

SOCIAL WELFARE, BA

The Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work core mission is to enhance human well-being and promote human rights and social and economic justice for people who are disadvantaged to achieve an equitable, healthy, and productive society. Cultural humility, anti-oppressive practice, and social justice are values central to the profession of social work and our school. Social work seeks to actively confront racism.

Undergraduates in the College of Letters & Science's Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work receive a liberal arts education in the social and behavioral sciences and their application to human problems that prepares them to be informed citizens involved in human services or social welfare problems and policies. Students majoring in Social Welfare leverage their understanding of the historical context of social work and the systems and policies that underlie our society and learn strategies to address social, racial, economic, and environmental justice and political contexts. Students take courses in a variety of social sciences to enable them to view social welfare in its broad social, economic, and political contexts. The Social Welfare major offers an overview of current social problems and prepares students for further academic study or for employment in selected human service arenas.

Social work's special contribution rests on an established body of knowledge, values, and skills pertinent to understanding human relationships and the interaction between people as individuals, in families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social work courses offer a theoretical understanding of social problems and an introduction to practice methods used by social workers. The curriculum covers areas such as aging, family and child welfare, poverty, mental health, developmental disabilities, substance use disorders, diversity, race and ethnicity, criminal justice, oppression and social, economic and environmental justice, and at-risk populations.

Graduates with the Social Welfare major go on to work at nonprofit organizations and federal, state, and local governments. Many go on to complete graduate degrees in Social Work, Counseling, Sociology, Psychology, Gender and Women's Studies, and Law, among other degrees in the social sciences and beyond.

Read more about the School and its mission: socwork.wisc.edu/about (<https://socwork.wisc.edu/about/>)

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Students in the Social Welfare major or the Bachelor of Social Work degree often choose from a variety of certificate programs (https://guide.wisc.edu/explore-majors/#filter=filter_45) available. Common certificates include African American Studies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/african-american-studies/african-american-studies-certificate/>), American Indian and Indigenous Studies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/american-indian-indigenous-studies/american-indian-indigenous-studies-certificate/>), Business (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/business/school-wide/business-certificate/>), Chicano/a and Latino/a Studies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/chicana-chicano-latino-latino-studies/chicana-chicano-latino-latino-studies-certificate/>), Criminal Justice (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/center-law-society-justice/criminal-justice-certificate/>), Gender and Women's Studies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/gender-womens-studies/gender-womens-studies-certificate/>),

Global Health (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/agricultural-life-sciences/entomology/global-health-certificate/>), LGBTQ+ Studies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/gender-womens-studies/lgbtq-plus-studies-certificate/>), South Asian Studies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/institute-regional-international-studies/south-asian-studies-certificate/>), and Southeast Asian Studies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/institute-regional-international-studies/southeast-asian-studies-certificate/>), among others.

HOW TO GET IN

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Requirements	Details
How to get in	No application required. All students who meet the requirements listed below are eligible to declare. For information on how to declare, see Advising & Careers.
Courses required to get in	Students who have completed or are enrolled in SOC WORK 205 or SOC WORK 206 are eligible to declare the major.
GPA requirements to get in	None.
Credits required to get in	None.
Other	None.

To declare the major, students should make an appointment (<https://socwork.wisc.edu/students/advising/>) and meet with one of the social welfare academic advisors at the School of Social Work.

REQUIREMENTS

UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

All undergraduate students must complete both the following Core General Education (Core GenEd) and University Degree and Quality of Work requirements. The requirements below apply to students whose first term at UW-Madison or whose earliest post-high school college attendance at any institution is Summer 2026 or later.

Students whose first term at UW-Madison or whose earliest post-high school college attendance at any institution occurred before Summer 2026 should refer to the archived Guide (<https://guide.wisc.edu/archive/>) for the requirements that apply to them.

CORE GENERAL EDUCATION (CORE GENED) REQUIREMENTS

Civics & Perspectives	3 credits of Civics & Perspectives coursework.
Communication & Literacy	6 credits of Communication & Literacy coursework. This requirement may be partially satisfied by a qualifying placement test score. More information: https://go.wisc.edu/qualifyingenglishplacement (https://go.wisc.edu/qualifyingenglishplacement/)
Humanities & Arts	6 credits of Humanities & Arts coursework.

Mathematics & Quantitative Reasoning 6 credits of Mathematics & Quantitative Reasoning coursework. This requirement may be partially satisfied by a qualifying placement test score. More information: <https://go.wisc.edu/qualifyingmathplacement> (<https://go.wisc.edu/qualifyingmathplacement/>)

Natural Science & Wellness Complete both:

- 6 credits of Natural Science & Wellness or Natural Science & Wellness + Laboratory coursework.
- one course must be in Natural Science & Wellness + Laboratory coursework.

