This course is an introduction to the profession of social work and the philosophical, societal, and organizational contexts within which professional social work activities are conducted. This course provides the opportunity for students to explore their interest in and potential for a career in social work. It introduces the knowledge, skills and values of social work as a profession and explores the role of social workers within the broad area of social welfare and social services. Social work practice requires extensive knowledge about the human condition, problems in living, problem solving, the delivery of human services, and the institutions that comprise today's social welfare system. Cognitive and interaction skills necessary for competent practice are introduced in this course. This course emphasizes the value base of social work practice and its commitment to social and economic justice. It assists students in assessing the congruence between their own values and those of the profession.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the accrediting body for School’s of Social Work, requires Social Work Programs to demonstrate how each course in the curriculum helps students develop competencies expected of all who seek entry into the profession. Programs must document a match between course content and CSWE competencies defined in Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). This course contributes to building knowledge and skills for students to demonstrate the following CSWE competencies: EPAS 2.1.1 (identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly), EPAS 2.1.2 (values and ethics), EPAS 2.1.3 (critical thinking), EPAS 2.1.4 (engage diversity and difference in practice), EPAS 2.1.5 (advance human rights and social and economic justice), EPAS 2.1.6 (research informed practice) and EPAS 2.1.9 (respond to contexts that shape practice). Introduction to Social Work (S141) is one of seventeen social work courses required for the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree. Students who seek admission to the BSW degree program must complete this course prior to applying to the Indiana University School of Social Work. As this course introduces students to knowledge pertaining to the characteristics, functions, and requirements of the social work profession, it prepares those formally admitted to the BSW degree program for further study in the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for effective generalist social work practice.