Course Description: Social Work 873: Theories of Change

A course with these goals was recommended as a result of the last external and internal review of the joint doctoral program, to help to develop some common frameworks in the program. A goal is to create a shared identity and common language across the multiple differences that characterize the social work profession and the five social science disciplines that comprise the joint program.

An early institute (1950) sponsored by the National Association of Social Workers was convened to discuss social science theory and social work research. Participants concluded that the effecting of change, or implementing interventions designed to create change, appeared to be the central “problem” of social work. They recommended that this become explicit in social work theory and research. Despite many developments since the 50’s, Social work is still basically concerned with understanding, creating, shaping, or blocking change of various kinds. Thus, understanding and engaging with different kinds of change is common to all forms and domains of social work knowledge, education, practice and research. Thus, this course focuses on understanding change and theorizing about change as a foundation for social work research, teaching, and practice. Previous versions of this course defined these as the characterization, explanation and perpetration of change.

Academic disciplines tend to be interested in explaining or understanding change while professions are likely to be interested in applying theory and doing change, not just studying it. Most professions develop their own epistemologies and bodies of knowledge and practice models. Often these are called practice theories, with articulation of underlying assumptions about change that often inform research and evaluation goals and methods. Relevant knowledge for social work practice often draws on
principles and theories a) from disciplinary knowledge, theory and methods, and b) research on, and experience with, practice and implementing change. One social work researcher described these as going from “bench to trench” and “trench to bench” (Proctor, 2003, Social Work Research)

The profession of social work is diverse in terms of the goals and social problems of concern, the different populations and issues addressed, and varied types of interventions of concern in multiple settings and contexts. Multiple epistemological and theoretical orientations are relevant for this course, including core theories in each discipline, postmodern and other critiques of these approaches, and a number of frameworks that endeavor to bridge and integrate across different perspectives. Each of the social sciences has epistemologies, methodologies and methods which overlap, but also have distinctive elements. Similarly, many types of theories and assumptions underlie different models and approaches to social work practice and doing change. Additional theories may be relevant for different types of settings, goal areas, and types of practice (e.g., change within organizations, communities, families, individuals, groups, and policies). We will not be able to cover every theory, every discipline, or every practice model or contexts, but will try and sample enough that students will learn skills and frameworks that will transfer to different contexts, and guide future work.

Social work is especially concerned with promoting justice and challenging and reducing oppression and privilege, and working with and across diverse populations and settings. Thus, we will consider theoretical frameworks about justice and other positive goals, as well as barriers to justice, and how these may operate different across populations and contexts. We will consider how various theoretical approaches help us to analyze contributors to injustice, changes underway towards justice or combatting injustice, and opportunities for desired change. Other relevant topics include examination of the processes through which social problems and social goals are discovered and defined, and biases with in these, how these definitions influence what types of change are desired, with implications for intervention design, implementation, and research.

Given all this, within the course are several themes:

- To develop understandings about theories of change as a framework for social work
- To explore different definitions of change and struggle to develop some shared definitions.
- To define change towards what ends, emphasizing theories about justice and especially social justice.
- To review different types of theories and theorizing about a) forces that shape stability and change; b) models and approaches for creating or “doing” change; and c) how these may vary for different fields, goals, phases and contexts.
- To develop skills in theorizing to inform a) work for change and effectiveness within that work, and b) research and knowledge development from social work change interventions.
- To determine epistemological and methodological issues within different theoretical traditions and in conducting research and evaluation to understand, inform, and monitor change.

We will consider
a) the usefulness and limitations of different types of theories and their implications for theorizing, implementing, studying and evaluating change;
b) the pros and cons of using multiple types of theories together—both for understanding change and designing and implementing desired change (or analyzing situations that did not work as expected);
c) what modifications are necessary for particular contexts, roles, and settings.

Course objectives: By the end of this course, students should be able to:
1. Compare and contrast different theories and paradigms for justice and positive change outcomes and processes, as well as barriers to these changes and sources of injustice.
2. Identify and describe various definitions and approaches for understanding, analyzing, and researching change.
3. Compare and contrast different approaches to understanding and formulating change. Identify what forms of knowledge and evidence underlie different understandings of change.
4. Use several theories of change to analyze and critique either situations that are changing, are in need of change, or are examples of planned change. Use these theories to strategize for and evaluate or research an intervention for change.
5. Develop a framework for theorizing change especially relevant for social work. Consider how these interface with your disciplines, methods of social work practice, and goal areas of concern, taking your own social locations, values and methodologies into account.
6. Implement some collaborative learning processes within interdisciplinary contexts.

These are all skills for critical contextual thinking, important capacities for studying and working for change towards justice.

**Course resources:**

Readings for each week will be on C-Tools. We may develop other options as the course evolves.

