



The University of British Columbia

**School of Social Work**

**Course Outline – SOWK550(003)**

*School Vision: Building upon a foundation of social justice and an ethic of care, we are a community of learners actively engaged in the development of critical, transformative knowledge for social work practice.*

Year/Term	2015-2016
Course Title	Social Work and Social Justice: Child and Family (3 credits)
Course Schedule	Term 1, Wednesdays, 2-5 pm
Course Location	Room 224, Jack Bell Building

Instructor	Office Location	Office Phone	e-mail address
Dr. Edward Kruk	Room 237	822-2383	<a href="mailto:edward.kruk@ubc.ca">edward.kruk@ubc.ca</a>
Office Hours	Wednesdays, 10 am-2 pm, or by appointment		

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

**This is a graduate course focused on social justice in the child and family field of practice, with the goal of assisting students in developing a comprehensive social work practice framework consistent with both a human rights and “responsibility-to-needs” orientation to theory, ethical principles and practice skills, in the field of child and family practice. The course will critically examine a range of contemporary social justice issues that have an impact on the lives of children and young people, their caregivers, and their communities. The course emphasizes evidence-based social work and critical thinking to determine what policies, programs and practices are best suited to address the needs of children, families and communities, and is a required core course for students in the child and family stream in the MSW program.**

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## **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- Students will learn to locate themselves in a professional and political context
- Students will develop a social justice framework for social work practice in the child and family field of practice.
- Students will learn about social justice in historical, theoretical and practice contexts by exploring theories of social justice relating to child and family practice from a variety of perspectives, including rights-based and responsibility-based approaches.
- Students will learn to critically examine sociopolitical patterns of power and privilege and the accessibility or lack of access to structures of socioeconomic opportunities.

- Students will reflect upon ways in which cultural assumptions, beliefs, and value systems will enhance or hinder our practice with people of diverse backgrounds. Students will develop and nurture approaches and perspectives to practicing social work with and across differences, and will build a framework for validating human diversity.
  - Students will develop an understanding about how to influence public policy in ways that will limit or reverse social inequality. (One of the aims of this course will be to draw attention to the damaging effects of current child and family policies on children and families themselves.)
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## **COURSE STRUCTURE:**

This course will be delivered in a combination of lecture, seminar and small group framework. Class members are expected to attend all classes and to come prepared to participate in discussion. Divergent opinions, analyses and experiences related to social justice in a variety of areas of child and family practice will be discussed and debated with openness and respect.

Our goal is not to have students end up with a “correct” position on contentious issues in the child and family field, but to provide a forum toward an open, considered and evidence-based dialogue with respect to matters affecting children and families.

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## **Course Context and Prerequisites:**

This course is a required course for students in the advanced year of the M.S.W. program, within the child and family stream.

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## **REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READING:**

### *Required:*

Journal articles, as listed below. These are in e-journal format, available through the UBC Library, or via Google Scholar.

Kruk, E. (2013). *The Equal Parent Presumption: Social Justice in the Legal Determination of Parenting After Divorce*. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. (Electronic version available).

### *Recommended:*

Reisch, M. (Ed.). (2014). *Routledge international handbook of social justice*. Routledge. (Electronic version).

Bell, R.H. (2007). *Rethinking Justice: Restoring Our Humanity*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Swift, K. & Callahan, M. (2009). *At Risk: Social Justice in Child Welfare*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

### **1. (Short) Essay on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:**

Students will submit a short essay of 6-8 pages (inclusive of references) with a discussion and analysis of Canada's "track record" in regard to compliance with one of the Articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Specifically, to what degree do you believe the Article has been contravened by Canadian provincial /territorial and federal governments in their child and family laws and policies? Present evidence and examples to back your claims. (Due Week 7) (20%)

### **2. (Long) Essay on a selected topic:**

Students will submit a 12-16 page essay (inclusive of references) on one of their choice of social justice topics within the child and practice field, which can be either on the topic they presented in class (see 4 below), or on one of the other topics discussed and debated in class. Students are expected to research and critically examine the theoretical and research literature and current debates relating to their topic, and outline their professional position in relation to the topic, with a clear rationale for their orientation based on empirically-supported theory and research. Students will discuss the practice implications of their stance, and identify and discuss how they will deal with potential ethical dilemmas relating to their topic. (Due Week 13) (40%).

