

Human Rights in Philadelphia

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Background: Inherent to the principles of human rights, all persons are entitled to such rights regardless of geographic location. Yet, social work's commitment to the person-in-environment perspective demands that location be considered in practice. **Objective:** This article details an elective course focused on human rights within the city of the campus' location. **Methods:** Using the frames of Freire (1970), Bronfenbrenner (2004), and the living classroom (Lane et al., 2017), content centers on local people, organizations, and social justice movements. **Results:** A *study abroad at home* format is introduced as a form of immersion learning for nontraditional students interested in human rights within the local context. **Conclusion:** A review of the course development and suggestions are provided for designing similar courses.

Keywords: human rights; immersion learning; Philadelphia; social work education

Inherent to the principles of human rights is that all persons are entitled to these rights regardless of geographic location. Yet, social work's commitment to the person-in-environment perspective demands that location be considered in practice. Accredited social work programs are mandated to provide the opportunity for students to develop competencies related to human rights and how such rights relate to social issues (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2015); however, Gatenio Gabel and Mapp (2019) found social work programs are more likely to address social justice throughout the curriculum rather than human rights. By placing emphasis on social justice, social work programs miss opportunities for students to understand the role of advancing human rights in the pursuit of social justice. It is critical that students learn how to utilize human rights and social justice as separate and complimentary ideals to frame practice with individuals and communities. This article details an elective course focused on human rights within the city where the campus is located, introducing the people, organizations, and social justice movements.

The United Nations (2020) defines human rights as:

... inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.

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Such a definition aligns with social work professional values and ethics (Albrithen & Androff, 2014; International Federation of Social Workers, 2014; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017). Therefore, it is critical for human rights education to occur complementary to the required courses and field placements if social work is to embrace its identity as a human rights profession (Mapp, McPherson, et al., 2019). Social workers who understand human rights as a lived experience will consistently promote the six core values of social work: service, social justice, respect of the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2017), as these values are aligned with the principles of human rights: human dignity, nondiscrimination, participation, transparency, and accountability (Mapp, McPherson, et al., 2019). Similarly, we saw opportunity to connect human rights with the local context through immersion learning, like studying abroad.

Study abroad experiences are one method that social work programs utilize to educate students on human rights (Chiarelli-Helminiak et al., 2018; Gatenio Gabel & Mapp, 2019). The benefits of a comprehensive study abroad program with a teacher guide knowledgeable about the travel location are well-documented and the experience can encourage the pursuit of advanced degrees, shorten degree completion time, increase global awareness, and influence future career paths for students (Schulmann, 2016). Unfortunately, the ability of many nontraditional and graduate students to participate in study abroad programs is hindered by their nonacademic responsibilities (Hittepole, 2020; Mapp, 2012). In addition, by isolating human rights to courses focused on international issues or studying abroad, social work education perpetuates the notion of United States exceptionalism in relation to human rights (Libal & Healy, 2014), a fallacy demonstrated through the ongoing work of the Black Lives Matter (BLM, 2020) movement, founded in 2013 following the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer and reenergized in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officers. BLM advocacy calls attention to one of the few human rights treaties ratified by the United States, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (United Nations, 1965), a policy which holds the government accountable for systematic racism and police brutality, and signifies the hypocrisy of exceptionalist narratives in the United States.

To overcome the number of students unable to go abroad, and to facilitate the learning and internalization of the connection between human rights and other discriminatory and oppressive social justice issues in our local community, West Chester University's (WCU) graduate social work program created an immersive learning experience we termed *study abroad at home* in Philadelphia. The curriculum allowed students to engage with people, organizations, and movements in the host city and study efforts to address the human rights and social justice issues currently impacting residents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature has richly conceptualized the benefits of studying abroad, yet as more students participated in international education programs, trends indicated that students were opting for short-term study abroad programs, 8 weeks or less,

even before the COVID-19 global health crisis essentially halted international travel. Historically, students who studied abroad were more likely to be White with personal and family funding as the primary financial sources. Nontraditional¹ and graduate students were less likely than traditional-aged undergraduate students to study abroad (Institute of International Education, 2019; Schulmann, 2016).