**Class Climate, Processes, Rights, Responsibilities**

How we conduct the course will depend partially on the ultimate size and composition of the course. Course expectations are those typical of seminars—that you will read the designated readings, complete the activities that are recommended during out-of-class time and come prepared and be responsible for participating actively and taking leadership in class discussion and activities. I will also design some small and large group activities and assignments to augment seminar-type approaches.

_I am quite willing to negotiate the specifics of particular assignments and course options, as long as what is proposed meets the objectives of the course, and it is cleared with me in advance._ I want you to collaborate with me and your classmates in the design and implementation of the course, and to advocate for your own learning goals and objectives. I also wish to stimulate student initiative, but do have responsibilities to be accountable for the goals and objectives of the course and the social justice emphasis. Thus, I will work hard to support you taking responsibility for your own learning, but wish this to be negotiated in advance rather than after the fact. I am also interested in helping you to build in generative/reflective elements and “portfolio-ize” some course elements, if people are interested.

_IF you have to choose between getting to class on time and handing in an assignment at the beginning of class, please come to class._ I can usually handle getting the assignment later in the day or the next day, but it’s difficult to convey the work we will be doing in most classes. If papers come in too late, I cannot guarantee that I can get them back with feedback the next week, which is always my goal.

**Fostering “Epistemological Curiosity” and adult learning**

“Epistemological curiosity”, from Freire, refers to eager exploration of knowledge about our worlds, theorizing about justice issues, and reflecting on ourselves in interaction with others. I hope that everyone will contribute to developing a climate in the classroom in which we can teach each other from our different disciplines, modes of practice, perspectives and experiences. It’s important to have a
flexible and empowering classroom if we are to explore social justice issues and approaches to change most productively.

You are all adult learners who bring much experience and knowledge to the class. Approaches to adult education assume that students need to be proactive about defining and pursuing your own goals, and will need to link new knowledge and learning with what you already know (which may involve some unlearning). We will also use principles and methods of appreciative/generative/reflective learning. These will allow you to formulate goals for yourself, consider how to implement and integrate these goals with your experience and knowledge, and to identify, reflect on, and showcase accomplishments. I will work to create opportunities for you to identify and incorporate your own perspectives and goals, and to identify what you already know, and what assumptions you may want to question and modify.

We will spend some time at the beginning developing class groundrules and norms for ourselves, and getting to know each other’s backgrounds and interests. We will revisit our procedures periodically, to be sure they are working well, and revise them if they aren’t. Theorizing and considering change can be scary and difficult, exciting and challenging. We are likely to differ in how we believe change should or does happen. We need to be able to challenge and assist each other if the learning experience is to be optimal. We need each of you to articulate what is clear, uncomfortable, problematic.

Somehow we have to be able to share with each other basic approaches in our disciplines and fields, while also developing shared language and frameworks, and using these analytically and strategically.

Any Special Circumstances (that might affect the class and/or your participation)

If there are any special circumstances that I and/or the class should know to allow you to participate fully, please consult with me about them so that we can make appropriate adaptations. There may be religious observances or other obligations that we should discuss how to handle. Also, some may need or desire some modifications to accommodate other special needs. Many aspects of the course can be modified, with some notice. We can also take advantage of resources elsewhere—the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site, and the Sweetland Writing Center (1139 Angell Hall, 764-0429).

Please talk with me about any special circumstances you may have so we can make arrangements.

Citation Guidelines, Scholarly Conventions, and Academic Honesty

I want you to use actual terminology and concepts from the course and its readings and to cite your sources, even if this feels awkward—for a number of reasons.

• First, one goal for this course is to develop some common knowledge and frameworks, and be explicit about concepts and epistemologies.
• Second, one of the goals of a scholarly and professional education is to assist you to learn and use the language of the profession—because people communicate using that language within professional contexts (although you should work to translate into day-to-day language for those from other disciplines and from the community).
• Third, it requires specific types of terminology to be able to conceptualize various elements in analyzing contexts, planning, implementing and evaluating change, and it requires a clear and specified language to be able to theorize.
• Fourth, in terms of my understanding and being able to evaluate your work, you will discover that many of the authors use different terms for similar things and similar terms for different things. If I
don’t know which version of concepts you are using, I will not be able to evaluate whether you are using them accurately—specific use of terms and citations of where they came from will help me identify their sources.

- Finally, accurate use of concepts and citations of the sources of these are important for ethical and practical reasons—it is important not to plagiarize other people’s work (see below).

The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (from School’s website, http://www.lib.umich.edu/socwork/apastyle.html, can provide writing and citation guidelines, although it is also acceptable to use some other citation guidelines appropriate for your discipline or for whatever publication outlets that may interest you.

It is plagiarism whenever you take credit for work that is not your own—whatever the source of that work, including the internet. You are taking credit for someone else’s work whenever you do not cite the sources of your ideas or points, whether you do this deliberately or because you are being sloppy about where ideas came from.

