Organizational, Community, and Societal Structures and Processes

Course Description
This course provides critical perspectives on theory, paradigms and research knowledge about political, economic and societal structures and processes that are related to communities, societal groups and organizations. It also explores how medium to large social systems have significant social, political, economic, and psychological impacts on the functioning of individuals, families and social groups, and provides a framework for understanding social justice goals and processes that includes the impacts of privilege, oppression and diversity. Students will engage in critiques of different bodies of knowledge to understand their histories, sources, strengths and biases. This knowledge is considered in relation to one’s own social locations and within a framework of social work values and ethics that support the general welfare of all inhabitants, especially those facing significant disadvantage.

Course Content
The course uses the central social work values of social justice, multiculturalism, empowerment to generate a framework for the critical examination of theoretical perspectives of organizational, community, societal, and global structures and processes. The key theoretical foundations that will be discussed include theories of poverty, inequality, racism, social change and social justice, theories of political economy and communities, and organizational theory. In examining these theoretical foundations, students will explore the intersectionality of the diverse dimensions [e.g. 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], and how this intersectionality plays out in discrimination, oppression, and privilege.
Course Objectives
Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify, describe, and critique selected theoretical perspectives on organizational, community, and societal structures and processes.

2. Describe and analyze how community and societal structures and processes impact the client groups served by social agencies.

3. Describe how (PODS) privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice are manifested in the structures and processes of society, communities, and complex organizations.

4. Analyze how the intersections of the diverse dimensions impact their own life experiences, their relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and their relationships with agency clientele and community groups.

5. Identify major processes and contemporary manifestations of oppression, discrimination, prejudice, power and privilege as they impact on populations-at-risk and vulnerable and oppressed groups by:
   a) Describing barriers to organizational and community competence;
   b) Identifying sources of intragroup and intergroup conflict stemming from cultural group membership;
   c) Identifying the role of risk and protective social factors in relation to social problems and social/economic justice.

6. Apply professional values and ethics by:
   a) Distinguishing differences among culturally sensitive, culturally competent, multicultural and ethnoconscious frameworks in social work;
   b) Critically evaluating organizations, community, and societal structures and processes that seek to promote social and economic justice.

Relationship of the Course to the MSW Curriculum

This course is part of the HBSE (Human Behavior and Social Environment) component of the foundation, generalist component of the curriculum. As such, it focuses on the “macro” knowledge base for social work practice in all methods and fields, emphasizing mid to larger size systems. It draws from some areas of psychology, but more from sociology, political science, and anthropology, with some economics and history. The course will emphasize what evidence is available to support particular perspectives and theories and will analyze the strengths and limitations of each. A major goal is to develop the capacity to think, plan, problem-solve, and create change at larger systems levels, and to understand how larger systems affect individuals, families, and groups.
Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

**Theme Relation to Multiculturalism & Diversity:** will be addressed through presentation of theory and research about oppressed and at-risk populations, and the impact that community, organizational and societal functioning has on the well-being of these groups.

**Theme Relation to Social Justice:** will be covered in the empirical and theoretical literature that document socially just organizational, community, and societal structures and processes. Social change theories and strategies will be presented that demonstrate how we move toward a more socially just society.

**Theme Relation to Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation:** will be addressed through presentation of theory and research about oppressed and at-risk populations, and the impact that community, organizational and societal functioning has on the well-being of these groups.

**Theme Relation to Behavioral and Social Science Research:** will be reflected in the organizational, community, and societal theories that are presented in order to analyze the impact that the social environment has on individuals, families and groups.

**Relationship to SW Ethics and Values:** This course will address ethical and value issues related to working with organizations, communities, and societal structures and processes. The NASW Code of Ethics and other professional codes will be used to inform practice in this area. Examples of ethical and value related issues will include: the social worker's responsibility to promote the general welfare of society by preventing and eliminating discrimination, ensuring equal access to resources, expanding choices and opportunities for all persons, encouraging respect for diversity, advocating for changes in social policies, and encouraging informed participation by the public. In addition, issues related to organizations will be covered, such as preventing discrimination in the work place, improving agency policies and procedures, and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations.

**Faculty Approval:** 10/17/2012

**Accommodations**

Any Student who has a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please feel free to contact me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at: G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000.
Required Reading

There are two books that are the main source texts for the course. The textbooks are both on reserve at Shapiro Library on-campus. They are also available for purchase through Internet distributors. Other readings (articles and other book chapters) will be available electronically through the course Ctools site. I strive diligently to take your workloads and schedules into consideration and have developed the reading assignments of this course accordingly. I do expect that you are making an honest attempt to complete assigned readings before class.

