

HELLENIC MEDITERRANEAN UNIVERSITY

School of Health Sciences

Department of Social Work

COURSE OUTLINES

1 course

PERSON-CENTED AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE COMMUNICATION IN COURSE OUTLINE

1. GENERAL			
SCHOOL	School of Health Sciences		
ACADEMIC UNIT	Department of Social Work		
LEVEL OF STUDIES	Undergraduate		
COURSE CODE	8000.1.218.0	SEMESTER	2nd
COURSE TITLE	Person-Centred and Culturally Sensitive Communication in		
INDEPENDENT TEACHING ACTIVITIES if credits are awarded for separate components of the course	WEEKLY TEACHING HOURS	CREDITS	
	3	6	
Total	3	6	
COURSE TYPE general background, special background, specialised general knowledge, skills development	ΠΡΟΑΙΡΕΤΙΚΟ-ΑΓΓΛΟΦΩΝΟ		
PREREQUISITE COURSES	KANENA		
LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION and EXAMINATIONS	English		
OFFERED TO ERASMUS STUDENTS	Yes (in English)		
COURSE WEBSITE (URL)	https://eclass.hmu.gr/courses/SW579		
2. LEARNING OUTCOMES			
Learning outcomes			

The aim of this course is to equip undergraduate students in social work with the knowledge, skills, and values required for effective, person-centered, and culturally responsive communication in community-based health and social care settings.

Students will learn to recognize communication as a core intervention tool in social work practice, fostering trust, empowerment, and collaboration between professionals, service users, and communities. Students are expected to:

Knowledge

- Explain key theories of person-centered and culturally sensitive communication and their application in social work.
- Understand how cultural values, language, and social determinants affect communication in health and social care.
- Compare models of community-based care and professional communication between Greece and the USA.
- Identify ethical and professional boundaries in cross-cultural and interprofessional collaboration.

Skills

- Apply active listening, empathy, and motivational interviewing to foster trust and engagement with clients and communities.
- Use tools such as the COMFORT model, Calgary–Cambridge Guide, and TeamSTEPPS strategies to enhance communication in interprofessional teams.
- Demonstrate culturally aware and trauma-informed responses when working with vulnerable populations (e.g., refugees, older adults, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities).
- Adapt communication for digital and community settings (telehealth, outreach, family meetings).

Competencies

- Integrate communication, cultural humility, and ethics as foundational aspects of social work identity.
- Collaborate effectively with health professionals, community leaders, and families in diverse environments.
- Reflect critically on their communication style, biases, and assumptions, using self-evaluation tools.
- Apply lessons learned from Greek and American practice contexts to strengthen inclusive, evidence-based interventions.

General Competences

Interdisciplinary work
 Respect of diversity and multicultural environments
 Showing social, professional and ethical responsibility and sensitivity to gender issues
 Display of social, professional and ethical accountability
 Decision-making
 Autonomous work
 Critical thinking and self-criticism

3. SYLLABUS

Unit 1. Communication, Culture, and Social Work Foundations

- The role of communication as a helping process in social work.
- Person-centered practice and the social work code of ethics.
- Communication challenges in Greek and U.S. social welfare systems.

Unit 2. Theories and Models of Communication in Care

- COMFORT Communication Curriculum (Wittenberg et al., 2018).
- Calgary–Cambridge Guide and the structure of professional encounters.
- TeamSTEPPS and interprofessional collaboration in practice.

Unit 3. Culture and Context

- Cultural humility, bias awareness, and reflective practice.
- Communication with refugees, migrants, and multicultural communities in Greece and the USA.
- Intercultural competence and the social worker's advocacy role.

Unit 4. Digital and Community Communication

- Digital health communication (Asan et al., 2021; WHO Digital Health Toolkit).
- Ethics, privacy, and accessibility in technology-mediated interactions.
- Community-based communication methods and participatory approaches (Living Lab).

Unit 5. Empathy, Trust, and Relationship-Building

- Relational aspects of trust (Doyle et al., 2013; Sharkiya, 2023).
- Managing difficult conversations (illness, trauma, end-of-life).
- Role-plays based on cross-national case studies (Greek community centers vs. U.S. integrated health clinics).

Unit 6. Comparative Seminar: Greece & USA

- Communication patterns, ethics, and cultural assumptions.
- Case presentations: service user narratives from both systems.

4. TEACHING and LEARNING METHODS - EVALUATION

DELIVERY Face-to-face, Distance learning, etc.	Hybrid	
USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY Use of ICT in teaching, laboratory education, communication with students	Use of ICT in teaching Supporting learning procedure and communication with students through the E-Class platform	
TEACHING METHODS The manner and methods of teaching are described in detail.	Activity	Semester workload
	Lectures	50
	Field-based / case study exercises	40
	Independent study	30
	Group assignment	30
	Course total	150

STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Description of the evaluation procedure

Student performance will be assessed through a **combination of continuous and final evaluation methods**, reflecting the holistic, person-centered, and intercultural orientation of the course. Evaluation will be **shared between HMU and Rutgers faculty**, ensuring transparency, academic equivalence, and feedback consistency.

Assessment Components:

- **Final Essay – 40%**
Students will write a reflective and comparative essay analyzing **communication approaches in community health and social work in Greece and the USA**, integrating theory and practice (COMFORT, Calgary–Cambridge, TeamSTEPPS).
- **Workshop & Role-Play Participation – 30%**
Assessment of students' applied communication skills during **interactive simulations**, role plays, and group discussions, focusing on empathy, collaboration, and cultural responsiveness.
- **Midterm Reflection Portfolio – 20%**
A short reflective journal on self-awareness, communication challenges, and personal learning growth during the course.
- **Peer and Faculty Feedback – 10%**
Evaluation through structured feedback sessions between peers and instructors (HMU and Rutgers), emphasizing professional communication and teamwork.

5. ATTACHED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Payne, M. (2021). Modern Social Work Theory – Fifth edition.
- Koutra, K., Burns, C., Sinko, L., Kita, S., Bilgin, H., & Saint Arnault, D. (2022). Trauma Recovery Rubric: A Mixed-Method Analysis of Trauma Recovery Pathways in Four Countries. International Journal Environmental Research & Public Health, 19, 10310. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191610310>
- Koutra K. (2015). Community development: A challenging strategy for Social Capital, Health Promotion and Community Social Work. In: Social Capital: Global Perspectives, Management Strategies and Effectiveness, USA: Nova Science Publishers, INC
- Kleio Koutra, Ann W. Roy, & Effrosyni D. Kokaliari (2020). The effect of social capital on NSSI and suicidal behaviors among college students in Greece following the economic crisis. International Social Work Journal, 63(1) 100–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872818776726>
- Rodelli, M., Koutra, K., Thorvaldsdottir, K.B., Bilgin, H., Ratsika, N., Testoni, I., Saint Arnault, M.D. (2022). Conceptual Development and Content Validation of a Multicultural Instrument to assess the Normalization of Gender-Based Violence. Sexuality & Culture, 26, 26–47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-021-09877-y>
- Bywaters, P., McLeod, E., and Napier, L. (2009). Social work and global health inequalities: Practice and policy developments. Policy Press Scholarship Online DOI:10.1332/policypress/9781847421951.003.0011
- Handbook for Public Health Social Work (2013). R. Keefe & E.T. Jurkowski (Ed). The Social Work Section Of The American Public Health Association. Springer Pub.
- The Social Determinants of Health: A Social Work Perspective (2016). The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers (NLASW)
- Siegrist, J. and Marmot, M. (2006). Social Inequalities in Health. New evidence and policy implications. Oxford University Press

