

Orientation Packet, Part I: Getting Started

Silberman
School of Social Work

HUNTER

Welcome to the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. We are very glad you are here! This packet includes basic information to get you started as well as information to refer to in the days and weeks ahead.

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During this time of unparalleled worldwide crises, social workers are more vital than ever in seeking social justice and assisting others in their efforts to confront oppression and inequality. The following handout contains information that will be necessary for you to know as you begin your studies.

I. MSW PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT, GOALS, AND EXPECTATIONS

Silberman School of Social Work Mission Statement

The Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College (SSSW) educates and trains outstanding social work professionals who are lifelong learners engaged in knowledgeable, ethical practice with communities locally and nationally. Guided by this mission, we are uniquely committed to social work excellence in the public interest. Our classroom curriculum, practicum experiences, and community-engaged partnerships are focused on supporting persons, families, organizations, and communities while respecting the humanity of all individuals.

The Silberman School of Social Work MSW Program is committed to educating ethical, culturally competent social workers to build community partnerships and strengthen community capacity to achieve social justice in diverse urban communities. This mission promotes the creation, transformation, evaluation, and assumption of leadership roles in services across systems to meet the complex and unmet needs of underserved and underrepresented populations through community-engaged education, intervention, research, and advocacy. The School is fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

MSW Program Goals

- To graduate excellently prepared and diverse social work practitioners for New York City and other major urban areas who use a range of interventions with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities and who operate from a strengths-based perspective and resiliency framework.
- To emphasize urban contexts in the person-in-environment perspective, particularly as they relate to preparation for employment as clinical practitioners, community organizers, and social service organization leaders.
- To develop life-long learners able to respond innovatively to emerging practice challenges in an ethical and research-informed manner.
- To produce culturally competent social work practitioners, community-engaged scholarship, and practice-based research.
- To instill a commitment to social and economic justice that produces graduates who skillfully and assertively advocate on behalf of clients and causes.
- To educate students in partnership with New York's communities, agencies, and organizations to promote the expansion and dissemination of effective, socially just practice.

Expectations

We strive to be supportive and responsive in helping you cope with the academic, professional, and personal demands of graduate school, which begins by making certain you know how to locate the wide variety of resources available to you. As graduate students and beginning

professionals, you are responsible for familiarizing yourself with all School policies, procedures, guidelines, and program requirements. Please check the website regularly to keep informed about updated policies. The *Student Handbook* is available on the School of Social Work's website: https://s27588.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/MSW-Student-Handbook__Body__12.2020.pdf

II. DATES AND DEADLINES

- **Registration:** Registration is determined by your credit status. For each semester, please check your CUNYfirst account for your specific enrollment day and time.
Remember that changes to your registration must be made prior to the first day of the semester (not the first day of class) in order to avoid significant charges to your bursar bill.
- **Resolution of Incompletes and No Credits:** Incompletes (INCs) may be maintained for up to one year (pending professor's approval). Students should contract with professors regarding a specific plan to resolve an INC. Students who receive a grade of NC (no credit) may require re-gridding of their academic schedules. Please see an academic advisor for guidance and general information around INCs and NCs.
- **Withdrawals:** Consult the academic calendar for specific course withdrawal deadlines. See an advisor for next steps.
- **Change of Status:** Please see an academic advisor for information and timeframes around a change of status in the program (e.g., leave of absence, withdrawal, etc.).
- **Degree Audits:** Potential grads register for their Degree Audit as the final step in their degree completion, and the request for the audit is generally made in the semester prior to the student's final semester (via a link on CUNYfirst). Please keep an eye on your Hunter email account for detailed information sent from Student Services and check in with an academic advisor to be sure that you are on track for a timely degree conferral.
- **Financial Aid Filing:** Please confirm with the Financial Aid Office at 68th Street that you have correctly and completely submitted all required documents by FA deadlines.
- **Requests for Letter Grade/Transfer Credits:** Requests for letter grades are made via each professor by the end of the 2nd week of classes. Please reach out to individual professors to make these requests. Information regarding transfer credits can be found in the Student Handbook, on Blackboard, or by meeting with an academic advisor.
- **Field of Practice Specialization:** The selection of an optional Field of Practice (FOP) Specialization is made during the spring semester of the first year (during planning around the 2nd year field placement and fall registration). Please consult advisors and the FOP Handbook for detailed information around the FOP Specialization options.
- **Bursar Deadlines:** Remember that there are strict deadlines around payment of your bursar bill. Please contact the Bursar's Office at 68th Street to confirm the status of your bill and the distribution schedule for loans.