### **3. (Individual) Class presentation and discussion on a selected social justice theoretical framework:**

Students will pre-select a social justice theory relating to different approaches to and conceptualizations of social justice in social work. Students will then make an individual class presentation on that model of social justice, and engage the class in a discussion on the merits and limitations of that approach/conceptualization vis-à-vis child and family social work. (Weeks 3-12) (10%).

### **4. (Dyad) Class presentation and debate on selected topics in child and family policy and practice:**

Students will research and critically examine the literature and current debates relating to pre-assigned social justice topics within the fields of child and family policy and practice. Student pairs will then make a class presentation in the form of each student taking one side in a debate related to the topic, and engage in a discussion and debate with their presentation partner, who will speak in favour of the other side of the debate. Debates will focus on the degree to which theories and perspectives are empirically supported by research. (Weeks 3-12) (30%).

## **COURSE POLICIES [attendance, participation, academic dishonesty]:**

Excerpt from the UBC calendar:

Regular attendance is expected of students in all their classes (including lectures, laboratories, tutorials, seminars, etc.). Students who neglect their academic work and assignments may be excluded from the final examinations. Students who are unavoidably absent because of illness or disability should report to their instructors on return to classes.

The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Access and Diversity Resource Centre. The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance,

preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. Students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with the instructor well before assignment due dates.

It is recommended that students retain a copy of all submitted assignments (in case of loss) and should also retain all their marked assignments in case they wish to apply for a Review of Assigned Standing. Students have the right to view their marked examinations with their instructor, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. This review is for pedagogic purposes. The examination remains the property of the university.

#### Academic Dishonesty:

Please review the UBC Calendar “Academic Regulations” for the university policy on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Also visit [www.arts.ubc.ca](http://www.arts.ubc.ca) and go to the students’ section for useful information on avoiding plagiarism and on correct documentation.

Students wishing to use any electronic devices including computers and recorders must have the permission of the instructor and must have the wireless capacity of the device turned off during class.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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### Week 1: September 9, 2015

#### **Defining Social Justice; Social Work as a Human Rights-Based Profession; Rights versus a Responsibility-to-Needs Approach to Social Justice in Child and Family Practice**

Conceptualizing justice and injustice

Justice, power and rights

Retributive versus restorative justice

The “ethic of care”

Critique of rights-based approaches

Social justice as responsibility-to-needs: the essential needs of children and parental and social institutional responsibilities to those needs; the “best interests of the child from the perspective of the child”

#### *Required Reading:*

Healy, C.M. (2008). “Exploring the history of social work as a human rights profession.” *International Social Work*, 55 (6), 735-748.

Skegg, A. (2005). “Human rights and social work: A western imposition or empowerment to the people?” *International Social Work*, 48.

Kruk, E. (2013). “Social Justice, Spirituality and Responsibility to Needs: The ‘Best Interests of the Child’ in the Divorce Transition,” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 15 (2), 1-13.

Nielsen, L. (2014). “Woozles: Their role in custody law reform, parenting plans, and family court,” *Psychology, Public Policy and Law*.

### Week 2: September 16, 2015

#### **International Social Justice and Human Rights Legislation; Social Justice and Children’s Rights: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Related Legislation**

Social justice and children’s rights

Parental and social institutional responsibilities to children’s needs

Parental authority and corporal punishment debate

*Required Reading:*

Universal Declaration on Human Rights

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Orr, F. (2014). "To what extent is it fair to say that children are 'vulnerable victims' that require special protection under international human rights law?," *Journal of Social Welfare and Human Rights*, 2 (1), 87-105.

Sparrow, J.D. (2011). "Child Justice, Caregiver Empowerment, and Community Self-Determination," in Fennimore, B.S & Goodwin, A.L (Eds.) (2011). *Promoting Social Justice for Young Children*. New York: Springer.

**Week 3: September 23, 2015**

**Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 1: Abortion–Reproductive Autonomy/Abortion Rights versus the "Right to Life"**

Defining "child" and "human life"  
Pro-life versus pro-choice debate  
Sex selection abortion; disability and abortion

*Required Reading:*

Condic, M.L. (2009). *When Does Human Life Begin?: A Scientific Perspective*, Thornwood, NY: The Westchester Institute.