When you quote someone directly (including something you have written for other purposes), you should include the source and the page number. When you paraphrase, you should include the source. For papers in this course, when you are citing sources from the texts or readings in the syllabus, I do not require a full citation, but you should cite the authors and date (in parentheses right after the concept, phrase, or paragraph) and if it is a large source (e.g., a book), you should cite the relevant chapter at minimum. If you are citing sources from outside the texts or syllabus, please use an appropriate citation format.

Note that this requirement to cite sources also applies to the contributions of your classmates as well. I encourage people to work together—to discuss readings and class activities, to brainstorm together about assignments, to divide up and teach each other about readings, etc. You may end up doing one or more assignment with one or several people group assignment in which I will assist you to develop group norms and roles to support working together. I expect you to tell me in writing when you have discussed assignments with others, and with whom, when you turn written work into me.

Course Assignments and Grading

All course activities, including assignments, are intended to support students’ interests, knowledge, and experience with social change. We will engage in a) learning about theories, b) engaging in theorizing (analysis, critique, and application of theories), and analyzing conditions and c) developing a planned change project, all drawing on different theoretical frameworks. Within this, we will focus on social justice goals and issues, and how our privileged and oppressed social identities shape our interests, experiences, epistemologies and options related to social justice and social change.

Assessment will be based on the following criteria:

General evaluation criteria:

- Degree of description, comparisons, critiques, and application of several types of theories about change.
- Use of theories relevant to particular goal and problem areas, and critique of their strengths and limitations, for a change project and in relation to social justice. Clear application and integration of particular theories to different areas of practice. Critique should include their
assumptions, origins, relevance for different social problems and social justice issues, dynamics that recreate power differences, and appropriateness for privileged, marginalized and oppressed groups.

- Appropriate use of evidence, use of relevant literature and concepts, with citations;
- Breadth (scope), depth, and integration of course concepts, from course readings (with citations).
- Discussion of ethical concerns related to social change theories and planned change.
- Consideration of your own positionalities, visions of justice, goals, and social locations.
- Systematic & logical presentation of arguments, with appropriate documentation.
- Clarity of presentation.
- Originality & creativity.

Student grades will be based on a grading scale in which an A reflects very excellent performance, with high degrees of theorizing and analysis, integration across theories and contexts (incorporating a range of concepts from course readings, with appropriate citations), clarity of writing and thinking, grasp of subject matter, well-organized and creative. An A will also represent a strong scope of theories used, accurate application of those theories and strong theoretical analysis of the applied situation. It needs to have consistent use of social justice lenses, high class participation and contributions to the learning of others, and clear inclusion of citations from multiple course sources. A+ is possible, for exceptional work across assignments and criteria, although this rarely happens.

An A- will be assigned for strong, very good work that is well written and conceptualized, uses a reasonable number of course sources, with appropriate citations, includes interesting insights, and clearly links relevant theories to applied situations. An A- also includes strong course participation and contribution to the learning of others.

B indicates achievement of basic course goals, with acceptable work. This includes clear writing, good use of course resources, use of several theories in appropriate ways, including application to a well-described planned change project, analytic in orientation with some insights, and an acceptable grasp of the subject matter. A B+ includes some components that are more analytic and go beyond basic course expectations.

C range includes at least some elements of what is described in B, with some acceptable elements and some marginal ones. D or below is likely to be missing key components, poorly organized, and without clear linkages between theories and planned change.

Different assignments may emphasize some of these criteria more than others. I will try and be clear about how I am using these in evaluating assignments, and in giving you feedback about them. In some instances, you will evaluate yourselves and give feedback to your classmates.

**Overview of Assignments:**

Note, I give you more detailed instructions later in this document, and may augment these later.

A. Course participation (20%) This includes attendance, coming prepared to discuss readings critically, engaging in class activities, and regularly contributing to the learning of others by asking questions, providing consultation and feedback, and sharing your own experiences and insights.
B. *Three analytic essays*, two early in the term and one at the end of the course. The first is in conjunction with attendance at an event associated with MLK educational activities, and a second, that analyzes and reflects on topics in the first month of the course, with a critique (5% @). At the end of the term, the last analytic essay focus on learning and principles for theorizing for change. (10%) (20% total). More details for these start on p 8.

C. *Theory summary, analysis, and education*—20% of your grade. This includes a project with one or two other students to investigate a particular theory, and apply social justice and planned change analyses/critiques. As you learn about your theory, you will prepare resource materials on the theory for your classmates in two phases, and find ways to consult with and assist your classmates to understand and apply they key elements, implications and applications in the resource materials you prepared. This will occur in several stages:

- selection of a theory, creation of group;
- creation of initial resource materials,
- everyone critique and provide feedback on all resource materials,
- preparation of response to others’ critiques,
- evaluation of your work (contributions, learning) in theory groups.

You will also consult with others about how your theory might be used in their change projects. The grade includes your reflection on all the above. More details begin on p 9.