Despite unequal access to studying abroad, U.S.-based social work students need a global perspective (CSWE, 2015; Healy & Wairire, 2014). Whether working with individuals and communities who have migrated to the United States or moving abroad to practice, social workers interact with international issues. Mapp and Gatenio Gabel (2019) found social work programs expose students to international social work issues in a variety of ways, such as global content in required and elective courses, international field experiences, and financial support for traveling students. While human rights content is often associated with international social work curriculum, Gatenio Gabel and Mapp (2019) also found that 12% of social work programs did not include human rights in their curriculum and 23% of programs merely affixed human rights to social justice content. Like Libal and Healy (2014), we do not advocate for an “abandonment of the global elements of human rights education,” but an emphasis on the local U.S. context in social work education (p. 123).

Benefits of In-Depth Study of Human Rights Within a Local U.S. Community

The United States has a well-documented history of examining human rights violations in other countries while maintaining a blind eye to its own relationship to human rights. Libal and Hertel (2011) cited *American exceptionalism* as the reason why the United States has focused on international concerns while essentially ignoring issues at home, especially those related to economic and social rights. Even while focusing on civil and political rights, the United States has resisted framing such issues as human rights. For example, a recent draft report by the Commission on Unalienable Rights (2020), created to guide the U.S. secretary of state, ignored the interconnectedness and indivisibility of all human rights as put forth by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

In the United States, the profession of social work has also been slow to frame social justice issues as human rights violations. Given the individualistic nature of U.S. society, social workers frequently emphasize the person’s healing from traumas, not the nation state’s responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights, despite the profession’s ecosystems perspective. A social work course focused on in-depth study of human rights within a local U.S. community allowed for an analysis of issues using a human rights lens, application of practice from a human rights-based approach, and an opportunity for students to have access to key stakeholders in the city.

Philadelphia as “Travel” Location. Philadelphia is a global city. As the fifth most populous and sixth largest metro area in the United States (World Population Review, 2020), the U.S. Census Bureau (2020) reported that nearly 14% of Philadelphia’s population were foreign born and 23% spoke a language other than English at

home. Philadelphia is also rich in racial diversity, with 44% of its population identifying as Black or African American, 15% identifying as Hispanic or Latino, and 8% identifying as Asian. Kolko (2016) found the Philadelphia metro region to be the ninth most representative of the demographic landscape of the country.

Despite its diversity, Philadelphia is also one of the most segregated cities. According to Silver (2015), the city boasted a high citywide diversity index, while its integration-segregation index placed Philadelphia as the fourth most segregated city in the country. Philadelphia is not unique in this regard; Silver found that the number of Black residents and segregation were positively associated variables in most cities. Segregation is not the only human rights concern given the city's documented history of systemic oppression (Saint et al., 2020). Human rights issues such as poverty and poor health outcomes also abound: 24% of Philadelphia's population lives in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), with females aged 25–34 and Black residents being most impacted (Data USA, 2020), while 12% of persons under 65 report a disability, 9% of persons under 65 have no health insurance (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), and the COVID-19 public health crisis continues to have a significant impact in the city.

Philadelphia's status as the country's first World Heritage City (Global Philadelphia Association, 2020) also makes it an ideal location to *study abroad at home*. Philadelphia is home to many historic and cultural sites, including Independence Hall, a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020a) designated World Heritage site. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL, 2015) has highlighted Philadelphia's history and food in promoting the city as an ideal locale for students looking to study abroad in the United States. Philadelphia's historical relevance and current status allowed for in-depth study of human rights in the past and present, and debate over what could be its future. As stated by Canlas et al. (2015), "human rights offers a way to build solidarity to fight against repressive regimes and oppressive systems" (p. 39).

Theoretical Frames

By way of Freire's (1970) concept of liberating education, Lane et al. (2017) introduced the living classroom where "ideas and concepts must be socially valid, consciousness-raising, and resonant with the lived realities of the students and educators" (p. 360). The living classroom provided an "intersectional relationship of theory, students' lived realities, and experiential application to human rights issues" (p. 362) that guided the current course, *Human Rights in Philadelphia*, development and implementation.

Given the importance of location in this course, Bronfenbrenner's (2004) ecological systems perspective provided the context to consider human rights on multiple levels. At the micro level, the student–teacher relationships were particularly important as both became subjects over the course of the class (Freire, 1970). Within the mesosystem, links and processes were examined between multiple settings, especially relationships among the city and social service agencies. Policy impacts were considered at the exosystem level, and the city, its culture, subcultures, and resources presented as a macrosystem. The chronosystem was significant as discussed below due to the significant changes that were occurring globally, nationally, and locally each time the course was taught.