Main Texts


Course Assignments, Requirements, and Grading

10% of your grade will be based on class participation – showing up for class is very important as is participation in a number of in-class/out-of-class group and individual activities.

There will be three (3) assignments this semester. Each assignment is worth 30% of your course grade. If you have a creative idea for one of the assignments, please come up with a 1-2 paragraph proposal which explains your idea AND explains how your idea will address/embrace the basic premises of the assignment. This kind of creativity is welcome! All assignments in this course will attempt to promote practice competence and skills that mimic what you might be expected to do in a practice setting over what might normally be completed for academic purposes. An assignment is late after 6:00 pm on the day it is due.

Assignments will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
- Terms are properly defined throughout writing (ex. Theory, paradigm, social justice, etc);
- Appropriate use of evidence to help frame and support your argument;
- Familiarity with and appropriate use of relevant literature and concepts;
- Clarity and coherence of presentation;
- Originality and creativity;
- Overall writing quality, including spelling, style, punctuation, and structure
- Presentation skills will also be evaluated in the final project
Assignment 1 – Glossary of Theorizing Terms. – Due Sept. 26 – 30pts

This assignment will look like a glossary as opposed to a paper; however, you will take it a step further by coming up with one example that fits each term that you define. In social science and social work, we often run into terms such as theory that can be defined and conceptualized very differently or utilized synonymously with terms such as; paradigm, perspective, and approach. Additionally, social work is filled with terminology that other disciplines may not readily utilize in practice or scholarship. You will utilize available resources, including the text, online resources, and other sources to research and define select terms applicable to theorizing in social work as well as utilize your critical thinking skills to create a conceptual model or illustration of how 4 or more concepts relate to one another, along with a current example of one or more social work specific terms relating to the PODS curriculum. (suggested length: 3—5 pages)


For this assignment you will analyze the content of a social work interview from a broader linguistic anthropological perspective. This analysis will focus on connecting the interview content to the interview context, interview stakeholders and salient cultural conventions. This analysis is an exercise in “Qualifying the Qualitative Social Work Interview” (Carr, 2010). It involves social work practice skills of reflecting, articulating a micro-macro connection and identifying salient issues of privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice related to the interview. For this assignment, you will analyze a social work interview in a social work context, such as an interview at your field placement. For this interview, it may be one that you observe or one that you directly conduct. Please see me if you need assistance with identifying a feasible interview, or interview content, for this assignment. The overarching framework that you will use for this interview analysis is that taken by Carr (2010), a framework which focuses on identifying the relevant stakes and interests of various persons involved - however directly or indirectly - in the interview.

Part of this interview analysis is helping you as a social worker to reflect on your role in the process of influencing relevant stakes and interests associated with an interview. It is an exercise that aims to increase critical thinking, awareness of the use of professional self in social work and understanding of language as a vector of power.

Please note that you must gain verbal consent from persons involved in any interview that you observe or directly conduct, as well as any interview content you analyze. In so doing, it is critical that you explain to persons involved in the interview that this is only for the purpose of a class assignment, and not for anything beyond the scope of this class. You may either take notes or tape record the interview depending on the actual situation and relevant consents provided. Please destroy all notes and recordings after your interview analysis is completed.
After observing, directly conducting or reading a relevant transcript of the social work interview (e.g. biopsychosocial intake summary), you will critically reflect upon relevant stakes and interests of persons involved in the interview. You will then (1) provide a brief explanation to situate the interview (who, where, what, why, when); and (2) examine and complete a written “Interview Analysis” following the framework proposed by Carr (2010), which includes the listed elements below; and (3) a brief concluding paragraph identifying what you learned from this exercise. In writing this assignment, please omit any identifying information about persons involved in the interview, such as actual names, ages, etc.

**Interview Analysis – Framework Elements** (Carr, 2010)

**Context:** How do the contexts in which people speak influence what they say? How does the context of the interview inflect interviewees’ reports?

**Contextualization:** How do people build context through linguistic interaction? How do interview participants build context in the course of an interview?

**Interaction:** How does the relationship between speakers affect what is said? How does the relationship between the interviewee, the interviewer, and other relevant parties shape the interview?