Johnstone, R. (2010). Framing Reproductive Rights: The Politics of Abortion Access and Citizenship in a Post-Morgentaler Era. *Canadian Political Science Association (May 2010) pp*, 1-12.

**Week 4: September 30, 2015**

**Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 2: New Reproductive Technologies and the Rights of Children to Know their Biological Origins; Same Sex Parenting–Diversity of Family Structures and Family Roles**

Defining "parent" and "family"  
Rights of children to know their biological origins  
New reproductive technologies  
"Presumption in favour of the natural"  
Traditional and emergent family forms  
Same sex parenting

*Required Reading:*

Somerville, M. (2007). "Children's human rights and unlinking child-parent biological bonds with adoption, same-sex marriage and new reproductive technologies." *Journal of Family Studies*, 13, 179-201.

Sharma, M. (2008). "Twenty-first century pink or blue: How sex selection technology facilitates gendercide and what we can do about it," *Family Court Review* 46 (1), 198-215.

Regnerus, M. (2012). "How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex

relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study.” *Social Science Research*, 41, 752-770.

Osborne, C. (2012). “Further comments on the papers by Marks and Regnerus.” *Social Science Research*, 41, 779-783.

### **Week 5: October 7, 2015**

#### **Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 3—Child Protection: “Best Interests of the Child” versus “Least Restrictive” Approaches to Child Abuse and Neglect**

Child abuse and neglect  
Child and youth mental health (in and out of child welfare care)  
Child removal versus family preservation orientation in child protection  
Utility of risk assessments  
Should social workers have discretion in child protection?

#### *Required Reading:*

Swift, .K. & Parada, (2004). Child Welfare Reform: Protecting Children or Policing the Poor? *Journal of Law and Social Policy*, 17. 1-17.

Child, Family and Community Services Act (BC), Part 3—Child Protection

### **Week 6: October 14, 2015**

#### **Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 4—Adoption**

Open versus closed adoption; international adoption  
Reunification of children and biological parents following adoption

#### *Required Reading:*

Neil, E. (2012). “Integration and differentiation from the perspective of adopted children in middle childhood.” *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 409-416.

Mezmur, B. D. (2009). From Angelina (To Madonna) to Zoe's Ark: What are the ‘A–Z’ Lessons for Intercountry Adoptions in Africa?“. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, 23(2), 145-173.

### **Week 7: October 21, 2015**

#### **Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 5—Child Protection: Child Welfare in the Aboriginal and Immigrant/Refugee Context**

Anti-Black and anti-Native racism in Canadian child welfare  
Anti-oppressive versus anti-colonialism perspectives on child welfare reform

#### *Required Reading:*

Pon, G. et al (2011). “Immediate response: Addressing anti-native and anti-black racism in child welfare,” *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 3, 385-409.

Blackstock, C. (2011). “The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations Child Welfare: Why if Canada Wins, Equality and Justice Lose,” *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, 187-

194.

**Week 8: October 28, 2015**

**Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 6–Child Protection: Family Violence and Child Welfare**

Family violence; violence against women; violence against men  
Child exposure to family violence; child protection and family violence

*Required Reading:*

Dutton, D.G. & Corvo, K. (2006). "Transforming a flawed policy: A call to revive psychology and science in domestic violence research and practice," *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 11.

Gondolf, E.W. (2007). "Theoretical and research support for the Duluth model: A reply to Dutton and Corvo," *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 12.

**Week 9: November 4, 2015**

**Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 7–Child Custody, Access and Parenting After Divorce I**

Discretionary "best interests of the child" standard: Should judges have discretion in child custody disputes? Should the discretionary "best interests of the child" standard be retained or should a rebuttable presumption of shared parental responsibility be legislated?  
Primary caregiver presumption

*Required Reading:*

Canadian Bar Association (2010). *In the Interests of Children*. Ottawa: National Family Law Section, Canadian Bar Association.

Kruk, E. (2013). *The Equal Parent Presumption*, pages xix-97

**Week 10: November 11, 2015**

**Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 7–Child Custody, Access and Parenting After Divorce II**

Egalitarian parenting after divorce; rebuttable presumption of shared parental responsibility

*Required Reading:*

Kruk, E. (2013). *The Equal Parent Presumption*, pages 98-147.

