Social Work 611: Social Change Theories

Mondays, 8:00 AM-12:00 PM

Spring/Summer 2013

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Office Hours by Appointment

Course Description
This course will review theories and research from the social sciences on social change, focusing especially at the societal level. Theories of social conflict, interest groups, and social movements, and such processes as consciousness-raising will be covered. Dynamics of the diffusion of innovations in society will also be addressed. Examples will be drawn from areas of practice in which social workers are involved, such as mental health and chemical dependency, child and family welfare, civil rights, health care, and consumer protection.

Course Content
The main goal of this course is to address the questions of why and how social change occurs. Students will compare and contrast different theoretical approaches to the understanding of social change. Comparative dimensions will include the theory’s scope; the cultural contexts, societal arenas, and problem areas from which the theory was developed and in which it has been applied; and the assumptions of a theory about society and how social change occurs. Emphasis will be given to the types of empirical evidence available about each theoretical approach and the types of inquiry used to develop and critique different theories.

Although the primary emphasis will be on societal level change, this course will also consider theories of change at the individual, group, community, and organizational levels, and in particular how changes at different system levels affect each other. Students will consider the extent to which different theories are, or are not, compatible with each other and the implications of these relationships for the usefulness of particular theories for different purposes. Change theories will be selected from each of the social science disciplines, and students will consider how scholars and activists from different disciplinary perspectives have used and critiqued each other’s work.
Different bodies of thought about change will be critiqued for their relevance to the issues facing marginalized and oppressed groups within U.S. society and for their usefulness cross-culturally. Students will consider how different theories have been applied or could be applied and critique existing types of practice from particular theoretical perspectives and lenses that recognize the impact of privilege, oppression and social justice on the change process. Particular attention will be given to the impact of a diverse society on social change inclusive of diversity dimensions such as ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation. Students will explore the theories that have been important within human service goal and problem areas of interest to them.

**Course Objectives and Guidelines for Learning**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe, compare, and contrast several types of theories about social change.
2. Identify theories relevant to particular goal and problem areas, and critique their strengths and limitations.
3. Critique different theories as to their assumptions, origins, relevance for different social problems, and relevance for marginalized and oppressed groups inclusive of a broad range of intersecting diversity dimensions.
4. Apply particular theories to different areas of practice.
5. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to social change theories.

**Course Design**

This course may use a variety of pedagogical strategies, including readings, class exercises, case studies, and debates. Students will focus on cognitive and analytic tasks, skills in the use and application of theory, and identifying underlying value and attitudinal issues related to particular theories.

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:**

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed in this course by identifying theories espoused by and compatible with different cultural traditions, by critiquing theories from different cultural perspectives, and through course examples about the uses of theory in different interest and ontological groups.
- *Social Justice and Social Change* will be addressed within the goals and assumptions of each theoretical approach. Most of the course will focus on social justice goals and conceptualizing and operationalizing social change.
- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* will be addressed by examining theories about social change for their relevance and applicability in each of these areas. Students will compare and contrast theories that focus on a positive vision of the future with theories focusing on existing problems.
- *Behavioral and Social Science Research* will be addressed by examining the evidence used to build theory and test theory through its applications in practice.
**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values**

Students will examine theories and explore the extent to which they aid social workers with their ethical responsibilities to the general welfare of society. In particular, theories and practice examples will be critiqued with respect to the following ethical principles: preventing and eliminating discrimination, ensuring access to resources and services, expanding choices for all persons, promoting conditions that encourage respect for diversity, advocating for changes in policy to improve social conditions and promote social justice, and encourage informed participation by citizens in shaping policies and institutions.

**Intensive Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS)**

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students to develop a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks, and strengthen critical consciousness, self knowledge and self awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

**Source Materials**

*Required Text* (The 5th edition may used in place of the 6th edition; however, it will be up to you to find the corresponding chapters and material and/or copy new material from other colleagues)


**Grading/Course Requirements**

This is a graded, 3-credit, course. Students will be graded on the assignments described below. The guidelines and descriptions are intended to help you meet the expectations for the assignments.

A major part of your grade for written assignments is based on your clarity, thoroughness, and effort. All written assignments should be carefully proofread for typos and clarity of content. A paper with lots of errors is difficult to read and will be marked down. All assignments should be double spaced, using 12-point
font, with 1-inch margins, and properly formatted references when needed, using the APA style. You should turn in all written assignments on time. Having assignments in on time will assist me in reading and grading them in a timely manner. On time is defined as turned in or uploaded into your C-tools drop box by the start of class on the due date. In general, a paper will be marked down 2 points for each day it is late. Exceptions will be made only for extreme circumstances. If you expect that you are going to be late turning in an assignment, let me know as soon as possible so I can plan accordingly.

