

# SW4SA3: Critical Child Welfare—From Theory to Practice

* January 9, 2023, to April 12, 2023 (Tuesdays) 11:30 am - 2:50 pm
* Instructor: Dr. Gary C. Dumbrill
* Virtual office hours: By appointment
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# Course Overview

## Course Description:

This advanced course develops and refines the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to undertake child welfare work, and the critical thinking skills needed to understand the social and political factors that shape the way practice is imagined and delivered. The course is a part of the school’s Concurrent Certificate in Critical Child Welfare Practice and as such builds on the school’s introductory Child Welfare Course (SW 4W03).

## Course Objectives:

In order to deepen but not duplicate prior learning, specific course objectives are decided between the instructor and students early in the course, and the means to achieve these are also decided based on students preferred learning styles. These learning objectives fall within the overarching course learning objectives which is for students to:

* Gain a robust understanding of the strengths and limitations of current child welfare systems in Canada
* Gain critical in-depth understanding of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to do child welfare well, and demonstrate the ability to apply these in practice
* To seek out new knowledge about child welfare, to critically appraise that knowledge, and to know where, when, and how to apply or not apply that knowledge
* Understand one’s own attitudes, the ways other people experience your attitudes and work (especially when under stress), and to adjust as necessary
* Work as a team member, including knowing how to support others, how to ask for support for yourself, and how to critically reflect on your role, contribution, and performance as a team member
* Address child protection cases with an open mind and fluid thinking
* Recognise how every way you think is also a way of not thinking
* Work anti-oppressively in a child protection setting

The basic assumptions of this course concur with the broader curriculum context set by the **School of Social Work's Statement of Philosophy**:

*As social workers, we operate in a society characterized by power imbalances that affect us all. These power imbalances are based on age, class, ethnicity, gender identity, geographic location, health, ability, race, sexual identity, and income. We see personal troubles as inextricably linked to oppressive structures. We believe that social workers must be actively involved in the understanding and transformation of injustices in social institutions and in the struggles of people to maximize control over their own lives.*

## Course Format

This is an on-campus classroom-based course uses problem-based learning, case simulations, and reflexivity where students can develop their child welfare social work skills and knowledge and also gain a deeper critical understanding of child welfare systems. Registration in this class is limited to allow the course to be tailored to individual student learning needs and styles, as such the course hinges on student active engagement with the topics and with each during the scheduled class time. If students wish, schedules allow, and if it fits learning objectives, the course may involve class visits to child welfare and related community settings.

## Required Texts:

The course begins with a small number of readings, after which students seek out and critically engage with the literature, research, and other forms of knowledge to explore and solve child welfare puzzles that arise in the course.

# Course Requirements/Assignments

## Requirements Overview and Deadlines

1. 30% | Interview reflection: Before February 14
2. 20% | Critical appraisal of an article of knowledge source: Before March 14
3. 30% | Paper on child welfare, or create your own assignment: Before April 4
4. 20% | Participation: Ongoing
5. 00% | To aid your own learning you may want to keep a reflective journal

Assignments are designed to be flexible so that you can adjust them to fit your own learning style and schedule. You can also adjust the weight between assignments 2 & 3, or you can merge assignment 2 & 3 for a combined weight of 50%. These options should be discussed with the instructor in advance.

## Requirement/Assignment Details

### Interview reflection

Reflect on a simulated interview you undertake in this class (we will practice how to do this reflection before you do the assignment).

### Critical appraisal of an article/knowledge source

In consultation with class members, seek out knowledge source relevant to class learning. Critically appraise that knowledge in a written assignment. Submit this assignment to A2L and also share a copy with the class to share this knowledge and also to gain peer feedback.

### Paper on child welfare, or create your own assignment

Write a paper (5-10 pages) or create a video or presentation that speaks to how to do child welfare well. This work should draw on content in this course and also on your own research and the sense you make of child welfare work. Decide on key messages in this paper and also the audience for the paper, it could be students about to take an introductory child welfare course (such as 4W03), policy makers, or some other audience.

Alternatively, you can suggest your own assignment. The assignment must be related to the course content or an idea that emerged for you during the course that you would like to explore, the assignment must also be something conducive to being assessed/graded. You can be as creative as you wish in this assignment, it can be a paper, art work, performance based, audio/video etc. Please discuss with the instructor in advance.

### Participation

This is a very small seminar type-class where participation is not only important for your own learning but also for the others in the class too. Participation means being present and not only engaging in a learning process yourself, but also constructively building and supporting the learning of others.