**Week 11: November 18, 2015**

**Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 8–Child Care Policy and Practice**

Egalitarian parenting in two-parent families  
Arguments for and against universal government-subsidized child care  
Should family allowance direct payments "flow with the child"?

*Required Reading:*

McLaren, L., & McIntyre, L. (2013). Conceptualizing child care as a population health intervention: Can a strong case be made for a universal approach in Canada, a liberal welfare regime? *Critical Public Health*, 1-11.

Baker, M., Gruber, M., & Milligan, K. (2008). "Universal child care, maternal labor supply, and family well-being," *Journal of Political Economy*, 116 (4).

### **Week 12: November 25, 2015**

#### **Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Practice: Topic 9–Income Security for Children and Families**

Child poverty

Alternative approaches to income security, including living wage and guaranteed annual income

#### *Required Reading:*

Howie, P. (2011). Guaranteed Annual Income: Derailing Economic Growth. *Policy Options* 57.

Forget, E. L. (2011). The town with no poverty: the health effects of a Canadian Guaranteed Annual Income Field Experiment. *Canadian Public Policy*, 37 (3), 283-305.

### **Week 13: December 2, 2015**

#### **Other Social Justice Issues in Child and Family Social Work Review of Course**

Consumer culture and corporatization of childhood; sexualization of children; routinization of children's lives and the "right to play"

Children of war

Practice and policy implications

#### *Required Reading:*

Pagani, L.S, Fitzpatrick, C, Barnett, T.A. & Dubow, E. (2010). Prospective Associations Between Early Childhood Television Exposure and Academic, Psychosocial, and Physical Well-being by Middle Childhood. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*, 164, (5).

Werner, W. (2012). Children and war: Risk, resilience, and recovery. *Development and Psychopathology*, 24, 553-558.

Kruk, E. (2015). "Child and Family Social Work in Canada: Issues and Challenges Within a Neo-liberal Political Context." In Palattiyil, G., Sidhva, D. & Chakrabarti, M. (Eds.) *Social Work in a Global Context: Issues and Challenges*, London: Routledge (to be provided by instructor).

### **ASSESSMENT, GRADING, & EVALUATION:**

#### Submitting Assignments-

Students can submit assignments in class or drop off to the reception counter in the main office. Items will be date-stamped and distributed to my mailbox.



Return of marked student assignments -

Instructors coordinate the return of marked assignments. The options are as follows: a) the instructor returns the paper to students in class; b) if the paper has been submitted electronically, the instructor will mark it on-line and return to the student on-line; c) the instructor returns the paper to the student by post (the student provides a self-stamped, addressed envelope to the instructor). Marked papers not returned by any of the options above will be held by the instructor. Marked papers will not be put in a box outside the instructor's office or at the main office counter.

Late assignments-

Deadlines for the assignment of grades for grading purposes are established on the basis of the university schedule to assure submission of marks to the registrar's office. In accordance with university policy, a deadline may be extended only in the event of serious illness or domestic affliction documented by the student's physician and approved by Student Health Services, or for reasons of religious observance.

*Students who submit assignments late will have one mark deducted per day late from the final grade for the course.*

**GRADING CRITERIA:**

Letter Grade	Percent Range	Mid-Point	
A+	90-100	95	Represents work of exceptional quality. Content, organization and style are all at a high level. Student demonstrates excellent research and reference to literature where appropriate. Also, student uses sound critical thinking, has innovative ideas on the subject and shows personal engagement with the topic.
A	85-89	87	
A-	80-84	82	
B+	76-79	77.5	Represents work of good quality with no major weaknesses. Writing is clear and explicit and topic coverage and comprehension is more than adequate. Shows some degree of critical thinking and personal involvement in the work. Good use of existing knowledge on the subject.
B	72-75	83.5	
B-	68-71	69.5	
C+	64-67	65.5	Adequate and average work. Shows fair comprehension of the subject, but has some weaknesses in content, style and/or organization of the paper. Minimal critical awareness or personal involvement in the work. Adequate use of literature.
C	60-63	62.5	
C-	55-59	57	
D	50-54	52	Minimally adequate work, barely at a passing level. Serious flaws in content, organization and/or style. Poor comprehension of the subject, and minimal involvement in the paper. Poor use of research and existing literature.
F	0-49		Failing work. Inadequate for successful completion of the course or submitted beyond final date of acceptance for paper.