Please try to anticipate your responsibilities and start your assignments well in advance of the due date. Be sure to have a back up copy on disk in case I misplace your work (which I hope never occurs!)

Your grades will be distributed along the following scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>99-94</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>93-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-87</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79-77</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>76-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>72-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>69-60</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
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**Classroom Community**

Given that the nature of macro practice involves working in some capacity with larger groups within the context of communities, we will strive to establish and build the capacity of our own classroom community. Although we each come from and belong to different communities, during this semester we will be working together and learning as a new community. The success of our smaller community will depend upon our ability to work together, share ideas, respect differing perspectives, and help one another aspire to reach the fullest potential possible. The potential of our community will not be reached through solely autonomous individual action, but by our ability to work together as a classroom community.

**Climate:**

Our class is structured around an adult learning philosophy that seeks to promote and integrate both classroom and community learning experiences. This style of learning relies on the full participation and contributions of everyone in order to reach our highest potential as a group. It is also imperative to the integrity of our classroom community to promote the exchange of ideas in a healthy way without fear of being attacked or put down.

Theorizing can be a frustrating experience for professionals of all sorts; however, the ability to utilize theory in practice provides a method for understanding and doing practice that is based on an intellectual rationale as opposed to only personal values or philosophy. It is my hope that as we move along in the semester, our dialogue and assignments will spark your intellectual curiosity about theories of social change.
As part of my desire to foster an inclusive learning environment, I would like to invite each of you to let me know if you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course. Please schedule a private appointment as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the law. You may also seek additional information and resources through our Health and Wellness team at the School of Social Work Office of Student Services and/or the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000.

It is also important for me to know if any religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments. Please notify me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Assignment 1 Participation (20%)**
I believe in the power of peer learning; everyone’s participation is critical for everyone’s learning. Participation includes providing leadership in classroom discussion, class attendance & punctuality, participation during class activities, consultation with colleagues on any group projects, and presentation & discussion of key aspects of your social change project with the class. Active participation includes reading the assigned materials before class, asking questions, or providing critical perspectives on your personal experiences and the readings. Colleagues are asked to come to class with a 3x5 or 5x7 note card or sheet of paper with one major take away point, and one question or insight from each assigned article and/or book chapter that is assigned for the week. It is your job to hand them in to me in person on the day of that class. Every class is worth a maximum of 2 points x 10 sessions = 20 points for maximum participation. This means everyone gets one free absence or 2 possible extra credit points. No other absences will be excused for credit. Three or more absences will result in the loss of one full letter grade for the semester.

**Assignment 2 – Major Terms in Theorizing Applied Brief Research Paper – 20% - Due – May 20th**

In order to properly understand theory it is important to fully understand the various terms that are regularly utilized in theoretical based discussions. Please use your text, online resources, and any other source to develop working definitions for the following terms:
- **Values:**
- **Ideology:**
- **Paradigm:**
- **Perspective:**
- **Framework:**
- **Informal Theory:**
- **Formal Theory:**
- **Grand Theories:**
- **Mid-Range Theories:**
Practice Theories:
Practice Models:
Conceptual Models:
Linear Theories:
Cyclical Theories:
Dialectical Theories:
In addition to defining the terms above, please provide an example of each term as well as one visual tool (concept map, table, matrix, etc.) for explaining a portion of the related terms above. I do not care how you format this as long as you meet the criteria set forth. You also need to submit a reference page in any format you want for the resources you used in this project. Please submit a copy of your project to C-Tools by the beginning of class on May 20th.

**Grading Criteria**
All terms defined – 5pts
One example of each term provided with appropriate context – 5pts
One visual illustration for helping explain the relationship between some portion of the terms above – 5pts
References documents – 5pts

**Assignment 3 - Theory Interactive Presentations Dyad or Small Groups TBD (20%)**

**Grading Criteria**
Presentation worth 20 Points – In groups or dyads, depending on class size, you will be asked to choose one theory from the list or on your own to present to the class. Presentation time limits will be determined based on class size and number of groups. You will identify one reading to assign for that week, which you will send to the professor to upload at least one week ahead of time. The presentation should include dialogue, information sharing, and audience engagement. Whenever possible, activity components are highly encouraged. The following criteria will be graded.

