# Bachelor of Social Work (H330): Scaffolding learning skills throughout the degree[[1]](#footnote-1)

# Draft outline for embedding learning skills in the second year core unit, HSW219, Self & Society

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| **Week:** | **Unit Topic:** | **Overall learning**  **Skills/Goals**  **for this week** | **Exercises/activities** | **Ongoing relevance of these skills to professional practice** |
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| Week 1 | Introduction to the Unit: the relationship between self and society; how the social interpenetrates the personal | To understand the ‘why’ of the unit and its concepts, and their relevance to professional practice.  To begin to ‘self assess’ in relation to current learning skills and professional attributes. | Students are introduced to the basic concept of the unit, through the use of a reflective exercise: students are asked to draw the relationship between themselves and ‘society’. (Individual exercise with optional input into large group.)  Students are asked to consider why this unit might be relevant to them as social workers/helping professionals. (Group brainstorm)  Students engage in an exercise aimed at helping them identify current skills and attributes, and areas for further development. Students then introduce themselves to the  group, commenting on one skill/attribute they currently have, and one they would like to develop. | An understanding of self and society is at the core of social work and the helping professions.  Lifelong learning and self assessment are ongoing components of professional practice. |

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| 2 | The Conceptual Vocabulary: identity, subjectivity, social fields and the agency-structure debate | To learn how to keep a journal for the purposes of this unit and how to demonstrate engagement with the four steps of critical reflection outlined in the lecture: moving from reaction to response.  To consider how one might respond proactively to challenging readings and ideas. | To begin this discussion students engage in a brief exercise about writing, completing sentences such as, ‘Sitting down to write makes me feel…’ and ‘Academic writing, for me, is…’ (This exercise is also linked to a key unit concept introduced this week: subjectivity – the unique inner voice of the self.)  Students are introduced to the concept of journaling and writing in the first person.  Students discuss what is meant by reflection in their own lives, and are then led through the four steps of critical reflection that they are required to use in assignment one. Students practice writing steps one and two of the critical reflection process in relation to a concept raised in the lecture. They then discuss this process with a partner or small group.  Students brainstorm their general/’normal’ reaction to a challenging reading. Group considers the impact/effect of this response and brainstorm alternative responses. Group chooses a word/concept from this week’s reading as a focal point. | Critical reflection is an important, ongoing professional skill enabling one to better understand themselves and their approach/theory base and to work with dynamic, challenging and uncertain contexts.  Social workers and other helping professionals will sometimes need to digest material that is challenging (e.g. research and/or policy informing service delivery) and/or controversial; hence these skills are important |

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| 3 | Developmental Theories: Piaget, Bowlby, Freud | To better understand ‘theorising’ | Students engage in an oral exercise (could be done in small groups):  What is your theory on the importance of the mother-child relationship?  Where does your theory come from?  How does your social location, personal experience and historical context shape your theory?  Students engage in discussion of how, in their assignment, they could move from reaction to a more considered response.  Students then engage in jotting down any thoughts about the theories studied this week and what some critiques of these theories might be.  An opportunity is provided for students to raise questions re Assign. 1 | Practice is always informed by (implicit) theory.    Helping professionals need to understand that all theories are partial and limited. |

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| 4 | The Individual Life Cycle, the family life cycle and Maslow’s Construction of human needs | To further develop skills in discernment, critique, research and writing skills in which one blends their own voice/view with those of others (reference sources) |  | Presentation by librarian: using discernment to distinguish amongst various resources/reference material.  Teacher models a search for how to find critiques of Erikson and/or Maslow.  Students asked to engage in a writing exercise summarising these critiques.  The writing exercise is structured in a ‘they say’/’I say’ format. In pairs they share what they’ve written. | The ability to access quality resources/references is crucial to helping professionals.  Social workers need to be able to identify the limitations of theories that inform practice in service delivery settings, and how to articulate diverse perspectives.  The capacity to write effectively is a vital component of professional practice. |

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| **5** | The unitary (autonomous) self; the relational self | To consider the relevance of and practice giving and receiving feedback |  | Group brainstorm: students are asked to consider the role of feedback in their lives (connect to concepts of relational and autonomous self).  Then they’re asked to consider the role of feedback in their lives as students and how they generally respond (also considering that they will be getting feedback on their placement)  Students examine a sample of a critically reflective piece on this topic (provided by teacher); they assess in small groups, using a marking rubric.  Students are asked to read pages xx-xx of Thompson before next week’s class. | Helping professionals almost always work in teams and/or are required to liaise with other service providers; this entails the capacity to thoughtfully give and receive feedback.  Preparing in advance (for a meeting, etc) is an important component of professional practice. |