### Reflective learning journal

This is not graded but consider tracking your learning in reflective journal and also cataloging it in a learning portfolio.

# Assignment Submission and Grading

## Form and Style

* Unless otherwise stated, written assignments must be typed and double-spaced and submitted with a front page containing the title, student’s name, student number, and the date. Number all pages (except title page).
* Paper format must be in accordance with the current edition of American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual with particular attention paid to font size (Times-Roman 12), spacing (double spaced) and margins (minimum of 1 inch at the top, bottom, left and right of each page) as papers not meeting these requirements will not be accepted for grading.
* Students are expected to make use of relevant professional and social science literature and other bodies of knowledge in their term assignments. When submitting, please keep a spare copy of your assignments.

### Submitting Assignments & Grading

Assignments are to be submitted by Avenue to Learn (A2L).

### Privacy Protection

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. In this course, papers will be submitted and returned, and grades communicated, in electronic format via Avenue to Learn.

### Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

# Student Responsibilities

* Students are expected to contribute to the creation of a respectful and constructive learning environment. Students should read material in preparation for class, attend class on time and remain for the full duration of the class. A formal break will be provided in the middle of each class, students are to return from the break on time.
* In the past, student and faculty have found that non-course related use of laptop computers and hand-held electronic devices during class to be distracting and at times disruptive. Consequently, during class, students are expected to only use such devices for taking notes and other activities directly related to the lecture or class activity taking place.
* Please check with the instructor before using any audio or video recording devices in the classroom.

### Attendance

## Students are expected to attend all classes. If you anticipate difficulty with this, please speak with the instructor. Missing a substantial number of classes often results in essential course requirements not being met (these must be met to pass the course). Students who are close to missing 20% of classes must contact the instructor to discuss.

### Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

* Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
* Improper collaboration in group work.
* Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations

## Authenticity/Plagiarism Detection

## Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g., A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

## Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity) .

### Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning, and working communities. These expectations are described in the *Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities* (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g., use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

### Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s *Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities* policy.

### Accessibility Statement

The School of Social Work recognizes that people learn and express their knowledge in different ways. We are committed to reducing barriers to accessibility in the classroom and working towards classrooms that welcome diverse learners. If you have accessibility concerns or want to talk about your learning needs, please be in touch with the course instructor.

### Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous, or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office *normally within 10 working days* of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

The School of Social Work requests and expects that:

* Instructors inform students about what they will record, when they will record, and what they will do with the recording.
* Students who wish to record contact the instructor first. This is so the instructor can inform the class when permission has been given to a student to record (the identity of the student will be kept confidential by the instructor).
* Recordings by students are used for personal study only, and not shared with anyone else, and are deleted when no longer needed for personal study
* There will likely be times when students or guest speakers share personal or sensitive information. In this circumstance we expect everyone to stop recording. The instructor (or student or guest sharing) may also ask for recording to stop, and we expect everyone to respect such a request.

## Confidentiality

A cornerstone of professional social work relationships is confidentiality with respect to all matters associated with professional services to clients. Social workers demonstrate respect for the trust and confidence placed in them by clients, communities, and other professionals by protecting the privacy of client information and respecting the client’s right to control when or whether this information will be shared with third parties (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

In 4SA3 it is recognized that students may participate and learn by discussing their placement and lived experiences. As such, it is important to identify issues of confidentiality that arise in addition to those related to client confidentiality. Each student will be required to review the Confidentiality Agreement for 3D06 and 4D06 Integrative Seminars and sign off to indicate their understanding and agreement. <https://socialwork.mcmaster.ca/documents/confidentiality-agreement-3d-4d-2020.docx/view>

### E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, they may not reply.

### Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

### Extensions and Incomplete Courses

Extensions

All instructors understand that life situations sometimes make it very difficult to hand in an assignment on the date it is due. If you need more time to complete an assignment, talk with your instructor – in advance of the assignment deadline! Once you and your instructor have agreed on a new due date, it is your responsibility to submit your assignment on time. If you find yourself unable to meet deadlines in more than one course, please reach out to Tammy Maikawa, Administrator ([millet@mcmaster.ca](mailto:millet@mcmaster.ca) ) or Jennie Vengris, Undergraduate Chair ([vengris@mcmaster.ca](mailto:vengris@mcmaster.ca)). We are here to support you to think about options (such as reducing your course load) that can take the stress off and contribute to your success in the program overall.