**Convention:** How do linguistic conventions - or genres – influence what people say? Are interviewees speaking with the conventions of a specific genre (like a therapeutic genre) during the course of an interview?

**Intertextuality:** How is a person’s speech on one occasion related to the same or similar speech on another occasion? How are the interviewee’s statements connected to other occasions in which similar statements were made by the interviewee or others?

**Stakes and Strategies:** What are people trying to do by saying particular things? How do the stakes and strategic intentions of interview participants shape interview data?

Assignment #2 Requirements – 3-5 page “Interview Analysis” including the major points above. Bring a hardcopy to class for discussion purposes. You may add more information to the above framework as you deem necessary or relevant to the interview analysis. However, please use the above linguistic anthropological approach to frame the crux of your interview analysis. This framework (Carr, 2010) is a powerful tool for understanding professional roles, functions, stakes and interests involved in social work.
Assignment 3 – Social Work Organizational Analysis and Change –
Due December 5th – 30pts Agency Presentation and Report

This assignment requires you to explore and analyze the theoretical and paradigmatic positioning of your field placement agencies. In conducting this analysis, you are expected to draw upon the readings and theoretical frameworks (e.g. “Just Practice” framework, “Intercultural Praxis” framework, structural social work framework, etc.) discussed throughout the course.

Part A – Organizational Analysis
Your task will be to analyze the current practices, theories, mission, programs, policies, and protocols of your own field placement across major dimensions. Using relevant agency policies, assessment tools, intake procedures, practices, interventions, mission statement, and programs, analyze and critique your agency in context of the following questions:

1. Describe briefly your agency: what is the history, scope of services, mission, service area, and target population(s) served?
2. How is “consumer” or “client” or service recipient defined at your agency?
3. What aspects of social work practice do you feel as though your agency promotes? (Use clear examples from the documents, protocols, policies, etc. of your agency to make your points)
4. What areas of social work practice do you feel as though your agency fails to promote or meet? Describe your rationale using specific agency examples to substantiate your case.
5. How does your field placement define oppression? And at what levels or in what ways does it strive to address it?

Part B – Organizational Change
In this section of your paper, think about how your field placement would look if it was transformed to following the new structural social work elements (see Mullaly, Chapter 9). Based on part A above, please address the following points:

1. What are some tangible changes that you would recommend to your field placement (think about specific policies, mission statements, practices, assessment, intakes, and other protocols) to become more progressively aligned with the structural social work framework? And, Why?
2. What elements of a structural social work framework would be the most difficult to create or promote within your field placement? And Why?
3. What barriers to change do you see within your field placement that prevents it from becoming more progressive?
4. Thinking back to how your field placement defines and addresses oppression, how does your placement perpetuate/reinforce oppression?
5. What would need to happen for your placement to adopt a perspective and practice orientation aligned with anti-oppressive social work?
Part C: Organizational Dialogue
Share your findings with your team, colleagues, supervisor, and administrators and ask for their reactions and feedback, either verbally or in written form. You could do this preferably at a team meeting, or at supervision, and may even want to circulate your findings to folks within your agency or organization with your supervisor's permission (I want to respect the power inequalities that exist at all of your field placements, so only do as much of this part of the assignment as is possible without causing yourself harm).

Finally, reflect back on what you learned from this exercise. What from this exercise stood out the most to you? What part of this exercise did you find to be most constructive? And, most challenging? Regarding the various theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed in the course, what elements, if any, do you see most useful to you in practice? What was the reaction and feedback of the colleague/s who read your report or with whom you discussed the findings? Were they open to the critique and feedback or defensive?

This assignment should be as long as it takes to effectively address all the elements outlined above. It will probably take most people at least 10 pages to properly address all of the elements and others may need more. All papers should be double-spaced, typewritten pages (using a 12-point font). Sources used must be cited properly. It is fine to be concise on this paper, my goal is not for you to construct a lengthy academic paper, but to critically analyze the practices and policies of your own organizations, think critically about alternative visions for the organization, and to share your findings with the organization. We will discuss and process these in class.

LATE POLICY for written Assignments (above):
10% reduction for each day (24 hours) late

Final Grade
The final grade for this course will be based on the following rating scheme:
98-100 A+
94-97 A
90-93 A-
87-89 B+
84-86 B
80-83 B-
77-79 C+
74-76 C
70-73 C-
≤ 69 D+ and lower
Class Schedule and Readings

The chapters and articles are to be read by the date under which they are listed in the Schedule. TBD means that the readings have not yet been determined, but will be at least one week before they are assigned. At times, YouTube videos, blogs, and websites may be used in place of reading in C-Tools, please attend to these materials in the same detailed manner as you would read an article. I have attempted to reduce the readings to what I feel is fair, manageable, and necessary for meeting the objectives of the course, please come to class prepared to lead and participate in discussions.

