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 employs frameworks of social justice, intersectionality and other core social work values for the critical examination of theoretical perspectives of organizational, community, societal, and global structures and processes. Students will examine theories related to poverty, inequality, different forms of oppression and privilege, social change and social justice, theories of political economy and communities, organizational theory, social policy, critical approaches, and other key topics. In examining these theoretical foundations, students will explore the intersectionality of diverse structural and cultural 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], how these affect work towards justice, and barriers to this work. A range of approaches to theorizing will be employed, with an emphasis on those that enhance different types of analysis and illuminate many aspects of organizations, communities, and society. A central theme will be on factors that contribute to power inequities and can be mobilized for change.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to: 1) Identify, describe, and critique selected theoretical perspectives and/or paradigms (models) on organizational, community, societal and policy structures and processes. (Practice Behaviors 3.1, 3.2,
6.2) 2) Describe and analyze how community, organizational, and societal structures and processes impact the client groups served by social agencies and also how communities, organizations and societal structures and processes influence each other. (Practice Behaviors 3.1, 3.3, 7.1, 7.2, 9.1) 3) Examine and critically analyze how factors related to privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice are manifested in the structures and processes of society, communities, and organizations. Examine especially how these change over time and contexts and impact different populations and settings, especially those at-risk. These include: a. Describing incentives and facilitators for organizational and community competence b. Analyzing barriers to organizational and community competence and what may reduce these. c. Identifying sources of intragroup and intergroup conflict stemming from cultural group membership d. Identifying the role of risk and protective social factors in relation to social problems and social/economic justice. (Practice Behaviors 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 8.1, 9.1) 4) Analyze how the intersections of the diverse dimensions impact their own life experiences, their relationships with colleagues and supervisors, agency clientele, community groups and policy issues. (Practice Behaviors 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1) 5) 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. (Practice Behaviors 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 5.3, 10.1, 10.3)

Course Design

Required readings will be selected by the instructor. Suggested references will be included for each session, along with a list of books related to this course. Selection of required readings, coursepack items, and texts will be made in coordination with instructors of the other HBSE foundation course instructors. Class room activities may include lectures, discussion, simulations, videos/films, group projects, case analyses, etc.

Theme Relation to Multiculturalism & Diversity

will be addressed through presentation of theory and research about privilege, oppressed and at-risk populations, how multiple social locations interact, and the impacts 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 discussion of theorizing for planning, programs and systemic interventions to promote positive goals [e.g., social justice, quality of life, organizational
and community competence and resilience) and address risk and protective factors to prevent problems, in different system levels, contexts, and populations.

**Theme Relation to Behavioral and Social Science Research**

will be reflected in the theories, knowledge base and scholarly methods that inform organizational, community, and societal analyses and interventions.

**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.

**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**

The following books are required for the course. The textbooks are available for purchase at Ulrich’s bookstore on S. University or through Internet distributors. Other readings (articles and other book chapters) will be available electronically through our Ctools site. You can assume that all articles are on the Ctools site unless stated otherwise.


• Bornstein, David, *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, Updated Edition

**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.

Everyone will be assigned a specific date on which she/he will co-lead a half-hour discussion/experience/activity of the readings for that particular class date. The group will be responsible for jointly developing 3-5 discussion questions (which should be made available to the class) and for facilitating the actual discussion. This activity will not be formally graded, but will be considered as part of your class participation grade. If it is possible to find a fictional or non-fictional video/movie clip (of no longer than 7 minutes) which illustrates and/or illuminates some of the material in the readings, please feel free to include this video in your presentation.

For Class **10 and 12 (on Nov. 11 and Nov. 25)**, I would like the presenters to focus on the assigned chapters from David Bornstein’s *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*. **For Class 11 (on Nov. 18)**, I would like the presenters to specifically integrate the concepts from *Leadership and Self-Deception* (in the Resource Section) into the presentation.

Your presentation should have specific learning objectives that include:

a. “terms” (actual terms from the readings);

b. “facts” (important facts you feel the class should remember); and

c. “principles of practice” actual practice principles revealed in the readings.

There will be three (3) written papers for the course. Each paper is worth 30% of your course grade. The requirements for each paper will be explained in detail at least 3 weeks prior to the due date. If you have a creative idea for one of the papers, 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! Papers will be marked down 5% for every day late. A paper is late after 8:10AM on the day it is due. The papers will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

• Systematic and logical presentation of arguments;

• Appropriate use of evidence;

• Familiarity with and appropriate use of relevant literature and concepts;

• Clarity and coherence of presentation;
- Originality and creativity;
- Conformity with the requirements of the assignment

I am not interested or impressed by lengthy papers that exceed the page limit or meet the page limit exactly. In many instances, the conciseness of a paper indicates that it has been well organized and well contemplated.

If you are unhappy with your grade, you can turn in a rewrite of Papers 1 & 2 no later than 1 week after it is returned to you. All changes should be highlighted and you should also turn in a copy of your original paper. Paper 3 cannot be rewritten.

**Assignment 1 – Examination of self in relation to the macro world. – Due Oct. 7**

This assignment asks you to examine yourself and your background in relation to the macro world and the material in this course. Details will be provided in class.