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| 6 | Oppression and privilege | To better understand the meaning and experience of oppression and privilege  To consider different ways of responding to challenging concepts |  | In pairs, students discuss their reactions to the lecture.  Students are asked to consider their own views on privilege and oppression and how those views were shaped. Could be asked to consider the statement: ‘there is no such thing as oppression in Australia, it’s a free society.’  Pose question: what is oppression? Based on Thompson, pgs xx-xx (which they were asked to read for this session), write a paragraph re one form of oppression and how it plays out in Australia. Feedback to large group.  Students brainstorm the relevance of structural factors in clients’ lives. Then do exercise (from IKE/Jodie) as a way of considering various forms of oppression and privilege. Feedback re the experience of doing the exercise.  Students are asked to have an ‘interview’ with an older/younger person re their childhood in relation to responsibility, age, of being ‘a child’, entertainment, etc. before next class. | Understanding structural inequality is a key component of social work practice.  Social workers and other helping professionals need to develop self awareness of their own social location and how it impacts their understanding of and work with clients.  Interviewing skills are vital to helping professionals.  Being prepared for an upcoming meeting/event is also important. |

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| **7** | Childhood: same as it ever was? | To further develop understanding of the historical and socially constructed nature of experience and the meaning of ‘structural factors’  To better understand what an assessment task requires |  | Students report back on their interviews (small groups) followed by large group brainstorm on the social construction of childhood.  Ask students to consider how various structural factors (gender, race, SES etc) might shape childhood. Refer to Stolen Generations and different ‘laws’ that related to Aboriginal children.  Ask students to jot down any thoughts about how this topic’s sociological lens has impacted on their understanding of Erkison’s life cycle theory.  Thoroughly review the requirements for Assignment Two. | As social workers, we cannot assume that ‘childhood’ (like other experiences) is a universal experience; however there may be shared experiences amongst structurally located groups.  In the workplace, we need to understand what is expected and how we might work with those expectations. |

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| 8 | Story, narrative and discourse | To understand the meaning of the key terms: story, narrative, discourse, and in particular discourse  To further consolidate understanding of how to blend referenced material into your discussion, along with your own voice; and the importance of writing clearly and grammatically |  | In small groups (or pairs) students consider the personal stories, family narratives and social discourses that are significant in their own lives and their empowering or disempowering nature. (Handout with diagram to assist.)  Students asked to consider/brainstorm how this might be relevant to social work practice.  Changing track somewhat, students brainstorm when/how/why social workers would need writing skills in their professional practice (can connect this to discourses of professionalism).  Moving on to further consider how to blend reference material with one’s own voice: teacher provides three examples of written work where students have attempted to use references well – students asked to rate from best to worst. | The power of discourse, story and narrative are significant in clients/groups lives; social workers need to have an awareness of this, to work from a narrative or consciousness raising approach.  Social workers consistently require writing skills in their professional practice.  Practitioners often have to make an argument (for continued funding of a program, client advocacy, etc) that requires substantiation along with an argument. |

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| 9 | The psychoanalytic contribution | To engage with the idea of reading for understanding rather than skimming the surface  To consider the issue of internal coherence in an essay |  | Using this week’s reading by Malcolm, students engage in an exercise aimed at demonstrating understanding of several pages of the reading. They produce a short written piece, and then mark each other’s work using a simple rubric.  Students consider how much does Freud take structural factors into account; they further consider how they might create a ‘match’ between parts 1 and 2 of their second assignment. | Social workers need to be able to comprehend and pick out the salient points of a range of documents, from research reports to policy documents.  Dominant discourses tend to individualise ‘social problems’; students are embedded in these discourses and need to develop their sociological literacies. |

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| 10 | Gendered identities | To further enhance understanding of structural factors and their significance to lived experience |  | Students brainstorm why an understanding of gendered experience is important to social work.  Students watch a video where a social worker engages, from a critical/feminist perspective, with a d.v. client; in pairs, students discuss their response; report back to large group.  Students asked to consider how they might understand diverse experiences of others, even when that has not been their own experience (e.g. ‘I’m a woman but I’ve never been oppressed’) | An understanding of intersecting structural factors and social inequalities is vital to professional practice.  Practitioners need to be aware of the impact of their theory base (conscious or unconscious) to their practice.  Empathy is a vital skill for helping professionals. |

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| 11 | Humanism and humanistic psychology | To consider again the relation of self to society  To review/self assess one’s skills and aptitudes |  | Brainstorm/discussion of strengths insights of humanism; then critique in light of sociological concepts such as gendered identity.  Students asked to do same exercises from week 1: drawing of self in relation to society; skill/aptitude sheet. | Agency-structure debates are at the heart of social work and social policy.  Self awareness and lifelong learning is vital to critical social work practice. |

1. HEPPP title: Inclusive Curriculum and Capacity Building – Social Work [↑](#footnote-ref-1)