Class 1  September 5  Introduction to the Course

Readings:

- “Whose Side Are You On?” – Becker article, on ctools
- “Excavating our Frames of Mind…” - McKee article, on ctools

Class 2  September 12  Social Work Vision-Values-Praxis:
Theory, Perspective, Approach,
Framework, Matrix...

Readings:

- “Just Thinking…” (Chapter 5) – Finn & Jacobson, on ctools
- “Opening the Conversation…” (Chapter 1) – Sorrells, on ctools

Class 3  September 19  Paradigm, Ideology, Practice...A
Theoretical Understanding of
Community Practice

Readings:

- “Capitalism, Crises, and Paradigms” (Chapter 1) – Mullaly, on ctools
- “Theorizing in Community Practice” – Reed, on ctools
- Planning and discussion of Assignment 1, in class

Class 4  September 26  Institutional Arrangements,
Socialization Processes, Networks

Readings:

- “The Moral Career of the Mental Patient” – Goffman chapter, on ctools
- “Informal Networks: The Company” – Harvard Business Review, on ctools

Assignment 1 Due
Class 5  October 3  Interactional, Contextual, Cultural and Conventional Dimensions of the Social Work Interview and “Institutional Insulation”

Readings

- “Qualifying the Qualitative Social Work Interview” – Carr, on ctools
- “Secrets Keep You Sick”: Metalinguistic Labor in a Drug Treatment Program for Homeless Women”-Carr, E.S., on ctools
- Planning and discussion of Assignment 2, in class

Class 6  October 10  Political, Economic and Societal Structures and Processes: Perspectives, Intersections and Impacts

Readings

- “Race as Biology is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem is Real” – Smedley & Smedley, on ctools
- “Intersecting Discourses on Race & Sexuality: Compounded Colonization Among LGBTTQ American Indians and Alaska Natives” – Balestrery, on ctools
- “Is Cultural Competency a Back-Door to Racism?” – Anthropology News, on ctools
- “Culture Card” on American Indian/Alaska Native peoples – SAMHSA, DHHS Publication, review and discuss in class

Class 7  October 17  Theoretical Understandings of Social Change: Innovation, Motivation, New Ideas, Creativity

Readings:

- “Four Practices of Innovative Organizations” – Bornstein, on ctools
- “Six Qualities of Successful Social Entrepreneurs” – Bornstein, on ctools
- Ted Talks – YouTube, viewing and discussion in class

Class 8  October 24  Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice: Structural Social Work

Reading:

- “A Reconstructed Theory of Structural Social Work” (Chapter 9) – Mullaly, on ctools
- “Oppression: The Focus of Structural Social Work,” (Chapter 10) – Mullaly, on reserve
- “The Silence” film, viewing and discussion in class
Class 9  October 31  Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice: Postmodern, Culturally Pluralistic Perspectives

Reading
• “Health” (Chapter 5) in State of the World’s Indigenous Peoples – Cunningham, on ctools
• The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – website, review and discussion in class

Assignment 2 Due

Class 10  November 7  Community Practice Framework and Communicative Framing

Readings:
• Community Practice Framework – O’Connor, Netting & Thomas, on ctools
• “The Term ‘Client’ in the Social Work Profession” – El Nasr, on ctools

Class 11  November 14  Organizations: Theoretical Understanding of “Capital” - Social Capital, Cultural Capital, Symbolic Capital - and “Transformative Complicity”

Reading:
• “Thinking About Social Change in America” – Putnam, on ctools
• “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction” – Bourdieu, on ctools
• Guest Speaker, reading to be determined

Class 12  November 21  Ethics: Professional Codes, Dilemmas, Assumptions

Reading:
• National Association of Social Workers, on ctools
• “Social Work Ethics Summit” & “Institutional Racism & The Social Work Profession: A Call to Action,” on ctools
• “The Bureaucratic Iditarod…” – Balestrery, on ctools

HOLIDAY  November 28  No Class

Class 13  December 5  Last Class
• Review and discussion of Assignment #3
• Wrap-up

Assignment 3 Due