Course Description
This is a macro-course on how sociopolitical, economic, community, and organizational processes, structures and conditions, and the interactions among them, affect the circumstances, conditions and opportunities of socially and economically disadvantaged groups and populations mainly in US society. Its purpose is twofold: (1) to advance student knowledge and understanding of the nature and operation of such macro-level processes, structures and conditions; and (2) to help students to critically analyze these processes, structures, and conditions, and to consider the implications for vulnerable populations, as well as for social work's place and role in contributing to improvements and change in society. Minimum competencies students are expected to demonstrate at the end of the course include:

a) an understanding of basic concepts and terms and how to use them descriptively in characterizing selected macro-level processes, structures, and conditions.

b) an awareness and understanding of major theories regarding the nature of selected macro-level processes, structures and conditions, and the capacity to use such theories to pose analytic questions about the implications such conditions have for vulnerable populations, the structuring of service delivery systems, and social work's role in promoting social change and improvements.

c) an awareness and understanding of theories and research pertaining to the concept of the welfare state, how it is changing, and the subsequent implications for vulnerable populations, the structuring of service delivery systems, and social work's role in promoting social change and improvements.

d) an awareness and understanding that different ideological and theoretical perspectives, producing conflicting analysis, are used to interpret macro-level structures, processes, and conditions, and to develop prescriptions for change.

Relationship to Curricular Themes.

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** is addressed from the perspective of critically considering how various macro-level processes, structure and conditions affect the opportunities and well-being of different vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and populations in society.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** is addressed from the perspective of critically considering how normative rules and conditions influence, and are influenced by, various theoretical and empirical interpretations of the operation of macro-level processes, structures and conditions in society.
Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation is addressed from the perspective of critically considering how variation in ideological, theoretical and empirical interpretations of the operation of macro-level processes, structures and conditions influence the definition of social problems and, subsequently, the enactment of policies and programs intended to address such problems.

Behavioral and Social Sciences Research will be reflected in the theory and research covered characterizing and analyzing macro-level structures, processes and their bearing and implications for the well-being of different vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and populations in society.

**Required Texts**

There is one required text:


The text is available for purchase at local textbook stores and online. It also is on four-hour reserve, available in the Askwith Media Library (Room 2002 Shapiro) on the second floor of the Shapiro Library.

Additional readings consist of articles and cases assigned on a week by week basis (see Schedule of Classes below). Both the articles and case studies will be available for downloading through the Ctools website. Since the case studies are provided under the auspices of Harvard Business Publishing, each will cost approximately $4.00, which is paid at time of retrieval. I will discuss how this works in the second class. Additional material pertaining to various themes and topics may be distributed or assigned from time to time by the instructor. These usually will be available on this Ctools web site under Resources in the subfolder Readings.

**Design**

The format is lecture, with questions and discussion, as well as organized in-class presentations and discussion. In addition, the class will be conducting using i>clicker technology, which will be explained in our first class.

**Cell Phones, Laptops and Voice Recorders**

Cell phones are to be turned off at the beginning of each class and stored appropriately. Students requiring an exemption from this rule for any given class should discuss this with the instructor prior to the beginning of that class.

Laptops are not to be used in class, with exemptions granted only for taking/making notes. Students seeking this exemption should arrange to meet with the instructor.

Voice recorders may be used with the permission of the instructor.

Non-compliance with these rules may result in a student being asked to leave the class in question, and will be taken into account in the assignment of value for class attendance and participation.

**Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all classes. Absences will be noted resulting in a loss of points for class attendance and participation.

Conflicting events scheduled in class times are normally not acceptable reasons for missing class and are recorded as absences.
Arriving more than 20 minutes late for class will be counted as an absence unless clarified prior to class or resulting from some unforeseen circumstance outside the student’s control.

**Grading And Requirements**
The overall grade for the course will be based on:
1. two written assignments;
2. graded responses to 20 readings-based questions;
3. one debate preparation/class presentation; and
4. class attendance and participation.

The respective weightings for each of the foregoing components are as follows:
1. first written assignment – 25%
2. second written assignment – 30%
3. responses to readings-based questions – 20%
4. debate preparation/class presentation – 10%
5. participation and attendance – 15%.

If additional written work or class presentation are required, respective weightings will be adjusted accordingly.

**Readings-based Questions**
Two readings-based questions will be posed at the beginning of each class, commencing in the second class on September 11 through to and including the penultimate class on November 27. Grading will begin in the third class on September 18, with the September 11 class serving as a “test run” in the use of the i-clicker technology.

**Debates**
All students will participate in one formal in-class debate. The general topic for the debates will be the topics of the seminar for that day, and will based on the readings for that day. Debate resolutions will be determined one week before the date of the debate. Debates will occur in the first 40 minutes of class, beginning October 23. They usually will involve two teams of two students each, one team arguing for the resolution and the other against it.

Debate teams and schedule will be decided by October 2. Teams will be determined by random draw.

Each debate will be evaluated and arbitrated by all non-discussants, who will determine the debate winner and provide feedback. Additional rules regarding timing, format and evaluation will be presented in class. Each team will submit a one-page summary overview of their arguments to the instructor via the CTools website by 4:00 PM on the day preceding their debate. Failure to post will result in a 20% reduction in the grade awarded for the debate performance.

**Written Assignments**
The first written assignment is due by 12 noon on October 29. The focus of this assignment will be one of the weekly topics covered to that point in the course, including the October 23 topic but excluding September 11.