Study abroad at home, a form of immersion learning as a teaching method, is not unique to the *Human Rights in Philadelphia* class. Quinn-Lee and Olson-McBride (2012) discussed a similar technique, domestic immersion, to teach undergraduate students cultural competence by getting students out of the classroom and into the communities. Robinson (2018) found immersion learning to enhance undergraduate social work students' knowledge and skill development as part of a course that included travel from the Midwest to Portland, Oregon.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The need for a *study abroad at home* human rights elective class was born out of several observations about WCU's Master of Social Work (MSW) students. One, students expressed interest in the program's study abroad courses; however, work and family obligations prevented most of these nontraditional students from pursuing the international opportunities. Two, while students understood the concepts of social justice and human rights linked together when discussing issues of human concern, they were limited in their ability to conceptualize the differences, consistently using the two terms interchangeably. Three, as found with other human rights-focused electives, once the students were exposed to human rights curriculum their ability to discuss topics such as civil rights, social justice, racism, and oppression were more nuanced and insightful. The logical conclusion from these observations was that a class dedicated to local human rights would complement their MSW studies.

A critique of short-term study abroad programs is the limited ability to engage with the host community and the replication of systems of power and privilege (Fisher & Grettenberger, 2015). To overcome such critique, the second author successfully applied for a Community Engagement Scholar (CES) through the University's Office of Service Learning and Volunteer Programs to assist in the course development. An elective curriculum that spoke to the educational objectives informed by the community needs defined what qualities would be important in the search for and selection of a CES. The first author was selected as the CES due to knowledge of the community and how to navigate the city via public transportation, and ability to collaborate on the development of the course. The first author provided a community historical context for what transformative events and policies have occurred and are currently happening in the city. The reciprocal relationship between the professor and the CES was a key to the development of the course as each brought knowledge and experience that the other needed to design the curriculum and connect students to the topic in an engaging manner and encourage a richer understanding of human rights and how they impact their community.

Since 2017, the coauthors have taught the *Human Rights in Philadelphia* course two times. The first course was held the summer following the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump. The second course was taught in spring 2020 during the initial wave of the COVID-19 public health crisis in the United States. In preparation to teach the course, the instructors discussed human rights and social justice issues and current events in the nation that were having a direct impact on the city of Philadelphia. Both instances of the course included topics such as

human trafficking, immigration, gentrification, mass incarceration, discrimination, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer rights. In 2017, the course also included the Mexico border wall, Supreme Court nominations, and healthcare reform. In 2020, an *In the News* segment was added to the beginning of each class with the purpose of giving students an opportunity to apply their evolving understanding of human rights to current news articles. The course was also redesigned midsemester to include what was known at the time about COVID-19, health disparities, and access to healthcare. To enrich the discussion, representatives from relevant community-based and governmental organizations with a human rights orientation were brought into the classroom, or the class travelled together to visit offsite destinations.

Like studying abroad, several practical and logistical considerations were attended to prior to the class: instructors' knowledge of the study location, learning objectives, cost, class size, and how to engage with the local community (Fisher & Grettenberger, 2015). Unlike studying abroad, only local travel logistics needed to be arranged and no housing was needed. In 2017, community experts and advocates were invited from People's Light Theatre to discuss human trafficking, and a site visit was made to the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services Philadelphia field office to better understand citizenship and voting rights, which included the witnessing of a naturalization ceremony and engaging with the citizens to register them to vote. Walking tours included a visit to The President's House at the Independence National Historic Park to highlight the paradox of slavery and freedom in the ideologies of early American leaders, and an excursion to visit some of the city's more than 3,500 murals created by Philadelphia's Mural Arts program to understand how art had been used as activism to transform public spaces. Students also participated in the March for Science and visited the African American Museum. In 2020, invited community experts included a doctoral candidate whose research focuses on incarcerated fathers and racism, a former inmate who advocates on behalf of returned citizens, and a visit to the Jewish History Museum. Both years included community experts from the Philadelphia Defenders Association (adult criminal justice reform).

