course is to help students develop skills to enhance critical thinking and communication. Students will apply such skills in class role-plays, written case scenario assignments, and class presentations. The course content will reflect the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) requirements for accreditation.

Student Learning Outcomes

Below are the Nine CSWE Core Competencies established by the Council on Social Work Education. Each of the competencies is included as an objective to understand and be met as appropriate for each course learning objective.

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

The Nine CSWE Core Competencies are the basis for the Learning Outcomes that follow.

Student Learning Outcomes for SOCW 2371:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate the following outcomes as progression in the noted areas of the Nine Core Competencies established by the Council on Social Work Education (EPAS 2015):

- 1) Describe and articulate what it is to think critically in the practice of social work. **Competencies 1-9**
- 2) Identify and articulate elements of a well-informed opinion pertinent to social problem issues. **Competencies 5-9**
- 3) Demonstrate the ability to critically examine one's values and beliefs as they pertain to the field of social work. **Competencies 1-3; 5-9**
- 4) Analyze and evaluate evidence, facts, and data to develop informed opinions pertinent to social problem issues. **Competencies 1-9**
- 5) Develop an understanding of and respect for the values, beliefs, and opinions of potential clients. **Competencies 1-3; 6-9**
- 6) Demonstrate the ability to write seven effective, in-class, two-page Reflective Narrative papers throughout the semester, including an out-of-class social problems perspective piece. **Competencies 1-9**
- 7) Describe and practice skills involved in critical inquiry and creative problem-solving through interdisciplinary, collaborative engagement of a specific issue or theme. **Competencies 6-9**

Methods of Instruction:

This class involves lectures, student-initiated discussions, role-plays, guest speakers, research of current events, collaborative projects, and active learning (interviews and information gathering in the community and student experiential learning).

Required Textbook:

Paul, Richard and Linda Elder. (2020). *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking, Concepts and Tools. 8th Edition*. Foundation for Critical Thinking. ISBN 9781538134948.

Additional readings and videos will be posted on Canvas.

About This Course – Artificial Intelligence (AI)

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

You may not use AI programs (ChatGPT, Copilot, etc.) for any of the in-class assignments in this course. AI, however, may be used in assignments outside the classroom. These programs can be powerful tools for learning and other productive pursuits, including completing assignments in less time, helping you generate new ideas, or serving as a personalized learning tool. However, your ethical responsibilities as a student remain the same. You must follow UT Tyler's Honor Code and uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. This applies to all uncited or improperly cited content, whether created by a human or in collaboration with an AI tool. If you use an AI tool to develop content for an assignment, you must cite the tool's contribution to your work. You will not earn full credit if inaccurate, invalid, or inappropriate information is found in your work.

Descriptions of Major Assignments and Examinations:

Reflective Narratives: Complete seven in-class reflections. (Worth 700 Points)

Issue Perspective Paper: Details in Files and Assignments Tabs. (Worth 100 Points)

Final Exam: Multiple Choice, T/F, Short Essay. (Worth 100 Points)

Participation: Instructor will consider the extent of student attendance, participation in discussions, and overall engagement. (Worth 100 points)

Grading Information and Letter Grade Assignment

Reflective Narratives:	700 Points or 70%
Issue Perspective Paper:	100 Points or 10%
Final Exam:	100 Points or 10%
Participation:	100 Points or 10%

Assignments: Scores will be assigned to written materials, based on the following criteria:

- a. **Thoroughness & Breadth** (Provides sufficient responses so as to provide coverage of the topic or in order to demonstrate a level of mastery of the skills)
- b. **Depth & Integration** (Demonstrates an integration of readings and understanding of the concepts through submitted assignments, portfolio and discussion forums on Sakai.)

- c. **Clarity & Understanding** (The submitted materials are easily readable or viewable and correct grammar and spelling are used on forums.)
- d. **Accuracy** (Extent to which the written responses are focused on the question and provide reliable information to colleagues.)
- e. **Critical Analysis** (The written materials demonstrate a critical analysis of the research literature studied.)

Grading Procedures:

Each exam and assignment will be graded on a point system used to calculate the final grade for the course.

Calculation of Final Grade

Reflective Narratives (700 Points) + Issue Perspective Paper (100 Points) + Final Exam (100 Points) + Participation (100 points)

Total Points Available for Course=1000

Final Grades

1000-900 Points = A (100%-90%)

899 - 800 Points = B (89%- 80%)

799 - 700 Points = C (79%-70%)

699 - 600 Points = D (69%-60%)

599 or less = F (59% or less)

Make-Up Exams:

Students must complete a missed exam within one week under the supervision of the instructor.

In-Class Reflective Narratives

There are 7 Reflective Narratives due throughout the semester. They are administered in class only.

Students are permitted to miss four classes but must still submit the missed classes' Reflective Narratives online. If students miss more than four classes, each subsequent missed Reflective Narrative will result in scores of 0.

If students must leave class before they can complete a Reflective Narrative, they may write the portion of what they were able to experience in their next class's Reflective Narrative worth up to 90 points.

If students attend every class (the entire class) and submit 7 meaningful Reflective Narratives, they will earn an additional 100 points and may opt not to take the Final Exam.

Late Work Policy

Students are responsible for submitting all assignments on time. Students must notify the instructor if there is an excusable reason (i.e. illness, death of loved one, etc.) for why their assignment will be late. Late assignments will not be accepted if the student does not contact the instructor with an excusable reason prior to the submission.

