

Hello and welcome to the MSW program!

I am Dr. Cindy Tandy and will be your instructor for SOWK 6303 this Fall semester, where you will enter the virtual world of Second Life (SL) to do your off-campus interviewing practice. You will also use SL for other courses in this program. It is **TRULY IMPORTANT** for you to get a (free) account in SL **BEFORE** you begin the program!!!! I can't emphasize this enough! When you begin your first class, there will NOT be enough time to help each individual student figure out how to create their account. The process is easy, but the process will let you know if your computer is adequate, OR if you need to upgrade your computer memory and/or graphics card. So do this right away so that you will have enough TIME to upgrade if necessary!!!

What is Second Life?

Second Life (SL) is like a 3-D web site expanded into a virtual world. As a student, you (via your "avatar" that represents you) can participate in activities and interactive, immersive simulations that are simply impossible in a "regular" classroom. In SL you can explore re-creations of London's Globe Theatre, the Sistine Chapel, simulations of events in the human body, engage in dialog with people from other countries, and much more while you have the feeling of "being there." For More information watch the Second Life introduction video at [http://secondlife.com/whatis/?lang=en-US#Education & Enterprise](http://secondlife.com/whatis/?lang=en-US#Education_&Enterprise)

Along with many prestigious universities Valdosta State University now has a virtual campus in Second Life. To see what the Valdosta State University Second Life Island looks like, go to <http://www.valdosta.edu/vista/TourVSUIsland.shtml> and scroll down the page to see the pictures.

How and why we will use SL

The face-to-face (f2f) cohort will practice interviewing skills in SOWK 6303 for two hours weekly. You will not have that opportunity. An alternative is to have you practice interviewing, using role play, via chat rooms. Unfortunately, you cannot see your role play partner and must imagine each scenario—where you are, who you are, etc. In SL there is a virtual building, the "VSU Clinical Services" with rooms provided for you (your avatar) to interact with your role play partner. There is a hospital room, a prison cell, a home, and a traditional counseling office. For other courses, there is also a group therapy room and a play therapy room. This is far more realistic than using chat rooms, where you have no visual feedback at all.

Here's how to get started.

1. Go to <http://secondlife.com/> , click the big orange "Join Now" button and follow the instructions to create an account and an avatar.
 - a. Create a unique name. The new naming system in Second Life uses just a single name, rather than a first and second name (mine is older so is "Eve Maven"). So create a single name such as GeorgiaPeach or Georgia.Peach123 or whatever you want. Make sure it sounds like a fairly realistic name that a social worker might have (not a silly name like "studlydinosaur" or anything like that).
 - b. It will ask for your birth date. Use the real date.

- c. It will ask for your e-mail address. Use any valid e-mail address you have.
- d. A confirmation e-mail message will be send to your e-mail. Continue to follow the instructions.
- e. When it asks you to download the “viewer,” ignore the download information and instead, go to <http://www.phoenixviewer.com/downloads.php> and click “Phoenix for Windows. Download the viewer. Accept all the defaults and install it. The Phoenix viewer is an alternative viewer and in my opinion it is superior to the standard Linden Lab (owner of Second Life) viewer.
- f. Log into Second Life by entering your avatar name in the first box provided for your name. You will need to enter “Resident” in the second box provided for the last name. Enter your password.
- g. You should be able to log into Second Life and will arrive at a short tutorial area where you will learn to walk, move, and generally navigate around. If you CAN’T log in and get error messages complaining about your computer, go back to <http://secondlife.com/> and click the “Help” menu at the top right. Click “System Requirements” and check to see if your computer’s memory and graphics card meet the Second Life requirements for use. On the Help menu you will also find the Phoenix Viewer Wiki, which gives info on all the viewer buttons and menus.
- h. At the bottom of the Phoenix Viewer is a “Search” button. Click it and enter Valdosta State University into the search box. You will see a teleport button that you can click to go to the VSU island. Feel free to explore this and other places in Second Life. The VSU Island is where you will do your interviewing practice with other students in your class. You will receive further directions later, including how to join the VSU group and make the VSU Island your “home.” My avatar’s name in Second Life is Eve Maven. You can send me Instant Messages and offers of friendship ahead of time if you would like. You will learn more when we meet face to face. PLEASE TRY TO GET SOMEWHAT ACQUAINTED WITH SECOND LIFE BEFORE THAT TIME. MAKE SURE YOUR COMPUTER IS COMPATIBLE AND HAS AN ADEQUATE GRAPHICS CARD AND MEMORY SO YOU CAN USE SECOND LIFE. You should be able to walk smoothly without “lagging” or crashing.
- i. **You can call me for help at 229-245-4338 (office) or 229-506-7755 (cell).** You can also call Vince at the VSU Distance Learning Dept. at 229-245-6490.

TIP: You may be dissatisfied with your avatar’s “newbie” appearance in SL at first. There are plenty of opportunities to “buy” free clothing and other accessories in SL. We will not take class time to learn how you can modify your appearance. There are many places in SL to learn how to do this. I can give you some suggestions, but we won’t take class time for this.

I will be away and unavailable from July 12-26.