D. *An application of theorizing*. A multistage project focused on theorizing about change (40%). This project will be chosen by you (with instructor approval) and can be done either individually or with another. It should focus on a particular area of change, using multiple theories for analysis and critique. It should be in some area of interest for you, can be prospective (meaning a change you would like to study or conduct/evaluate) or retrospective (something that has already occurred that you would like to understand and critique, propose how to improve). It will be due in several stages, so you can get feedback from the instructor and the class, and also help others to learn from your work. Each written part should be 10 to 15 pages. Especially if you want to move to publication, you may want to integrate the two as the second part develops.

- Part I: Understanding and analyzing change. Define types and foci of change, historical contexts, major component areas (incorporating 5 perspectives to explore, “causes”/risk/protective factors, facilitators, inhibitors of change). Should identify social justice issues, goals, theories, definitions. Use multiple relevant theories, identify implications for research questions and methods, and begin to discuss implications for change strategies. (15%)
- Part II: Class education and consultation session—to share and critique your work to date on your change project, identify questions and goals you’d like the class to assist you with as you reflect on first and second components. (10%)
- Part III. Planning and implementing/steering change—strategies, tactics, methods. Using multiple relevant theories, define actions for change, and identify implications for research questions and methods, and consider issues of evaluation and monitoring. (15%).

You may want to integrate all the previous pieces into one coherent paper, with revisions to the first two components.

I will ask you to articulate your goals for this change project, and hopefully we can work out formats that will allow you to meet both the course goals and your own. More detailed instructions and resource materials for this assignment begin on p. 16.
**Schema of assignment components and due dates (which we may modify if we need to)**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Written assignments</th>
<th>Interactive assignments</th>
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<td>Jan 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 20</td>
<td>Project proposal due</td>
<td>Select theory for group project</td>
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<td>January 27</td>
<td>Post MLK by end of Sat, Jan 31</td>
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<td>Feb 03</td>
<td>First analytic reflection due</td>
<td>Theory resource materials due</td>
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<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Second analytic reflection due</td>
<td>Feedback on resource materials</td>
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<td>Feb 17</td>
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<td>Revise resource materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 24</td>
<td>First project paper due</td>
<td>Could have first education/consultation</td>
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<td>March 3</td>
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<td><strong>Spring Break</strong></td>
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<td>March 10</td>
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<td>Education/Consultation sessions begin?</td>
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<td>March 17</td>
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<td>March 24</td>
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<td>March 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 7</td>
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<td>Education/Consultation sessions end</td>
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<td>April 14</td>
<td>Last project paper drafts due</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>Final papers/abstracts due. Post abstracts by end of Sat, April 18.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 25 (post class)</td>
<td>Last analytic reflection due</td>
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**More detail about assignments**

**Analytic Essays**

**MLK Symposium Event analytic reflection (5%)**  Attend and analyze some MLK event/activity of interest to you. This is at least partially about change and justice, with many options. Establishing the MLK holiday was a national strategy intended not only to honor Martin Luther King, Jr., but also to be another and on-going step in the struggle for human rights, peace and civil rights for which he was an advocate and spokesperson. At the UM, establishing the MLK symposium was part of the University’s response both to a set of “demands” made as part of an on-going set of mobilization and protests by a well-organized group of students, with many components, as well as internal advocacy and commitment by some administrators and faculty. It was intended to be an education day (the “holiday” itself), but with sessions spread over a number of weeks, and both institutionalized and decentralized throughout the University, with links to the community.

Your assignment is to attend at least one event associated with the MLK commemorations and analyze this in relation to the concepts and readings from the class, and your own interests and background, using and citing these concepts in a no more than 5 page paper. You should submit a longer version to me, and prepare a shorter version that can be public. The public papers should be posted to a folder labeled MLK events in the Resources section of C-Tools, so that everyone can read them, and you can include additional materials you might rather not share with others in the class only to me. We will then discuss these in class, within the concept of the MLK holiday and symposia, plus specific
strategies and activities within it, through the lenses of definitions, types, and theories about change, and social justice.

This should be not just a description, but an application analytically of the concepts and readings from the course. Sources should be cited. Scope and depth are relevant criteria as well as reflexivity.

Topics: Enough of a description of the activity to inform the analysis
- What interests and goals of your own led you to choose this activity—your own history, interests, intersectional positionalities
- Social justice goals and processes implicit or explicit (positive goals as well as combatting privilege and oppression)
- What types of change are specific of implied (or not)—use readings on different ways of understanding change?
- Any theories relevant to change directly on indirectly discussed, or you could apply?
- Analysis and critique of the event. Impacts? Strengths? Suggestions?