Preparation of the group – Includes coming to class prepared having assigned a reading to the class the previous week, be prepared with all materials and technology when you arrive to class. It should be evident that you have both knowledge on the theory and are prepared to present and teach. – 10pts

Audience Engagement – Did you properly engage the audience using a variety of approaches? Did you include the audience in discussions and/or activities? – 5pts

Peer assessment of Presentation – Your peers will be asked to rate your presentation using similar criteria as me as well as assessing whether or not they learned from your presentation. – 5pts

**Assignment 4 - Social Change Project: Linking Theory to Practice (40%) – Due July 29th**
During the course of this term, you will learn about a number of theories regarding social change and have an opportunity to apply that learning to a social change arena that interests you. In one final paper, due the last day of class (July 29th), you will submit a 20-25 page paper that demonstrates how you engaged in the process of applying theory of social change practice. Your paper should include proper references and citations throughout whenever you are making a claim. It is fine to integrate your own perspective and voice in this paper, but bridge the affective with the intellectual side by bringing in what others have said about the topic. In your integrative paper, you should do the following:

1. **Describe the change arena that interests you and why (Think of this as a problem statement).**
   - What has been previously done to change or attempt change within the context of this issue or arena?
   - What people, settings, organizations, and contexts have been historically important in relation to this goal? What have they done in this arena?
   - How would you describe changes that have occurred or are occurring in this arena (Think along the lines of a continuum between maintaining social order and complete radical change)?
   - What strategies/tactics/methods have been used to make change?
   - What are some of the outcomes of the changes made in this arena – intended or unintended?

2. **Theorize about the social justice implications of this change arena.**
   - How is social justice defined, either explicitly or implicitly, in the change arena?
   - What are the implications of this in regards to privilege and oppression?
   - How do you understand and define power in this arena?

3. **Theorize about a change goal you would like to see happen in this change arena. This should include 7-10 citations.**
   - Why has change in the directions you desire not occurred?
   - What theories/conceptual approaches have been used, either implicitly or explicitly, to understand or make change in this arena?
   - Based on your experience and exposure to theories, which might be helpful in pursuing change?

4. **Construct a force field analysis, based on your theorizing around your change goal.**
   - Which forces are strongest? Which are most consistent? Which are most amenable to change?
   - What specific change goal(s) did you pursue to modify these forces? Why did you choose these forces?
   - What desired outcomes would you like to see happen as a result of achieving this goal?

5. **Describe your strategy for planned change in the change arena. This section should also include references and can be considered your methodology section.**
   - This might include 1) discussion of social change work that you believe should happen on a particular topic in a particular action context, 2) a case study of actual social change work done in the past (through literature review, interviews.
with participants, document analyses), or 3) a case study of social change work that is ongoing (through participation and observation, in addition to literature review, interviews, doc analyses), and/or 4) A summary of interviews conducted with people who have expertise about your topic. Please make it clear what sources you are utilizing to come up with your plan.

How do the theories and concepts from this class help you think about stimulating change, identifying and addressing barriers to change, and applying particular change strategies or tactics in this arena?

• How do you compare, contrast, and critique the theoretical approaches – with regard to their assumptions and implied strategies, their likely effectiveness, and/or their concern with and impact on privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice?
• How does your plan address or relate to social justice?
• Describe how you will assess and evaluate change efforts informed by relevant theories.

6. **Discuss your positionality (the role of your social identities and resulting experiences of privilege or oppression) in relation to this change arena.**

• How do they impact your practice and passion for social change?
• How do they affect how you understand power?
• How do they aid/hinder/bias you as a change agent in this arena?
### Grading Criteria for Assessment Report

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Points Earned</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Major sections properly covered in the paper</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proper identification and use of theory explicit in paper</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper is well written with proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, and style</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10 References used in the paper with proper reference page</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force Field Analysis utilized in problem identification stage</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper is at least 20 pages in length and no more than 30 pages</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper defines major terms properly</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

**Total Points Awarded** /40

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### Weekly Schedule & Course Outline

**Week 1 May. 13th**

Introductions and overview of course

Readings:

Week 2 May. 20th – Discussion Board 1 DUE
The role of paradigms and theory in social work and social change
Readings:


Week 3 May. 27th – No Class Memorial Day

Week 4 June 3rd
Theorizing about Social Justice and Social Change
Readings:


Nassbaum Article

Week 5 June 10th
Theory and consciousness: Social identities, power, privilege, and oppression
Readings:


M.L. Anderson and P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class, and gender: An anthology.*


**Week 6 June 17th**
Education as a mechanism for creating social change
Readings:


**Week 7 June 24th**
Social movement theories
Readings:


**Week 8 – July 1st**
Theories of Organizational and Policy Change

Readings:


**Week 9 July 8th**
No Class (Presentation Work Day) – **Discussion boards still due, will discuss next class, along with the next one.**

**Week 10 July 15th**
Group Presentations + TBA Readings

**Week 11 July 24th**
Group presentations + TBA (postmodernism Contributions and Theorists)
Readings:
TBA

**Week 12 July 29th**
Final applied theory project papers due.

*This outline is a tentative draft for the semester that may change as we go along due to our changing needs.*