**Assignment 2 – Multicultural Conceptions of Community – Due November 11**

This assignment utilizes literary and social science sources to examine different perspectives on the nature of community. Each student will select a novel (or anthology of short stories) that explores the role of community in the lives of individuals, families, and groups. The assignment will require students to compare and contrast the conception of community presented in the novel with their own perspective(s) on community in the context of a theoretical perspective on community drawn from the course readings. A list of potential readings will be distributed in class. Students may also suggest additional titles. **Note: Students must select a book that describes a racial, ethnic, or cultural group different from themselves.** Further details will be provided in class.

**Assignment 3 – Community/Organizational Theory and Change – Due Final Day of Class**

This assignment requires students to explore the utility of a theoretical perspective on community or organizational change in the context of their field placement agencies. Details will be provided in class.

All assignments should be **5-8 double-spaced, typewritten pages (using a 12-point font).** Sources used must be cited using the appropriate citation format. Note that two important criteria for the evaluation of each assignment are that its emphasis must be on analysis, and not merely description; and that the paper applies concepts and theories covered in class and required readings.

4 students will be allowed to substitute the 3rd paper with a “theater” performance-piece that is described in the Class 12 Outline. Roleplay scenarios will be developed by the whole class during Class 12. It will then be up to these 4 students to transform the work of their classmates into a viable and effective educational theater performance to be performed on the final day of class.
Class Schedule and Readings
The chapters and articles are to be read by the date under which they are listed in the Schedule. Example: On September 9, you need to come to class having read Mullaly, Chapters 3-7.

Class 1  September 2  Introduction to the Course
The Significance of Theory in Social Work

Readings:
- Change the World, Chapters 1, 2
- Mullaly, Chapters 1, 2

Class 2  September 9  Paradigms and the Social Work vision/Values
Clarification/Theories of Change

Readings:
- Mullaly, Chapters 3-7

For Class 3
- take notes – how would the testimony be viewed through the lens of your paradigm

Paper 1 assigned

Class 3  September 16  Theories of Society and Social Welfare:
Analyzing Poverty


Change the World, Chpts. 4, 5, 6

Class 4  Sept. 23  A Theoretical Understanding of Community Practice

Readings:
Human behavior and the social environment (pp.3-47)

- *Change the World*, Chapter 7, 8

**Paper 2 Assigned**

**Class 5** Sept. 30  **Theories Underlying Community Change: Modern and Post-Modern Perspectives**

**Readings**

- Payne, Chapter 1: the Construction of Social Work Theory
- How to Change the World, Chapter 3

**Guest Lecture: Jim Toy from the Office of Institutional Equity on Community change-efforts and theory that underlies community change**

**Class 6** October 7  **Theories Underlying Community Change: Empowerment and Feminist Perspectives**

**Reading:**

- Academic/Plenuni Publishers
- Payne, Chapter 11
- How to Change the World, Chapter 9
Paper 1 Due

October 14          Winter Break

Class 7     October 21  Community Political Systems and Power:
Anti-Oppressive Social Work

  Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment
  (pp. 275-297)
- Mullaly, Chapter 7, “Feminist, Anti-Racist, and Postmodern Critique.”
- Johnson, Chapter 1, 2
- How to Change the World, Chapters 10, 11, 12
- Wilson, A., Bereford, P. Anti-Oppressive Practice: Emancipation or Appropriation,
  British Journal of Social Work, 2000

Student Presentation 1

Class 8     Oct. 28  Privilege, Power, and Difference: Post Modern
And Multicultural Perspectives

Reading:
- Mullaly, Chapter 9, 10, “A Reconstructed Theory of Structural Social Work” and
  “Oppression: The Focus of Structural Social Work.”
- Johnson, Chapters 3,4
- How to Change the World, Chapters 13, 14, 15

Student Presentation 2

Guest Lecture: SAPAC on Community organizing and how community conflict can be managed

Assign Paper 3

Class 9     November 4  Community Organizing on the Neighborhood
Level/Resiliency Theory

Reading
• Breton, M., Neighborhood Resiliency, Journal of Community Practice, Vol. 9(1) 2001 by The Haworth Press, Inc]
• Johnson, Chapters 5, 6

Student Presentation 3

Class 10  Nov. 11  Theories of Organizations and Organizational Practice I

Reading:
• How to Change the World, Chapters 16 (very appropriate for this week as well), 17, 18
• Johnson, Chapter 7, 8

Student Presentation 4

PAPER 2 DUE

Class 11  November 18  Theories of Organizations and Organizational Practice II

Reading:
• Arbinger Institute, Leadership and Self-Deception, 1-48
• Nickel and Dimed, “Selling in Minnesota”
• Johnson, Chapter 9

Student Presentation 5
Class 12  Nov. 25  Organizational Development and Change: A Social Justice Perspective

Readings:
- The Tipping Point, Chapters 1, 2, 4
- Mullaly, Chapter 9, Working Within (and against) the System: Radical Humanism, 163-186.
- How to Change the World, Chapters 19, 20, 21
- Johnson, Ch. 10

Student Presentation 6

Guest Lecture: Sue Carpenter from Hegira Wraparound Services in Wayne County

Class 13  December 2  Interorganizational Relations/Organizational Oppression/Contemporary Manifestations of Social Work Practice

Readings:

Student Presentation 7, 8 (Both groups need to coordinate with one another so that different articles are covered by each group)

Class 14  December 9

Assignment 3 due