Second Analytic Reflection: first month of course (5%)

Course introduction and themes, social locations and self-reflection/reflexivity. (5%) Analyze and reflect on readings, handouts and activities from the first several weeks of the course. Write a four to five page analysis of topics in the course so far, your reactions to these, and how these relate to your own social locations and experiences, your discipline, and your goals. Be sure you address all topics in the course so far in terms of your knowledge, skills, goals and critique, as steps towards critical consciousness and praxis. Remember to use and appropriately cite ideas and concepts from our readings to support and illustrate your points. Both scope and depth in use of concepts is important.

Last analytic essay (10%) {5 to 8 pages}

a) Reflect on various definitions and theories of change, about justice and other goals and processes, those focused on understanding/analyzing, and those that can inform actions for change.

b) Develop a set of principles for working for change and creating knowledge for change, grounded in theories relevant for your research and change arenas of interest. Be sure you consider theories that help you to consider yourself as an actor for change, and/or a researcher studying change.

c) Identify areas of major learning, goals for future learning, and

d) Link all the above with relevant course concepts, readings, etc.

Theory Resource Materials Assignment

Goals:
- To explore and learn skills for theorizing, using theories to understand change (or lack of it) and to influence change.
- To learn how to learn about and apply a theory to inform social change
- To share key elements of what you have learned about your theory with your classmates.
- To consult with individuals and groups as they work on their social justice analyses and planned change projects, helping them to consider what your theory would illuminate (or not) in their analyses, and implications from your theory for a) analysis and b) planned change.
Tasks: to work with one or two classmates to learn about a theory that has implications for planned change, including the origins and components of the theory, its underlying assumptions, and some implications for social justice and planned change.

First steps will be to select a theory and form a group (Jan 20)

What you should consider/include in your work: [questions for understanding/applying theory]

1. What are key elements in this theory (theories, or types of theories)? How are these important in considering social change (e.g., what creates and sustains stability, implications for change)?

2. What does this theory illuminate? How can it be helpful? What are its limitations?

3. What is the history of the concept(s)/theory—its roots, key people in its development, what they were trying to explain. Some implications of this history for the current relevance of the theory?

4. What “research”/knowledge development methods have been used to produce the body of knowledge? What are the strengths and limitations of these methods and the implications of these for social change and research/evaluation of social change?

5. In what ways can this theory/set of concepts inform social justice work and social change that is also intersectional? What are the theory’s limitations with regard to social justice?

6. Consider how your theory(ies) are relevant for the social change projects being developed within the class and assist classmates to apply them.

Responsibilities

1. To prepare resource materials on your theory which will allow your classmates to understand key elements and potential implications of your theory for their projects. This should be a several page handout that covers the above 6 topical areas, with some useful references for future learning. We will also make some time for each workgroup to share these materials with classmates, by applying them to examples, and provide additional examples of how these approaches are helpful or not for theorizing change. This will occur in several phases:
   a) prepare the initial resource materials (Feb 3);
   b) give and receive feedback on all the resource materials (Feb 10);
   c) groups revise/add to them in response to the feedback (Feb 17).

2. To assist your classmates to understand and apply your materials, by contributing to class activities and discussion from that perspectives and providing consultation to collaboration groups and individuals/groups working on social justice analyses or planned change projects (especially planned change projects) to assist them to consider how to make use of your theory.

Evaluation: This will have four parts. First will be the written resource materials. Second is the clarity and usefulness of the sharing and application of materials. Third, is an assessment of how well group members provide useful consultation to other groups in the classroom. Fourth is your own reflection on your learning and performance. We will evaluate this by giving and receiving feedback across groups, gathering information about ways in which different theories are being used, and generating reflections on your accomplishments and learning.
This form will be available separately in class and on C-Tools, so you can complete one of these for each set of resource materials. To be completed by Feb 10

**Forms for providing feedback on first draft of theory resource materials**

**Feedback on Theory Resource Materials**

Which theory ______________________________________________

Group members ________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

1. Usefulness of the materials as they are currently

   0    1    2    3    4    5

   not at all  extremely

   Explain and be specific in terms of ways helpful or not
   Helpful

   Not helpful

2. What additional information would you like to have about the theory or in the materials for it to be more useful/helpful for your project and in the future.

3. What questions do you have that you would like to know about the theory?
Next Steps for Theory Groups—some may be more or less relevant for different theories.

By Feb 17

A. Responding to feedback and your own assessment.

- Review and catalogue/discuss the feedback from the consultation groups and individuals about the resource materials you provided.
- Consider how to address questions and suggestions and clarify what people report not understanding, or anything in the feedback that suggests misunderstanding.
- You will probably also have ideas about next steps from your assessment of areas you didn’t do as well or completely as you wanted, and that arose from your efforts to use your theory in your own papers.

B. Basic definitional elements. Continue to address the basic definitional elements below (some of these are already included in resource materials, but maybe you can review to see how effectively).

1) What are the theory’s underlying assumptions about humankind and the human condition?
2) What conditions do they believe make change more likely?
3) What kinds of change would the theory (or theorists) think are important to pursue (especially in relation to key social justice issues)?
4) How does this theory (or clusters of theories) define power? What does the theory think power is (or types of power), common sources of power, how is power manifested, employed, applied by those who’ve developed and advanced the theoretical formulations?
5) What are some implications for research and evaluation questions and methods?