In line with the human rights principle of participation and to facilitate the students' understanding of the community, a hallmark of both classes was a walking tour of West Philadelphia's University City and Mantua neighborhoods. Bordered by two large universities, the neighborhoods provided ample opportunity to discuss gentrification. The tour was led by the first author, a resident of the community for over 20 years. In 2017, the tour was narrated by Myra Johnson, the mother of the first author and lifetime resident of the neighborhood. Ms. Johnson shared her knowledge of the changes the community endured starting in the 1950s. The tour included the history of the neighborhood and how the gentrification process had changed the culture and ethnic makeup of the community. The debriefing sessions allowed students to reflect on the experience and discuss how the process of gentrification could violate human rights and how gentrification intersected with the migration of people, including in some cases their own relocation to the city.

The spring 2020 course occurred in an uncertain and volatile moment: nonessential businesses and social activities had ceased normal operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic while tens of thousands of Philadelphians took to the streets to protest systematic racism and police brutality. The course was quickly revised to

an online format and the final class focused on the human rights issues related to the federal, state, and city government's response to the pandemic. Because of the nature and impact of the virus, the students could link a global crisis to local issues in real time. The discussion touched on human rights concerns such as freedom of movement, peaceful assembly, access to public services, and the very same access to technology that was required to make the move to online learning. As horrific as the pandemic was, it made students more aware of the intractability of human rights. Human rights exist inherent to the individual, but the realization of rights lies in the access to necessary systems and the discourse surrounding rights presents an ongoing threat.

The students could see that human rights were not just a subject for academic discussion or to be used to frame the oppressive and unfair experiences of citizens; human rights and how they are recognized had important implications on their lives as well. The instructors were sensitive to the impact the pandemic was having on the students as they spoke of their own job loss and family members who were sick.

While the course was modeled after a 10-day study abroad program, the course in Philadelphia was shortened to a 6-day time frame. To accommodate the increased challenge of the shortened time frame, two assignments were developed: a reflective journal and postclass analysis and evaluation photo voice project, with attendance and participation accounting for the rest of the course grade. For the journal assignment, students were expected to reflect daily on how the focus of the day impacted their understanding of human rights. For the photo voice project, students were required to use their cell phones to take photos that represented the human rights issues being discussed while traveling throughout the city. While the students did not have the shared experience of traveling abroad and living in a communal space, the intense nature of the class offered opportunities to bond as a group and immerse themselves in the city.

The *study abroad at home* model was used to overcome the critique of short-term study abroad programs that do not allow students to sufficiently engage with the host community. Given that the students lived in the city or nearby, there was opportunity for them to make connections and access systems of power with the expectation that students would continue to engage with the community and the issues in their field practicums and employment after the course.

Course in Context

Human Rights in Philadelphia is an ideal course offering considering the MSW program's specialization and student demographics. The elective was aligned with the MSW program's specialization, *Advanced Practice with Individuals, Families, and Communities*, conceptualized as "an approach to social work that addresses well-being from a trauma-informed, recovery perspective grounded in human rights" (WCU, 2021). The specialization maintained an advanced generalist orientation focused on social work practice with individuals, families, and communities that intentionally applied a human rights-based approach to overcome the false dichotomy between micro and macro social work (Quzack et al., 2021). With three electives built into WCU's MSW program requirements, *Human Rights in Philadelphia* and other human rights-oriented electives, such as *Human Rights Exploration*,²

Radical Social Justice, and *Social Media and Social Movements* (see Williams et al., 2018), have become popular options on the urban campus. Generalist coursework provides a foundation for anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and human rights-based practices (Werkmeister Rozas & Garran, 2016) that is then expanded on in the elective(s). Additionally, the program has intentionally integrated human rights across required specialized coursework to diminish the likelihood that human rights content is only found in macro or international social work courses (Quzack et al., 2021; Libal & Healy, 2014).

The MSW program represented one of the most diverse student bodies across the university in academic year 2019–2020. The MSW student population was evenly divided across two campuses, with 53% of students identifying as persons of color. On the urban campus, 70% of the students identified as persons of color. Across both campuses, 84% of students identified as female (WCU, 2020). In addition to race and gender, the MSW program is diverse in that our faculty, staff, adjunct faculty, students, and alumni represent diversity in life experience, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, and abilities, among other identifying characteristics that commonly marginalize individuals and communities. The program is intentional in providing a high-touch human rights-based advising model to serve a graduate student population that is predominantly persons of color, working, adult, urban learners with various caregiving responsibilities.