Social & Behavioral Science 3 credits of Social & Behavioral Science coursework.

Total Credits 30 credits.

For more information see the policy (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1095/>).

UNIVERSITY DEGREE AND QUALITY OF WORK REQUIREMENTS

All undergraduate degree recipients must complete the following minimum requirements. Requirements for some programs will exceed these requirements; see program requirements for additional information.

Total Degree 120 degree credits.

Residency Complete 30 credits in residence. A course is considered "in residence" if it is taken when in undergraduate degree-seeking status and:

- is offered by UW-Madison and completed on the UW-Madison campus or at an approved off-site location, or
- is offered by UW-Madison in an online or distance format, or is completed during participation in a UW-Madison study abroad/study away program.

Quality of Work Achieve at least the minimum grade point average specified by the school, college, and/or academic program.

Math Demonstrate minimal mathematics competence by:

- placing above MATH#160;96, or
- successfully completing MATH#160;96, or
- successfully completing a more advanced mathematics course such as MATH#160;112, MATH#160;113, MATH#160;114, MATH#160;141, MATH#160;211, or MATH#160;221.

English Language If required to take the UW-Madison English as a Second Language Assessment Test (MSN-ESLAT), demonstrate minimal English language competence by:

- earning credit for ESL#160;118, or
- achieving a qualifying MSN-ESLAT placement test score.

Language Complete one:

- 2 high school units of a single language other than English, or
- one course with the second semester Language designation.

Major Declaration Declare and complete the requirements for at least one major.

COLLEGE OF LETTERS & SCIENCE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS: BACHELOR OF ARTS (BA)

Students pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in the College of Letters & Science must complete all of the requirements below. Some courses satisfy more than one L&S degree requirement (visit College of Letters & Science: Requirements (<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/#requirementstext>) for details).

This major can be paired with either the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree requirements.

BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Communication Complete both:

- Part A: one course with the Communication A designation or eligible UW Placement Score; and
- Part B: one course with the Communication B designation

Quantitative Reasoning Complete both:

- Part A: one course with the Quantitative Reasoning A designation or eligible UW Placement Score; and
- Part B: one course with the Quantitative Reasoning B designation

Ethnic Studies one 3+ credit course with the Ethnic Studies designation

Language Complete either:

- the fourth unit of one language other than English; or
- the third unit of one language other than English and the second unit of an additional language.

L&S Breadth: Humanities Complete 12 credits with the Humanities or Literature designation, which must include at least 6 credits with the Literature designation.

L&S Breadth: Social Sciences Complete 12 credits with the Social Science designation.

L&S Breadth: Natural Sciences Complete 12 credits with the Natural Science, Biological Science, or Physical Science designations, which must include both:

- one 3+ credit course with the Biological Science designation, and
- one 3+ credit course with the Physical Science designation.

Liberal Arts and Science (LAS) Coursework at least 108 credits

Depth of Intermediate/Advanced work at least 60 credits at the Intermediate or Advanced level

Major Declare and complete at least one major.

Total Credits at least 120 credits

UW-Madison Experience • 30 credits in residence, overall; and
• 30 credits in residence after the 86th credit

Quality of Work • 2.000 in all coursework at UW-Madison
• 2.000 in Intermediate/Advanced level coursework at UW-Madison

NON-L&S STUDENTS PURSUING AN L&S MAJOR

Non-L&S students who have permission from their School/College to pursue an additional major within L&S only need to fulfill the major requirements. They do not need to complete the L&S Degree Requirements above.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR

Complete a minimum of 32 credits, to be attained via the requirements detailed below.

SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY & SERVICES

Code	Title	Credits
Complete both:		
SOC WORK 205	Introduction to the Field of Social Work	4
SOC WORK 206	Introduction to Social Policy	4

SOCIAL SCIENCE CONCENTRATION

Complete two Intermediate or Advanced level courses and at least 6 total credits with the Social Science Breadth designation from one of the following subject areas:

- African American Studies (AFROAMER) (<https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/afroamer/>)
- American Indian and Indigenous Studies (AMER IND) (https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/amer_ind/)
- Anthropology (ANTHRO) (<https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/anthro/>)
- Asian American Studies (ASIAN AM) (https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/asian_am/)
- Chicanx/e and Latinx/e Studies (CHICLA) (<https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/chicla/>)
- Economics (ECON) (<https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/econ/>)
- Gender and Women's Studies (GEN&WS) (https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/gen_ws/)
- Political Science (POLI SCI) (https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/poli_sci/)
- Psychology (PSYCH) (<https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/psych/>)
- Sociology (SOC) (<https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/soc/>)