III. ACADEMIC ADVISING

Academic advising is available to all students **Monday-Friday (please see the advisors' schedules for specific hours and contact information)** for consultation about matters including the following:

- A review of program requirements/concurrency issues
- Course selection
- Assistance from the Silberman Writing Program
- Field of Practice Specialization (FOP) information
- Graduate degree audit information

In addition, academic advisors are available to direct students to policies, procedures, and deadlines for issues including the following:

- Change of practice method
- Grade appeals
- The Student Advisement committee
- The Educational Review committee
- Leaves of absence

There are two full-time advisors, one part time advisor, and an Assistant Director of Student Services. All are available to assist you.

- **Pam DeCuir** pdecur@hunter.cuny.edu (full-time advisor)
- **Bonnie Zweig** bonnie.zweig@hunter.cuny.edu (full-time advisor)
- **Alicia Greene** Alicia.Greene@hunter.cuny.edu (assistant director)

Academic advisors are not assigned to students; however, to facilitate the process, once you have contacted an advisor, it is recommended that you continue to work with that same person during your time at Silberman.

Academic advisors have contact with instructional faculty concerning issues that arise in the classroom, such as attendance or academic performance (including writing issues). Academic advisors may also have contact with field advisors to coordinate assistance for a student who is experiencing difficulties in the field.

In the first semester, OYR-Time-Frame-I students are encouraged to meet with an advisor to review issues of time management, adjustment to school, course selection, and academic performance. In the second semester, OYR-Time-Frame-I students are encouraged to meet with an advisor to begin planning for the field practicum in the Time Frame II or residency year.

Helpful Tips to Get the Most Out of Academic Advising:

- Check your Hunter Email daily for important updates
- Check your CUNYfirst account regularly
- Have CUNYfirst access info handy when visiting advisors

If you have an issue that an advisor cannot help you with, please see **Rob Lorey, the Director of Student Services** (Room 302, 212-396-7574, rlorey@hunter.cuny.edu) or **Alicia Greene, the Assistant Director of Student Services** (Room 303, 212-396-7778, ag4602@hunter.cuny.edu).

IV. UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE AS A SOCIAL WORK STUDENT

What is ethical social work practice and how can I learn more about it?

Social work students are expected to conduct themselves according to the **National Association of Social Workers** (NASW, 1997) *Code of Ethics* (located in Appendix C of the Student Handbook). Violations of this code may be cause for disciplinary action and possible dismissal from the School.

Unprofessional behaviors related to the safety of clients are covered by the NASW Code of Ethics. Violations include but are not limited to the following:

- Sexual harassment
- Sexual interaction with clients
- Physical threats and actions directed at clients, students, faculty, or staff
- Acceptance of gifts or money from clients that are not standard payment for services received
- Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty

Social work students are expected to act in accordance with professional social work ethics and values and should demonstrate tolerance and respect for human diversity. Social work students are also expected to strive to follow the NASW standards outlined in *Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* (located in Appendix D of the Student Handbook).

What are the essential abilities and attributes of a social work student?

Students are expected to maintain high levels of achievement in both: (1) academic performance in courses and in the field practicum and (2) professionalism in relationships with faculty, staff, peers, clients, and field practicum personnel. Evaluations of students' academic performance in courses and in the field are based on criteria stated in the course syllabi. For more details, check the Field Practicum Manual and the Student Handbook online.

What is academic integrity and how is academic dishonesty defined?

- The Hunter College policy on academic integrity is clearly stated on the syllabus of each of your courses. The policy defines “academic dishonesty (e.g., committing plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsifying records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty.” More information on this topic can be found in the Student Handbook and in the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity.
- Academic dishonesty is regarded as serious ethical misconduct that may affect the student's continuation in the program. Students may not present the work of anyone else as their own achievement or submit a written assignment prepared for one course as original work for another course. Work prepared for one course must be clearly cited (and permission to reuse the material must be granted) before this material can be included in an assignment for another course.
- The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and

will pursue cases of academic dishonesty in accordance with the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures (See *Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity* at <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/provost/academic-integrity>.)

What are the policies related to alcohol, tobacco, and drug use on campus?