The positionality of the co-instructors was also an important factor in the collaborative development and teaching of the course. The first author identified as a Black, cisgender male born and raised in Philadelphia with extensive social work experience in the city. When the course was first taught in 2017, he was also in the final semester as a nontraditional graduate student on the urban campus and could discuss, from a place of lived experience, the opportunities for learning and growth while engaging with the community. The second author identified as a White, cisgender female who was hired to teach on the urban campus due to her social work experience and human rights research. While not from Philadelphia, some of her earliest activist training was at Philadelphia-based peace and justice organizations. Both brought over 20 years of social work experience, primarily with youth who had experienced individual and community-level trauma. Traditional student–teacher hierarchy was addressed and over the years has been dismantled to establish a reciprocal relationship as trusted colleagues and collaborators.

DISCUSSION

By employing the tenets of the living classroom, the students and the teachers established trust, respect, and empathy. The University campus location in the center of Philadelphia and students having been raised in and/or currently living and working in the metro region provided ample opportunity for the students to resonate with and validate their own experiences. It was important to decolonize the curriculum and ensure the study of the city did not center on Whiteness (Farina, 2019). The intensive class format allowed the teachers to bond with the students, quickly enabling an immersive experience customized to the students' personal knowledge and educational needs.

Current human rights issues within the community were identified when developing the course and then appropriately adjusted to reflect the current reality (e.g., in 2017 the evolving Trump administration, and in 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic and protests for racial justice). By the end of the course, students were observed to have increased “self-awareness regarding their beliefs, their social identities, and their roles as agents of change in society” (Lane et al., p. 362).

Implications

There are many practical implications for the use of a *study abroad at home* curriculum in bachelor of social work (BSW) and MSW programs. First, students and educators can learn the history of their community. For instance, Philadelphia is the first U.S. World Heritage City. To be selected, a city must meet one of 10 criteria, among them: exhibit an important interchange of human values over a span of time, be an outstanding example of a type of building, and be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions (UNESCO, 2020b). By demonstrating the importance of lifelong learning and gaining more knowledge about the city, the students understand that the history of the community impacts how the various communities of people have been treated and can work in solidarity for the realization of human rights (Freire, 1970).

Second, *study abroad at home* programs can engage a greater number of students in a type of immersive learning traditionally afforded only to those with the financial ability to travel out of country. Third, due to the focus of the course, students had the opportunity to engage with multiple stakeholders and organizations who work to reform or eliminate the systems, laws, and policies that perpetuate human rights violations. The class can be structured so that issues pertinent to their community are the focal point and students can leverage their knowledge to assist social service organizations and social justice movements.

Fourth, the students become critical evaluators of their community’s political, economic, and social systems. Critical evaluation of the human rights issues affecting local communities brings the subject matter to life as more than academic. Social workers armed with new knowledge and skills from the immersive experience will be better prepared to engage in transformative community-based practice necessary to advance human rights for all residents.

Limitations and Challenges

As with traditional study abroad programs, time was a major issue and affected the depth to which students could investigate the impact of human rights violations on the community. There are 30 articles in the UDHR, and finite time limited course scope to six articles and related treaties and conventions. The class format and design, that is, intensive versus full semester, affected decisions about what community issues and UDHR articles to address and how to approach the teaching of human rights, which must include an overview of the international human rights systems, as most U.S. students have not discussed this foundational knowledge (Libal & Healy, 2014).

Transportation to the city campus was also a concern. Some students who attended the University's main campus located 35 miles outside the city did not have access to a car or public transportation to travel to the city campus; these students could not register for the course (88% of students who have taken the course were from the urban campus). The use of public transportation to get around the city, while convenient in locations with a robust system, can further constrain the students' and instructors' experience when transportation schedules and routes were factored into the class schedule. The need to have an instructor who was familiar with how to navigate the city took on a greater importance when these issues were considered.

The class held at the university's city campus limited the resources available to the students and instructors. WCU's diverse faculty from other disciplines were not readily available to provide an interdisciplinary, nuanced expertise to further students' understanding of human rights. The main campus also offered various classroom designs, including outdoor classrooms, that could have been accessed to meet the pedagogical needs of a learning activity. Finally, the main campus had technological and library resources that the city campus could not match.