Expectations for Out-of-Class Study:

Beyond the time required to attend each class meeting, students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least an additional 9 hours per week of their own time in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, preparing for exams, etc.

Attendance:

Students are allowed four excused absences during the semester. Students must notify the instructor with an excusable reason (i.e. illness, death of loved one, etc.) for class absences. Engaged and timely participation in all assignments constitutes "attendance" for purposes of this course.

The **Census Date for the semester is 1/26/26**. This is the last day students may withdraw from the course without penalty.

Course Schedule

As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course. Any changes will be communicated in a timely manner through UT Tyler email and announcement(s) in Canvas. (See Canvas tools for specific weekly online activities/assignments.)

Week One: Date: 1/12/ and 1/14

Course Overview; Opinion Entitlement

Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 4 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

Week Two: Date: 1/19 (no class – MLK Day); 1/21

Opinion Entitlement

Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 4 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

In-Class Reflective Narrative #1 Due 1/21

Week Three: Date: 1/16 and 1/28

Critical Thinking Part 1

Learning Outcomes: 1, 5 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

Week Four: Date: 2/2 and 2/4

Critical Thinking Part 2

Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

In-Class Reflective Narrative #2 Due 2/4

Week Five: Date 2/9 and 2/11

Critical Thinking Part 3

Learning Outcomes: 1-6 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

Week Six: Date: 2/16 and 2/18

Beliefs

Learning Outcomes: 3, 5 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

In-Class Reflective Narrative #3 Due 2/18

Week Seven: Date: 2/23 and 2/25

Code of Ethics

Learning Outcomes: 3, 5, 6 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

Week Eight: Date: 3/2 and 3/4

Code of Ethics

Learning Outcomes: 3, 5, 6 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

In-Class Reflective Narrative #4 Due 3/4

Week Nine (Spring Break): Dates 3/9 through 3/13)

Week Ten: Date: 3/16 and 3/18

Issue Perspective Part 1

Learning Outcomes: 1, 4, 5, 7 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

Week Eleven: Date: 3/23 and 3/25

Issue Perspective Part 2

Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 4, 5 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

In-Class Reflective Narrative #5 Due 3/25

Week Twelve: Date: 3/30 and 4/1

Issue Perspective Paper and Presentations Due

Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

Week Thirteen: Date: 4/6 and 4/8

Opinion Editorials (Op Ed) Part 1

Learning Outcomes: 1-5 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

In-Class Reflective Narrative #6 Due 4/8

Week Fourteen: Date: 4/13 and 4/15

Opinion Editorials (Op Ed) Part 2

Learning Outcomes: 1-7 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

Week Fifteen: Date: 4/20 and 4/22

Opinion Editorials (Op Ed) Part 3; Review for Final

Learning Outcomes: 1-7 (see full description of learning outcomes on page 2)

In-Class Reflective Narrative #7 Due 4/22

Week Sixteen (Finals Week)

Final Exam: 4/29/26

I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO MODIFY THIS SYLLABUS AT ANY TIME. PLEASE ATTEND CLASS REGULARLY AND PAY ATTENTION TO THE ANNOUNCEMENTS IN CANVAS TO KEEP CURRENT WITH ANY SYLLABUS MODIFICATIONS.

Institutional Information

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at

<http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

Format for using AI in SOCW 2371

If you use AI tools in this course for any assignment, paper, or weekly discussion post, you must address each of the following bullet points:

- What generative AI tool(s) did you use for this assignment? Be sure to cite this information in your References section.
- What was your initial prompt?
- How did you refine your initial prompt to improve your AI generated output?
- How did you evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the AI-generated content before using its output for this assignment? In other words, when you evaluated the output, what types of factors did you consider (i.e. accuracy, bias, relevancy, consistency, etc.)? For example, if you determined the output to be accurate, what steps did you take to determine the output was accurate?

AI Glossary

- Prompt: text input that provides instructions to the AI model on how to generate output. (Google, n.d.)
- Input: the prompt and/or content that the user enters into the AI model. (University of Texas at Austin, & Grammarly, (2023))
- Output: the content that the AI model creates in response to the user input. (University of Texas at Austin, & Grammarly, 2023)
- Iteration: the process of refining your prompt based on the AI's output. (Google, n.d.)

References

Google. (n.d.). *Google AI Essentials*. [Online course]. Coursera.
<https://www.coursera.org/learn/google-ai-essentials>

University of Texas at Austin, & Grammarly. (2023). *The faculty guide to getting started with generative AI*. University of Texas at Austin.
<https://campustechnology.com/Whitepapers/2024/11/Grammarly-Guide-to-Getting-Started-with-Gen-Aspx#:~:text=Created%20in%20collaboration%20between%20UT,adaptable%20to%20various%20subjects.>

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors.

Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products.

There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade

being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waiver through Financial Aid State-Mandated

Course Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application.

The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students

have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

- i. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to:
 - copying from another student's test paper;
 - using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
 - failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
 - possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
 - using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
 - collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
 - discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
 - divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
 - substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
 - paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
 - falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
 - taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
 - misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.
- ii. "Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit.
- iii. "Collusion" includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.
- iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- [UT Tyler Writing Center](#) (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- [UT Tyler Tutoring Center](#) (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- [UT Tyler Counseling Center](#) (903.566.7254)