- The Silberman School of Social Work adheres to Hunter College policies governing conduct, including the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs on campus. Please refer to the College's website:
<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/deanofstudents/student-conduct>

Resources for and by students

- **Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/SilbermanSSW>
- **Childcare and housing resources in East Harlem:** Brochures are available from advisors via email inquiry or in Room 301 (Student Services).
- **Points of interest guide to restaurants in East Harlem:**
<https://www.nycfoodpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Restaurant-Guide.pdf>
- **NASW Student Membership:**
<https://www.socialworkers.org/Membership/Membership-Types/Students>

V. READING, WRITING, AND INFORMATION LITERACY AT THE MASTER'S LEVEL

In order to succeed at the master's level, students are expected to be able to satisfy a number of requirements, including but not limited to the ones enumerated below.

Reading Requirements

In order to gain the practice knowledge and theoretical perspective necessary for licensed master social workers, students at Silberman will undertake a significant amount of academic reading, including but not limited to textbooks, journal articles, and scholarly websites. This reading is of a particularly difficult degree, dealing as it does with high-level concepts in the fields of sociology, psychology, social work, social justice, and many others. In addition, the volume of reading expected on a weekly basis (approximately 5-6 chapters, postings, or articles per class/per week) can also be challenging, especially when students' other responsibilities—including their field work—are factored in.

Students who are unable to comprehend this information or to keep up with the reading workload will find it difficult (if not impossible) to successfully complete their course of study.

Writing Requirements

In the same way that students are expected to complete a good deal of reading, so too are they expected to write frequently—in cogent and error-free prose at a level commensurate with master's-level expectations. In most classes, students are expected to produce essays ranging from 5-12 pages each. Third- and fourth-semester students will produce essays ranging from 10-20 pages each (including the capstone project in Professional Seminar). In addition to papers, students may expect regular posting assignments to Blackboard and weekly case note, process recording, and/or journal entry assignments.

As noted above, this writing must be free from most if not all errors in grammar, rhetoric, and logic and must correspond to the specific assignments (many of which are based on the readings for the class).

Information Literacy Requirements

In order to support the arguments made in their written assignments, students must be able to find credible sources and document them using correct APA format (including in-text citations, reference page entries, and correctly attributed quotations). Students must also be able to paraphrase effectively to avoid plagiarism and the overuse of quotations and to demonstrate complete understanding and mastery of the assigned material.

VI. THE SILBERMAN WRITING PROGRAM

The Silberman Writing Program is the place to turn to for assistance with written work both in the classroom and in the field. To make an appointment, please visit ssswriting.youcanbook.me (weekdays) or ssswriting2.youcanbook.me (evenings & weekends). Appointments are offered both in person and via Zoom, depending upon the students' preference.

The Silberman Writing Program supports students with their academic and professional writing skills and is specifically tailored to the needs of social work students. Working with faculty and advisors, the professional staff of the program facilitates the development of writing, research, and critical thinking skills.

The program offers resources that address relevant topics including the following: how to read and annotate scholarly texts with ease, how to read assignment directions, how to structure and revise papers, how to avoid plagiarism and master the art of citations, how to cope with the stress of writing research papers, and how to write for the field (e.g., process recordings, progress notes, etc.). Additional resources are devoted to creating successful résumés and cover letters and publishing your work in professional journals.

For helpful handouts and podcasts, go to the SSSW Information Corner on Blackboard (under "My Organizations"). There you will find over 80 handouts and 20 podcasts on various writing and information literacy topics.

If coming to Silberman for assistance is not convenient, you may utilize the remote services of the Rockowitz Writing Center at Hunter College, 68th Street, Thomas Hunter Hall (Room 416). Registered students can receive tutoring in reading and writing skills, critical reading, and the writing process. For more information, please visit <http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/>.

VII. RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT 68TH STREET AND LEXINGTON AVENUE

- ICIT for log on: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/icit/help-docs/registration-help>
- ICIT for Blackboard: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/icit/teaching-learning/blackboard>
- Student Help Desk: Studenthelpdesk@hunter.cuny.edu
- Bursar: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/bursar/>
- Financial Aid: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/finaid/>
- Registrar at 68th Street: <http://registrar.hunter.cuny.edu/>
- Counseling & Wellness Services:
<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/student-services/counseling-and-wellness/pcs>
- Office of AccessABILITY: www.hunter.cuny.edu/student-services/access
- Career Development Services: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/student-services/cds/>
- Rockowitz Writing Center (68th Street): <http://hunter.cuny.edu/rwc>