Incomplete courses

If you are not able to complete all of your assignments by the end of term, you have the option of contacting the instructor to request an Incomplete (INC) on the course. If the instructor agrees, (taking into account the amount of outstanding coursework and the time it will likely take to complete), the instructor will enter the grade you have so far in the course (the default grade) and the course will appear in Mosaic as INC (incomplete).

The School’s requirements for completing courses depend on a) the nature of the course (whether it is a foundation course\*, or a social and political context course) and b) when you are hoping to start placement. For example, a student who has an incomplete in a foundation course cannot start placement. Please see the [Policy on Extensions and Incompletes in the BSW Program](https://socialwork.mcmaster.ca/resources/undergraduate-resources/policy-on-extensions-and-incompletes-november-2019.docx/view) for more details.

At approximately 52-60 days after the end of term, the Mosaic system will automatically change an INC to the default grade. Depending on the default grade, this might affect your standing or progress in the program.

*As always, if you have any questions or concerns about your progress in the program, please connect with Tammy Maikawa, Administrator (*[*millet@mcmaster.ca*](mailto:millet@mcmaster.ca) *) or* *Jennie Vengris, Undergraduate Chair (*[*vengris@mcmaster.ca*](mailto:vengris@mcmaster.ca)*).*

Course Weekly Topics and Readings

WEEK 1: January 10, 2023

Course overview & planning

The previous child welfare course (4W03) provides the starting point for 4SA3. Consequently, together we consider what you have learned and what you want to clarify from 4W03. We also discuss any personal learning goals you may have for 4SA3. We then map out and tailor the 4SA3 schedule (especially the later part of the class schedule) to match your child welfare learning needs and interests. There are no readings this week, though you may want to get a head-start on the readings for week 2.

WEEK 2: January 17, 2023

Thinking about casework interviews

We begin to consider how to approach interviews in child welfare. Where do you begin and what is the purpose of interviews? While doing this we will consider risk to children, the risk you pose to families and communities, and the strengths and limitations of anti-oppression in this context.

Readings

Adjei, P. B., & Minka, E. (2018). Black parents ask for a second look: Parenting under ‘White’ Child Protection rules in Canada. *Children and Youth Services Review, 94*, 511-524. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.08.030> ([LINK](https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.08.030))

Stoddard, J. K. (2021). The risk of risk: Unpacking the influence of “risk” on child welfare decision making. In K. Kufeldt, B. Fallon, & B. McKenzie (Eds.), *Protecting Children: Theoretical and practical aspects* (pp. 288-304). Canadian Scholars.

WEEK 3: January 24, 2023

Simulated case interviews

We begin simulated case interviews; these will be based on a case we will discuss in class. Readings will be assigned based on emerging themes and learning needs.

WEEK 4: January 31, 2023

Simulated case interviews continue

We continue simulated case interviews.

WEEK 5: February 7, 2023

Simulated case interviews finalized

We finalize simulated case interviews. In the process of interviews casework and other practice puzzles will have arisen. We examine these and look for consensus on the ones we are going to unravel and find answers to in the later part of this course. Solving these puzzles become ongoing assignments in the course.

WEEK 6: February 14, 2023

Guest presentation

This week’s class have a presentation from a guest who is a leader in child welfare who will help us take a deeper look at how to get practice right in the field. Attention will be paid to critical thinking, and also the knowledge, skills, and attitudes you need to do the best possible work in the field.

February 21, 2023, RECESS – enjoy!

WEEK 7: February 28, 2023

Determining topics and activities

This week we decide the content for the remainder of the classes in this course. These will include work and presentations on the child welfare “puzzled” you identifies in the previous weeks of this course. Topics will also include guest speakers who can speak to these “puzzles” and other child welfare issues and may also include visits of agencies and other child welfare related settings.

WEEK 8: March 7, 2023

Customized content

Activity, guest presentation or field trip, and readings to be determined.

Week 9: March 14, 2023

Customized content

Activity, guest presentation or field trip, and readings to be determined.

WEEK 10: March 21, 2023

Customized content

Activity, guest presentation or field trip, and readings to be determined.

WEEK 11: March 28, 2023

Customized content

Activity, guest presentation or field trip, and readings to be determined.

WEEK 12: April 4, 2023

Customized content

Activity, guest presentation or field trip, and readings to be determined.

WEEK 13: April 11, 2023

Course conclusion

We pull together learning from the class and conclude.