C. Practical Application. Move towards considering the practical applications of your theory. In the initial materials, it is common that group members are focused on just trying to understand what the theory was, how it evolved, etc. Usually, after some class time working on how to apply the theories, group members are able to articulate additional or more clear ways that the theories can be applied.

1) What questions or dimensions would your theory suggest should be asked or pursued in assessing a situation to prepare for change (about the past, about the present)?
2) What types and sources of information (or “data”) would be valued in this theory?
3) What would the theory/theorists likely to articulate as driving forces for change (try and be specific, with examples)?
4) What would the theory/theorists define as resisting forces/challenges to change (again, try and be specific)?
5) What overall methodologies for creating change would your theory or theorists espouse for creating change?
6) What specific strategies and tactics would be common among those who espouse your theory?
7) What steps, desired outcomes and measures of these might theorists value?

Anything else you think is important??

I prepared one format that you can use to consider how to augment/revise your materials, but you can revise/assess the materials in any way that works given the feedback you got.
## Next steps for Theory Analysis and Application

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<tr>
<th>Question/topic</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topics to address from feedback from the consultation groups about the resource materials you provided.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responses to questions and suggestions and clarifications of misunderstandings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideas about next steps from your assessment of your work and efforts to apply your theory</td>
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<td>What would the theory/theorists likely to articulate as driving forces for change (try and be specific, with examples)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What would the theory/theorists define as resisting forces/challenges to change (again, try and be specific)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What overall methodologies for creating change would your theory or theorists espouse for creating change?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What specific strategies and tactics would be common among those who espouse your theory?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What steps, desired outcomes and measures of these might theorists value?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What research and evaluation questions and methods are important?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anything else important?</td>
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</table>
Summary of Assessment of Theory Group Assignment

Remember the goals for this were to

1) learn skills for theorizing—how to learn about and apply a theory/set of theories for change;
2) how to work with other people to do this (and why this can be important);
3) do this within social justice and social change frameworks;
4) prepare resource materials for yourself and that will be accessible and useful for others.
5) consider implications for change, theory, research/evaluation?

You could also include some elements of how you were able to use others’ materials.

B. Complete the worksheet that follows.

Group name ____________________________ Date: ________________

Who filling out this form: __________________________________________________

Most significant learnings

Most interesting thing about the research you did on the theory and theorizing?

Any evidence you have about how (well) class members were able to use the materials you produced.

Any regrets? Things you’d do differently if you had to do it over again?
What each member contributed (division of labor)—be specific about who, what, how, and your assessment of the contribution

Plusses and minuses about how your group worked together.

How you think you will use what you learned in doing this project.

Anything else you want to say about the project, your learning and contributions, next steps, etc.

**Note:** If you are interested in working on a professional portfolio, I am happy to have you prepare an artifact analysis of your theory group/resource materials. This could be two (or more) summaries—one focused on the group processes/your roles, and the other on learning about and preparing resource
materials for others on a theory related to social justice and social change that you knew little/nothing/less about before the project. There is a format for this on C-Tools.

**An Analytic and Applied Project: Theories, Theorizing and Change**

Note: the outlines below may need to be modified depending on the type(s) of projects you propose. These should get you started. You will complete a project proposal form, and we can then figure out what revisions might be useful for particular topics. I want to see the written components in two parts so I can know where you are headed and give you feedback, although you may want to ultimately write them as one integrated project. Parts I and III may have figures, tables, etc. and should be 10 to 15 pages each.

**Part I: Understanding and analyzing change.** Historical contexts, major component areas (use what I called multiple perspectives), “causes”/risk/protective factors, facilitators, inhibitors of change. Social justice issues, goals, theories, definitions. Use multiple relevant theories, identify implications for research questions and methods. Use course concepts and readings.

- Describe a change arena of interest to you—outline key definitions, elements, explore goals, relevant history, different components, what types of change have/are occurring.
- What types of change have occurred, or might you want to stimulate?
- Consider desired/social justice goals and processes to consider, develop. Identify key areas of oppression and privilege, and components/“causes”, etc. Include analyses of power, resistance, and other relevant components that theories suggest are important.
- Use multiple theories and perspectives to analyze, help with understanding
- Consider forces working for and against desired change, using particular theories to identify and analyze these.
- Analyze these forces to identify potential options for promoting desired change or preventing undesired change.
- Identify important questions for research and evaluation. Consider how you could increase understanding in a way that might further desired change.
- How do your own positionalities, social locations, and roles influence possibilities?

**Part II: Class Education and Consultation.** Analysis and Critique—Consider how the class can collaborate/consult to deepen your analyses and application, and learn from your project and theorizing.

