McMaster University School of Social Work

**Master of Social Work**

**Critical Leadership in Social Services and Communities** offers:

**Knowledge and Ideas**
- Foundational courses focused on the critical analysis of social work practice, and the critical analysis of policy
- Critical analyses and conceptual frameworks about changing conditions in social services and communities

**Models and Perspectives**
- A range of models for progressive and transformative leadership
- A range of perspectives (including feminist, Indigenous, and post-heroic) on the complexities and possibilities of ethical leading in the contemporary context

**Professional Development and Skills-Building**
- A leadership-focused practicum – a practical experience of leadership with personalized feedback and mentorship that prepares students for leadership roles in social and community services
- Opportunities to share knowledge, stories and strategies, and to reflect on leadership practice, with respected local leaders

**Community**
- A chance to build community with people keen to engage the daily work of leading and sustaining progressive public services

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**socialwork.mcmaster.ca**

**Kenneth Taylor Hall (KTH), Room 319**
McMaster University
1280 Main St. West
Hamilton, Ontario
L8S 4M4

**Phone:** 905-525-9140 extension 2599
**Fax:** 905-577-4667
**Email:** scwkgrad@mcmaster.ca

McMaster’s MSW program is accredited by the Canadian Association for Social Work Education.
Our instructors have years of practice, research and advocacy experience, and are deeply connected with their communities.

Tara LaRose has many years of practice experience in community organizing, asset mapping in low income communities, child protection, homelessness, mobile mental health crisis counseling, sexual assault and domestic violence care, and individual and couples’ counseling. Her research explores changing conditions of social work labour and implications for social workers’ identities, professional status, work design and scope of practice. Her work highlights a growing tension between definitions of professional leadership and the goals and values of social work, the labour required to bridge the gap between ideals and realities of practice, and the strategies social workers use to preserve social justice in practice. Tara is also interested in the potential of social media and Internet-based narratives to facilitate social justice communication, consensus building and community organizing/ activation, and the use of digital spaces for educational, mentoring and empowerment resources for social work leaders. Tara teaches 741 & 742.

As a senior policy analyst with the City of Hamilton Jennie Vengris led the development of a 10 year housing strategy, consulting stakeholders and analyzing the literature and the political climate to understand how to position local needs. Before that, at the Social Planning and Research Council, she facilitated a needs assessment about street-involved and homeless youth and then worked with and supported youth, workers and managers to implement recommendations. She brings long experience in building networks of community stakeholders and decision-makers and creating effective, accessible consultation processes. She has a particular interest in processes of trust building in the context of complex community dynamics and in ways to hold oneself and one’s colleagues accountable for community-generated ideas and solutions. She supports students to develop strategic analysis, planning, facilitation and collaboration skills, alongside nuanced communication skills and capacities for thoughtful risk taking. Jennie works with students to establish Leadership Practicums (751) and facilitates 750.

Stephanie Baker Collins has worked in social policy analysis, research, public education and advocacy at community and national levels. Stephanie examines the impact of public policy on the lives of marginalized groups, conducting research in partnership with community organizations and advocating for justice in public policy. Her policy research on socio-economic issues has included writing and presenting briefs before Standing Committees of Parliament. Her current projects focus on the intersection of disability and homelessness for youth, and policy impacts of the social assistance system in Ontario. Stephanie teaches 743.

Saara Greene has worked in a range of social work positions and settings including as Director of Research and Evaluation at Fife House, an agency providing supportive housing for people living with HIV/AIDS. Saara is committed to community-based research and to developing models of CBPR that address methodological and ethical challenges. Her research focuses on the needs and experiences of women living with HIV in relation to housing instability, pregnancy, birth and motherhood, and the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure, paying attention to the ways that racism, colonization and sexism intersect in women’s lives. Saara teaches 721.

Laura O’Neill has over 14 years of social work practice experience in outpatient and inpatient hospital programs. She provides clinical supervision at the undergraduate and graduate levels across a range of disciplines and is committed to taking what are often complex theories and finding ways to teach them to students, using specific examples from work settings. In her PhD study Laura examined a specific computerized psychosocial assessment, showing how such tools can simplify and narrow professional practice, turning it away from care and justice. Laura teaches 740.

Do you have a BSW, and at least three years of work experience in social or community services?

The MSW in Critical Leadership in Social Services and Communities at McMaster’s School of Social Work offers the opportunity to develop your capacity for leading in justice-focused ways, and to connect with people with similar commitments and goals.

Major changes in funding and governance have strained and constrained social and community services. Requirements for efficiency, competition, and narrow accountability are reshaping conditions for workers and service users and changing how social agencies operate.

In response to these challenges, and at the urging of community partners, McMaster University is excited to offer an MSW in Social Services and Communities. This MSW responds to the desire expressed by many BSW graduates for an MSW with a focus on critical practice, and to interest on the part of senior managers in social services for employees prepared for the complexities of leadership in contemporary social service settings.

The program is structured around the recognition of conditions in contemporary social services and communities work, with a focus on expansive and critical definitions of leadership. It will support emerging leaders as they reflect on changing conditions and consider their own approaches to progressive leadership.

This MSW welcomes people who have BSWs and at least three years of work experience, including people:

- in or aspiring to formally recognized leadership roles in social and community services
- in direct or front-line service positions who are sustaining justice-orientated approaches in their agencies
- active in community organizing, and leading social movements

Courses:

741: Changing Social Services, Changing Communities: Focus on Leadership
742: Organizational and Social Change: Theories, Practices and Possibilities for Leadership
743: Critical Approaches to Evidence and Evaluation in Social Services & Communities

And one of:

740: Changing Social Service Organizations: Implications for Workers and Service Users
721: Changing Communities: Tensions and Possibilities for Citizenship and Social Justice

Practicum:

Each student will have a leadership practicum (SW 751) in a social service agency or community organization. Students will be supported by the school to secure and develop their placement. Each student will take on a leadership project - for example, lead the development of a new policy, move a service initiative forward, or explore and provide recommendations about how a community need might be addressed. An MSW-prepared social worker will provide field instruction. Students’ experiences, observations and actions in the practicum setting will become topics for reflection in the accompanying seminar (SW 750), with theory and concepts from coursework will be brought to bear on specific aspects of their leadership practice. The practicum is 450 hours long. Students may have a practicum in their regular work setting, however it must be in a different section, program or department.

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Phone: 905-525-9140 extension 24596
Fax: 905-577-4667
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