HUMAN BEHAVIOR & THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Code	Title	Credits
Complete both:		
SOC WORK 457	Human Behavior and the Environment	3
SOC WORK 640	Diversity, Oppression, and Social Justice in Social Work	3

STATISTICS & RESEARCH

Code	Title	Credits
Statistics		
Complete one course from:		3-4
STAT 301	Introduction to Statistical Methods (recommended)	
or STAT 371	Introductory Applied Statistics for the Life Sciences	
or PSYCH 210	Basic Statistics for Psychology	
or SOC/ C&E SOC 360	Statistics for Sociologists I	
Research		
Complete one course from:		3-4
SOC WORK 650	Methods of Social Work Research	
or PSYCH 225	Research Methods	
or SOC/ C&E SOC 357	Methods of Sociological Inquiry	
Total Credits		6-8

ELECTIVES IN SOCIAL WELFARE

Complete **two** Intermediate or Advanced level SOC WORK courses and **at least 6 total credits** of Social Work electives. Not all courses in the list below are offered in each semester or year.

List of Elective Soc Work Courses

Code	Title	Credits
SOC WORK 316	Power, Possibility, and the Practice of Social Justice	3
SOC WORK 336	Making Sense of Mental Health & Mental Illness	3
SOC WORK 375	Contemporary Issues in Social Welfare	2-3
SOC WORK 420	Poverty and Social Welfare	3
SOC WORK/ SOC 422	Social Issues in Aging	3
SOC WORK 453	Substance Use Disorders	3
SOC WORK 462	Child Welfare	3
SOC WORK 578	Housing Precarity and Social Policy	4
SOC WORK 623	Interpersonal Violence	3
SOC WORK 627	Sex Trafficking and Sex Trading	2
SOC WORK/ AMER IND 636	Social Work in American Indian Communities: The Indian Child Welfare Act	3
SOC WORK 639	Social Work Practice with LGBTQIA2S+ Individuals and Communities	3
SOC WORK 644	Issues in Developmental Disabilities	3
SOC WORK 646	Child Abuse and Neglect	2
SOC WORK 648	Social Work Practice in Palliative Care	2
SOC WORK 656	Child Welfare Practice in Foster and Kinship Care, Permanency, and Adoption	2
SOC WORK 675	Topics in Contemporary Social Welfare	2-3
SOC WORK 691	Senior Thesis ¹	2

SOC WORK 692	Senior Thesis ¹	2
SOC WORK 699	Directed Study ^{1,2}	2-3

RESIDENCE AND QUALITY OF WORK

- 2.000 GPA in all SOC WORK and all major courses
- 2.000 GPA on 15 upper-level major credits taken in residence³
- 15 credits in SOC WORK, taken on the UW–Madison campus

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Students with an interest in a particular area of study may develop a plan of independent work with the assistance of an interested Social Work faculty member. They may obtain information about instructors and their areas of interest from the School of Social Work website. Consent of instructor is required for the noted course offerings in independent work.
- ² No more than 3 credits of SOC WORK 699 may be used to meet this requirement.
- ³ PSYCH 225, SOC/C&E SOC 357, STAT 301, STAT 371, PSYCH 210, and SOC/C&E SOC 360, and all SOC WORK courses designated as Intermediate or Advanced level count as upper-level in the major.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. Identify the historical foundations of the US social welfare system and the social work profession
2. Recognize human differences and how social welfare systems interact with these differences to shape opportunities and outcomes for individuals, groups, and communities.
3. Demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate research with respect to its relevance, quality, and utility for addressing social welfare issues.
4. Synthesize and communicate knowledge relevant to social welfare issues.
5. Practice self-awareness of one’s values, beliefs, and biases regarding the causes and consequences of social welfare issues.
6. Connect awareness of self, systems and social welfare knowledge to promote human dignity and justice.

FOUR-YEAR PLAN

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This Four-Year Plan is only one way a student may complete an L&S degree with this major. Many factors can affect student degree planning, including placement scores, credit for transferred courses, credits earned by examination, and individual scholarly interests. In addition, many students have commitments (e.g., athletics, honors, research, student organizations, study abroad, work and volunteer experiences) that necessitate they adjust their plans accordingly. Informed students engage in their own unique Wisconsin Experience by consulting their academic advisors, Guide, DARS, and Course Search & Enroll for assistance making and adjusting their plan.

Social Welfare majors are encouraged to gain social service experience through volunteer work. See the Social Work advisors or contact the

Morgridge Center for Public Service (<http://www.morgridge.wisc.edu/>), 263-2432, for information on volunteering.

Students wishing to apply to the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program must do so in spring of Junior year.