This component has three purposes and steps:

- First, articulate some goals and questions you have as you are grappling with your change arena.
- Second, develop some brief materials (to be distributed the week before your consultation is scheduled) to orient the class, including your focus and goals, how you have used theory, and key questions and topics you would like to discuss. You may want to recommend some short background readings.
- Third, facilitate some class discussion that helps you to grapple with the goals and questions and next steps in your change arena.

**Part III: Planning and implementing/steering change—strategies, tactics, methods.** Using multiple relevant theories, implications for research questions and methods.
• Considering what you learned in Part I, using relevant theories about understanding and implementing change, identify what seems like a feasible goal for change, and relevant strategies for moving towards that change.
• Use theories about steering, implementing, furthering change to illuminate components, strategies, tactics, steps, etc. of change, plus cautions, issues to anticipate.
• It will probably be useful to identify a particular context or setting for a change project.
• You may want to compare and contrast various theoretical approaches, identifying similarities and differences.
• You may again want to identify forces for and against desired change.
• Develop some sort of “model”, set of strategies that might be pursued.
• What research and evaluation questions and methods will increase knowledge about change in this arena?
• Form a concluding section—social justice and other issues related to change, relevance of theories, limitations and strengths, learnings…You as agent of theorizer about change.

Initial proposal for this is due Jan 27, even if you still have several ideas, and they are very much still evolving. The proposal is included in the next section, and will also be on C-tools, and I can make paper copies available.
Applying Theory for Analysis/Understanding and Change Project "Proposal" (Ideas) 873

Name _____________________  Telephone(s) ___________________
Date: _____________________  E-mail _________________________  Box # _______

1. Describe own learning goals, priorities and objectives. Please tell me why these are important to you; how they are relevant for change and relevant theories?

2. Briefly describe the project ideas you are considering (potential arenas, fields, goals, processes. If you have some specific ideas, describe locations, current state of change, brief contexts, your relationship to it)

3. What types of theories about change are you most interested in using? Why?
   - Theories for analyses and understanding
   - Theories relevant for approaches to justice
   - Theories relevant for planning, steering, creating, sustaining desired change (or preventing undesired)

4. How do you think you will define change, and what do you know about change already occurring?

5. How will you link your social work theorizing/models, goals, approaches, practice areas and methods with theories, in general and about change in your discipline?
6. What level(s) of intervention, target systems and action systems are possible in this project?

7. Would you work with others? With whom? How?

8. Why are you interested in this? How does it incorporate your goals? What do you want to get from tackling this project?

9. What kinds of “research” will you need to do to conduct your analyses, current state, social justice issues, potential facilitators, inhibitors?

10. How will your own positionalities be relevant in this project? How they inform your interests, issues that might arise.

11. What kind of publication might you consider coming from this work? What venue?

12. What assistance might you want from the instructor? Others?

12. Anything else??
Some relevant questions for the course.

1. What do we mean by theories? What about theorizing as a verb?
2. How do various disciplines and professions define change, its components, types, outcomes, processes? How do these definitions of change differ and what contributes to these differences?
3. Change towards or away from what? e.g., theories of justice, injustice.
4. What theories help us to see what needs to be changed (esp from social justice frame)?
   e.g., Critical theory; Foucault, deconstruction; some forms of feminism
5. For many types of change, what theories can tell us about what creates inequities?
   e.g., Utilitarianism, analyses of power; capitalism (Marx), Foucault. Psychopolitical validity
6. What leads to/catalyzes social change, in general? What sustains/stop different kinds of change?
   a. What helps social systems (society), concepts, etc stay stable? What de-stabilizes them?
      e.g., Systems and ecological theories; Social structures, bureaucracies (Weber)
      Stable norms, central values, solidarity (Durkheim)
      Shared symbols and meanings (e.g., symbolic interactionism)
      Interdependence          Economic equilibria
   b. What leads to change? What destabilizes systems? (all of the above)
      Change in consciousness, values, attitudes, spirituality
      Scarce resources          New “technologies”
      Environmental turbulence Resource scarcity
      Intergroup, and class conflict (Marx)         Other contestations
      Organized groups/actions (social movement theories)
      Evolution. Emergence.
7. Why is it extremely difficult to initiate change at some points in time, easier at others?
   Non-linear/complex adaptive systems/chaos theory; innovation theory
8. What theories can help us to think about planned (or steered) change?
   (e.g., field theory, complex adaptive systems, innovation dissemination, many of the above)
9. What knowledge and theories are relevant for specific goals and/or problem areas? e.g., What we know about causes of the issue.
   What we know about what improves the problem, or moves to goal?
   Knowledge about what leads to change?
   …what barriers exist to change (and how to reduce them)…
   …what “causes” the problems (and how to eliminate the cause)?
10. What theories are helpful specific to different types of target systems?
    a. Is this a planned change project, instituted by whom? What target and action systems are relevant?
    b. Is change already underway, and you just want to “steer” it, or do you need to initiate it?
    c. At what stage of “readiness” is the target system for the change you want to institute?
    d. What assists people and groups to change?
    e. Community issues
       i. Communities of place—environmental changes (systems theory); Anomie/solidarity
       ii. Communities of affinity—Standpoint theories, consciousness changes, new social movements, intergroup relations dynamics
    f. Organizations—organizational development options
    g. Particular time and place—history, dynamics, sunk costs
11. What theories and knowledge are relevant for particular strategies and tactics (e.g., the law) or action systems (e.g., small groups, popular education, coalitions, critical consciousness)
12. What “tools” can help us to apply theories, or theorize systematically?
Readings, SW 873. All are available on C-Tools, plus additional resource materials. We’ll make some decisions as the course progresses about which ones to emphasize.