Recommendations

A *study abroad at home* format or immersion as a teaching method can activate social work students' willingness to engage in the community and with human rights and social justice movements. Immersion learning, if utilized effectively, pushes against the rigidity of traditional teaching methods. Teaching the course in the future, the instructors will need to address current issues affecting the city in a postpandemic world. The BLM movement must also be addressed in social work, human rights, and social justice education. BLM has shocked the U.S. consciousness to act against multiple human rights and social justice issues. The course needs to be continuously revised and updated in its approach, scholarly content, and human rights issues to focus the students' attention on the concerns of the community in real time. This means that the instructors must continuously engage in the community and its social, political, and economic justice advocacy. The addition of an oral history assignment or integrative sociopolitical and psychological analysis (Farina, 2019) could push students to probe the past, critically assess the present, and thoughtfully plan the future.

The benefits of an immersive learning experience support social work programs' investment in continual curricular improvements and university-community connections. A commitment to offer a *study abroad at home* course on an annual basis will shape social work students' foundational understanding of the community in which they will practice. The lessons learned will serve future practitioners well as a unifying theme as they work to integrate theories and practice models from other courses into what will become their lens of engaging with clients and communities.

Instructors will also need to increase the use of social media platforms to engage with students and to connect to the community, programs, and nonprofit organizations in the city. The necessity to engage with students via social media cannot be understated. Students entering the profession now were raised in the digital age and are globally connected in ways past generations could have only imagined.

Successful social justice movements, locally and globally, predominantly organize through an exchange of information and ideas on social media platforms. Therefore, it is imperative that instructors of similar courses be educated and savvy on the use of social media as a tool for advancing human rights and integrating into class assignments (see Lane et al., 2017 for an example of utilizing Twitter).

The breadth of human rights necessitates the consideration of various course formats. As with most courses, the instructors and students only scratched the surface of human rights topics, but this was especially true in an accelerated semester course with travel built into the schedule. While meeting on consecutive days, modeled after study abroad programs, allowed for continual engagement of the topic and class participants, students had only a few hours between each class to reflect on their learning. Past students have suggested that the course be offered as a traditional semester-long course. This is an especially important consideration given many universities will be engaged in some form of remote or hybrid learning for the foreseeable future. A traditional 14-week schedule would encourage a more in-depth engagement with the subject and impactful connections with the community organizations.

Finally, the financial cost of a *study abroad at home* course format cannot be ignored. Social work programs looking to design a similar course in their community will need to invest funding to support student food and travel costs. Money needs to be allocated for travel on public transit systems or by university passenger van to shuttle students to the various locations where public transportation is not available. Additionally, funds are necessary for students to taste their community by sampling local and ethnic foods while touring the community.

CONCLUSION

Community-based curricular and pedagogical strategies build trust, resist dominant narratives, and promote a human rights perspective in social work. The frames of the living classroom (Lane et al., 2017), Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Bronfenbrenner's (2004) ecological perspective guide the ongoing development of *Human Rights in Philadelphia*, an elective *study abroad at home* experience through which students gain knowledge of local human rights violations and community responses, and apply skills to work for the realization of human rights in the local context.

The course introduces the people, organizations, and movements working to address the human rights and social justice issues currently impacting city residents. The development and teaching of the course has forced the co-instructors to break from their default of teaching human rights from a primarily global perspective to create a *study abroad at home* format that immersed students in their community, literally meeting students where they are at, in alignment with a core social work value.

Post-COVID-19 realities in the United States will influence future course development and topics. Economic impacts, including increased layoffs and homelessness, must be addressed. Course instructors will face new uncertainties of how to protect invaluable relationships and contacts at local social service agencies. COVID-19

outbreaks and social distancing requirements will considerably alter the ability to meet in-person or to use public or bipedal transportation to visit agencies and communities. One solution to explore would be offering the course in a full semester format to encourage sustained digital or in-person connections which would boost immersion and help students to engage with the breadth of the community.

Finally, broader support for social justice issues to be framed as human rights violations in the United States is necessary. Social workers must be on the forefront of this paradigm shift. The Human Rights in Philadelphia course offers one example of social work education's role in shifting the profession's focus from one of needs-based to rights-based social work practice (Gatenio Gabel, 2015) and connecting macro with the micro (Androff & McPherson, 2014).

NOTES

1. A nontraditional student is characterized as 25 years or older and meeting one or more of these criteria: works fulltime or part time, may have children, single parent, studying for a new career, former member of the military, pursuing first degree, pursuing an advanced degree, or getting specialized credentialing (Pelletier, 2010).
2. Syllabus can be accessed at <https://teachinghumanrights.uconn.edu>

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