The paper will provide a brief discussion of the nature of the topic and why you chose to address it, along with a critical evaluation of all the readings assigned on the topic, as well as other references you consider to be relevant, possibly including readings assigned on the topics. Taking account of what you have learned as a result of addressing this topic, the paper will conclude with a discussion of the implications for how social work deals with, or should deal with, questions of improving the quality of life for vulnerable groups and populations in society.
The second written assignment is due by **11:30 p.m. on December 11**. The topic for this paper will be circulated by no later than **November 13**. In general, it will focus on using knowledge to critically consider a particular social problem or social condition that bears on social work’s role in relation to vulnerable groups and populations in society. Although the emphasis in this assignment will be on readings assigned in the second half of the semester, you nonetheless should anticipate invoking and using theoretical and empirical knowledge obtained over the class as a whole.

The first written assignments will be no longer than **8 pages** and the second, no longer than **10 pages**. Each will be double-spaced and type-written using a twelve point font and one inch margins. Page limits includes diagrams, charts, etc, but excludes references.

Additional specifications on the focus, structure, and content of the each written assignment will be discussed in class.

Note that the general emphasis for each written assignment is on demonstrating a clear understanding of the issue/condition/problem under consideration, and on the application of relevant concepts and research covered in class and in the readings issue/condition/problem. It is not on problem-solving and prescription.

**Submitting debate summaries and written assignments**

Assignments are to be submitted as attachments through the Ctools web site under the Assignment Folder on the dates and by the time specified. Subfolders will be created in the Assignment Folder for this purpose. Note that the web site is set up not to accept submissions after the dates and times specified here. Also, note that assignments are not to be submitted using the Drop Box feature.

**Evaluation Criteria**

Following are the main criteria applied in the assessment of class presentations and written assignments:

1. Definition and maintenance of a clear focus.
2. Systematic and logical presentation of arguments
3. Appropriate use of evidence.
4. Development of relevant and interesting insights.
5. Familiarity with, and appropriate use of relevant literature.
6. Clarity of presentation.
7. Conformity with the requirements of the assignment.

**Writing**

If writing well is difficult for you, or you have experienced difficulty in the past, or received negative feedback on the quality of your writing, don’t wait until after assignments before looking for help. Please consider contacting Career Services in the Office of Student Services in the SSW; they may be able to help with coaching and editing. If not, they can direct you to the Sweetland Writing Center. Since both services require advanced notice with coaching or assistance in editing papers, you need to schedule an appointment to meet in advance.

**Penalties**

Submission times/dates for written assignments are firm, with exception without penalty granted only for medical reasons established by a physician's statement. The penalty for written assignment turned in after the submission date is 1% per day from the percent value for the assignment in question to a maximum of 5% per week up to a total of 15%. Papers submitted
more than 3 weeks after the submission date will be awarded an "F" i.e. failure, unless conditions for an incomplete, i.e. "I," have been satisfied (see "Student Guide to the Master's in Social Work Degree Program" The University of Michigan, School of Social Work).

All written submissions must follow an established academic convention for organization, pagination, footnoting, table and figure presentation and bibliographic references. Papers not complying with an established convention will be returned, with penalties for late submission applied.

**Grading Scale**
The grades for all assignments, and the final grade, are based on the grading scale described below. Grades for each assignment will be reported on scale that is relevant to the total value for that assignment. For example, grades for a debate summary might be reported on a 40-point scale with a top value of 10. These values can easily be converted to numeric and letter values for the 100 point scale described below by dividing the score you receive by the value of that assignment, and multiplying by 100, e.g., \((7.5/10) = 0.75\) * 100 = 75 = B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Point Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td><strong>Outstanding:</strong> focused; well-written; well-organized; strongly analytic; strong grasp of subject matter; interesting and creative insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td><strong>Excellent:</strong> focused; well-written; well-organized; analytic; good grasp of subject matter; interesting insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>Average to Strong: focused; writing acceptable; organization OK; analytic in orientation with some insights; acceptable grasp of subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>Acceptable to Marginally Average: diffuse focus; some problems with writing and organization; more descriptive that analytic though with potential for insights; limited grasp of subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>Marginally Acceptable: poorly focused; poorly organized and poorly written; mainly descriptive with little or no analytic orientation; poor grasp of subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
<td>F</td>
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**Class Schedule and Readings**

1. **September 4.** Introductions and orientation, with some thoughts on listening, reasoning and struggling.
   Readings:
   None.

2. **September 11.** Reasoning critically about what you see, hear, read, believe, don’t believe, agree with, don’t agree with.
   Readings:

3. **September 18.** Social Work: what is it, why do we have it, and where does it get its knowledge?
   Readings:
   Tucker, D. J. (2012). Some Thoughts on the Appraisal of University-Based Professions. Unpublished manuscript.

4. **Sept. 25.** Social work and social problems.
   Case: Public Image Assessment
   Readings:

5. **Oct. 2.** Theorizing society.
   Readings
   Hurst, chapters 1 & 2

6. **October 9.** Connecting individuals to the larger social context – Part I
   Case: Crises and Response: Sexual Abuse Allegations in the Boston Archdiocese.
   Readings:
   Hurst, chapter 3

7. **October 16.** Break
8. October 23. Connecting individuals to the larger social context – Part II  
Debate:  
Readings:  

Debate:  
Readings:  
Hurst, chapter 4  

10. November 6. How civil is our civil society?  
Debate:  
Readings:  
Hurst, chapter 5.  

Readings:  
Hurst, chapter 6.  

12. November 20. More on markets and the role of the state  
Debate:  
Readings:  
Hurst, chapter 7  

Debate:  
Readings:  
TBA

Readings:  