In the middle of the course, what we read together will depend partially on what theories the theory groups select and the resource materials they create. I will develop readings and foci for those sessions after we have formed the theory resource materials groups.

Jan 13: Intro to course and each other. Identification of interests, goals, norms. An overview of course goals and components. Some about underlying epistemologies and themes in the course.

Jan 20: Change and theory within social work—historically, currently, epistemologies and issues Where social work has been—general systems and ecological theories. Selection of theories
    - Loeb, M. B. The backdrop for social research: theory-making and model building (3-15)
    - Kogan, L. S. The relationships among social work practice, social work research, and the social sciences, 135-140.

Jan 27: Two topics: Defining change—from disciplines, some theories, in some fields Intersectionality: types and controversies
Initial project proposal due Introduce Social Justice Capacities

Multiple ways of defining change: We will “jigsaw” these.


**Intersectionality and Critical Consciousness (Reflexivity)—everyone read Cho et al, and we will divide up the others.**


**Feb 3: Defining social justice— theorizing and applying theories. Some ethics questions in change. Post MLK public papers by Saturday eve.**


**Overviews and some introductions:**


**Contractual and distributive approaches**


**Human Rights approaches**

• Universal declaration of human rights (United Nations, 1948)


**Capabilities approaches** (with some thought about “constituencies” not able to participate fully in decision-making that affects them—those with some kinds of disabilities, non-human species, the larger environment).


**Approaches more focused on processes**

These are implied within Sen’s approach to implementing social justice, some postmodern approaches, and approaches that assume you must combat forces working to sustain or recreate inequality along the way.

Approaches that focus on combatting injustice

See Mullaly summary of Iris Marion Young's mechanisms of oppression, and Johnson chapters on privilege, power and oppression in supplemental readings.

Other resources: Also on C-Tools are a number of other possible resources. These are a mix of additional overviews prepared specifically for social work (Barusch, two chapters from Just Practice, Reisch chapter on historical trends), some focused on privilege and oppression (Johnson chapters, Mullaly summary of Young’s mechanisms of oppression), a couple of explanations of capabilities perspectives, an application of critical consciousness and intersectionality, a piece by Audre Lorde, and the School’s social justice competencies.

Feb 10: Theorizing and some core analytic perspectives—sources, applications to change, justice and oppression


• Two chapters drafted for this course,
  o Several Analytic Perspectives: An overview, and implications for power, justice, and injustice
  o Analytic Perspectives on Change, Resistance to Change, and Implications for Leadership

Feb 17: Espistemologies and Methodologies and A module on feminism—as an example of connecting goals/desired outcomes, theories, and methods for change.


• I will do a brief review of different forms of feminism


Feb 24: **Complex Adaptive or dynamic systems approaches**—what are they, key elements. How can these be adapted to address social justice and social work issues?  

*First consultation??*

*Read the Axelrod and Cohen, and at least two others. Is also a folder of resource materials on C-Tools*


These are two chapters from a text with a Human Behavior and Social Environment (HBSE) focus for SW


Other applications of complexity approaches


  
  *Note that all of this issue of this journal is totally relevant for this course, and I suspect later editions are too. This is its first issue. This seems to be the only article that deals explicitly with complexity.*


**March 3: Spring Break**
March 10: Theories that bridge across perspectives. With implications for social justice and change


March 17—“Planned change” and some applications of theories


March 24:--More about Doing change—innovation theories


OR
• Mayer, J. P., & Davidson, W. S. (2000). Dissemination of innovation as social change. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of Community Psychology* (pp. 421-438). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. This is more community focused

Everyone read this one:

Read at least one of those that follow

**March 31: Using theorizing to guide evaluation.** How do we know desired change is happening, guard against undesired and unintended outcomes  Consultations end.

April 7: Participatory action research, critical theorizing, and change. Pros and Cons
I am happy to review project paper drafts


April 14: More application and integration of theories about change for social justice.
Second project paper submitted [may include revised first and the two combined]


April 21: Sharing abstracts of projects. Integrating and reflecting on learning, next steps.

April 28: Last analytic reflection and any revisions due this date or earlier.