

Spring 2026 Special Topics (HWC 579)

Course Descriptions

HWC 579-01 (54446) Special Topics in Social Welfare: Digital Media and Mental Health

This course will use the latest clinical and brain imaging research along with a sociological, political and economic lens to explore how Digital Media (i.e. Social Media, gaming, AI, VR, chat rooms, etc) has harmed our mental health, shaped our society, affected child development and impacted education. This course will also explore the latest best-practice clinical protocols in the assessment and treatment of tech overuse and tech addiction. We will also explore the global impact of "Big Tech Colonialism" and the exploitation of marginalized peoples around the world who are used to manufacture our devices. This course is essential for any social worker in both micro or macro settings to better understand the impact of our ever-evolving digital age on individuals and on society.

HWC 579-02 (54449) Special Topics in Social Welfare: Play Therapy and Social Work Practice

This course is designed to provide social work students with an introduction to child-centered play therapy. Students will explore the history of play therapy, its different types, and begin to enhance their engagement skills with children and parents through play. In addition, students will learn about the application of play therapy with specific populations. Attention will be given to play therapy viewed through a multicultural lens. Social justice issues will be explored as well within this modality.

HWC 579-04 (54848) Special Topics in Social Work: Social Work and Environmental Ecological Justice

This course provides students with a foundation in the principles of environmental and ecological justice, environmental racism, and an understanding of the role of social work in promoting social, environmental, and ecological justice. The meaning and application of Environmental Social Work will be explored through readings, class discussions, and service learning assignments. The course will highlight examples of environmental inequity and environmental racism in the local community, region, and worldwide; provide historical context for the environmental justice movement; suggest various ways that social workers and communities can mobilize to redress injustice; situate social work's role in environmental justice in the context of ecological justice; and expand our definition of "environment" beyond the social. This class will meet in person with a required service learning component of 6 hours to be completed in local communities.

HWC 579-05 (54828) Special Topics in Social Work: The Concepts and Practice of Self Care

This graduate-level course encourages students to approach self-care not as an add-on, but as a core component of competent, compassionate social work. It equips emerging social work professionals with the foundational tools to cultivate resilience, integrate self-care into ethical practice, and respond effectively to the demands of academic and professional environments. Through critical reflection, experiential exercises, and engagement with institutional and community resources, students will explore the intersection of personal well-being and professional sustainability.

HWC 579-06 (54146) Special Topics in Social Work: Emotionally Focused Therapy for Individual Couples and Families

Emotionally Focused Therapy is an evidence-based, state of the art, new science researched relational therapy with a success rate of almost 75% effective five years after treatment. Students will understand and practice the basic experiential and systemic concepts of an “Emotionally Focused” approach to therapy. Students will be able to view clients interpersonal attachments and conceptualize relationship distress and repair based on theories of attachment and emotion including trauma-informed strategies to address the invisible wounds of those most harmed. Students will develop and practice skills in overcoming common blocks and impasses in individual, couple and family modalities and so shaping core corrective emotional experiences.

HWC 579-07 (55131) Special Topics in Social Work: Shaping Public Opinions

This class will focus on practice skills community organizers and advocates can use to build public support for equity policies. Topics include fundamentals of community organizing and policy advocacy, understanding and measuring public opinion, and practice skills to shape public opinion. The class includes several workshops to learn and practice the following skills: talking with journalists to frame issues in news media, developing videos to frame issues through digital communications, and deep canvassing to influence attitudes of community members. Particular attention will be given to the roles of information, stories, and emotions in shaping public opinion.

HWC 579-08 (55135) Special Topics in Social Work: Ambiguous Loss and Grief

Emotionally Focused Therapy is an evidence-based, state of the art, new science researched relational therapy with a success rate of almost 75% effective five years after treatment. Students will understand and practice the basic experiential and systemic concepts of an “Emotionally Focused” approach to therapy. Students will be able to view clients interpersonal attachments and conceptualize relationship distress and repair based on theories of attachment and emotion including trauma-informed strategies to address the invisible wounds of those most harmed.

Students will develop and practice skills in overcoming common blocks and impasses in individual, couple and family modalities and so shaping core corrective emotional experiences.

HWC 579-30 (54914) Special Topics in Social Work; Essentials of Social Work Leadership and Management

This course helps students build critical knowledge and practices to cultivate the unique skills that will help them develop into successful social work managers and leaders. This course was developed in collaboration with community based social service leaders through funding from NY Community Trust. The course's content will draw from a four-quadrant model of social work leadership that is informed by societal context, social work ethics, justice, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism perspectives. Skills specific to leadership, strategic planning, communication, program planning, budgeting, grant writing, diversity, and human resources development, along with other topics will be presented with the understanding that social work leaders work within a climate of scarce resources. The course will culminate in a final project in which students design an intervention or strategy for a social service agency based on the skills presented in the course. Students will present their final project to a panel of social work social service leaders in the community for feedback and possible inclusion in their programs.