Freshman		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
Communication A	3 Communication B	3
Quantitative Reasoning A	3-4 Elective	3
SOC WORK 100 ¹	3 Natural Science Breadth (or Physical Science if BS)	3
Language (if needed)	4 Language (if needed)	4
Elective	3 Elective (Intermediate/Advanced-level)	3
16		16
Sophomore		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
SOC WORK 205 (can be taken Freshman or Sophomore year)	4 SOC WORK 206 (can be taken Freshman or Sophomore year)	4
Language (if needed)	4 Language (if needed; or Intermediate/Advanced level Comp Sci, Math, Stats if BS)	3-4
Biological Sciences Breadth	3 Physical Science Breadth	3-4
Humanities Breadth	3-4 Literature Breadth	3-4
14		14
Junior		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
SOC WORK 640	3 SOC WORK 457	3
STAT 301, 371, PSYCH 210, or SOC 360 (Take STAT 301 or STAT 371 if BS)	3-4 SOC WORK 650, PSYCH 225, or SOC 357 ³	3
Social Science Concentration course ²	3-4 Literature Breadth	3
Humanities Breadth	3 SOC WORK elective (Intermediate/Advanced level)	2-4
Electives (I/A-level)	3 Social Science Concentration course ²	3-4
15		15
Senior		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
SOC WORK elective (Intermediate/Advanced level)	2-4 SOC WORK elective (Intermediate/Advanced level)	2-4
Natural Science Breadth (or Biological Science if BS)	3 Electives (Intermediate/Advanced level)	3-4
Electives (Intermediate/Advanced level)	3-4 Electives (Intermediate/Advanced level)	3-4
Electives (Intermediate/Advanced level)	3-4 Electives (Intermediate/Advanced level)	3-4

Electives (Intermediate/ Advanced level)	3-4 Electives (Intermediate/ Advanced level)	3-4
	15	15

Total Credits 120

- ¹ Note: SOC WORK 100 is a pre-major elective course that can be taken in the first year, if offered; it is not required for the major.
- ² Take two Intermediate or Advanced level courses from one of the following social science departments: African American Studies, American Indian and Indigenous Studies, Anthropology, Asian American Studies, Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies, Economics, Gender and Women's Studies, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology.
- ³ SOC WORK 650 is often available in the summer. Check with an Advisor for course availability and how summer courses might fit into your schedule.

Through one-on-one career advising, events, and resources, you can explore career options, build valuable internship and research experience, and connect with supportive alumni and employers who open doors of opportunity.

- What you can do with your major (<https://successworks.wisc.edu/what-you-can-do-with-your-major/>) (Major Skills & Outcomes Sheets)
- Make a career advising appointment (<https://successworks.wisc.edu/make-an-appointment/>)
- Learn about internships and internship funding (<https://successworks.wisc.edu/finding-a-job-or-internship/>)
- Try "Jobs, Internships, & How to Get Them," (<https://successworks.wisc.edu/canvas/>) an interactive guide in Canvas for enrolled UW–Madison students

ADVISING AND CAREERS

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Students interested in either the Social Welfare major or Bachelor of Social Work meet with the Social Work advisors to discuss degree requirements; explore career paths; declare the major; and confer on student issues and concerns. Advisors are an excellent resource for information about campus and community services. Students should see an advisor at least once each semester to review academic progress: socwork.wisc.edu/students/advising (<https://socwork.wisc.edu/students/advising/>)

Advising appointments for current UW–Madison students are made through Starfish (<https://wisc.starfishsolutions.com/starfish-ops/>) or by calling 608-263-3660.

Social Work faculty members are available for advice about coursework, research, and the social work profession in general.

STUDY ABROAD

Learning in Letters & Science emphasizes discovery, growth, understanding different perspectives, and challenging yourself, which makes studying abroad an excellent fit for many L&S students: studyabroad.wisc.edu (<https://studyabroad.wisc.edu/>)

As a university with global influence, we have more than 300 study abroad programs (<https://studyabroad.wisc.edu/programs/>) in over 80 countries. These vary in length, academic focus, teaching format, language requirements, cost, and level of independence. There are many programs to complement every major (<https://studyabroad.wisc.edu/academics/major-advising-pages-maps/#L&S>) and any year of college (including the final semester)—and all meet UW–Madison's high academic standards. Students admitted into Letters & Science can even choose a short program in the summer before they start college or their whole first year: studyabroad.wisc.edu/launch (<http://studyabroad.wisc.edu/launch/>). Talk with your academic advisor about how studying abroad might fit with your academic plan.

SUCCESSWORKS

SuccessWorks (<https://successworks.wisc.edu/>) at the College of Letters & Science helps you turn the academic skills learned in your classes into a fulfilling life, guiding you every step of the way to securing jobs, internships, or admission to graduate school.