

**Social Work 305: Theories and Practices  
for Community Action and Social  
Change**

**Community Action and Social Change  
Minor Foundation Course**



**FALL 2015: Section 1-CRN: #23130**

Mon. 5:30p-8:30p

School of Social Work Building; Room #B798

**Professor:**

ShariLynn Robinson-Lynk, LMSW, ACSW, MA candidate  
Adjunct Lecturer, School of Social Work

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Office Hours: By appointment only, please

**ABOUT YOUR PROFESSOR:**

**Educational preparation:**

- MSW (health care & gerontology); Wayne State University, Detroit.
- MA (linguistic anthropology); Wayne State University, Detroit.
- BSSW (gerontology & social work); University of Alabama at Birmingham.

**Teaching areas:**

- Social work & diversity (particularly, TBLGQ & People of Color)
- Social work & social justice
- Social work & cultural competence
- Social work & gerontology
- Anthropology (cultural)

**Additional teaching experiences:**

- Adjunct faculty member; Social work, WSU, Detroit, MI
- Adjunct faculty lecturer; Social work, EMU, Ypsilanti, MI
- Continuing education instructor; Social work, WCC, Ann Arbor, MI
- Part-time instructor; Anthropology; WCC, Ann Arbor, MI

**PROFESSORS TEACHING STYLE AND PHILOSOPHY:**

- PLEASE SEE STATEMENT ON CANVAS.

**ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR PROFESSOR:**

- Make every attempt to arrive to class on time & begin & end class as scheduled.
- Always treat each student with the dignity & respect she/he deserves.

- Make every/all attempts to ensure each student learns the most she/he can & performs at her/his greatest potential.
- Return all graded assignments within two (2) weeks of receipt.
- Respond to all emails within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt.
  - **(excluding Fridays, weekends & holidays!)**
- Willingly agree to be a reference & write a letter of reference for those students who have demonstrated a dedication & adequate level of understanding of the course content.
- Make every effort to ensure the classroom is a safe, peaceful, guilt-free, non-judgmental learning environment.
- Comply with all pertinent FERPA (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 aka the Buckley Amendment) to the best of my ability.

### **STUDENTS ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS:**

Successful completion of this course requires every student fully participate in all fourteen (14) sessions, actively listen & participate in all class discussions and exercises, take notes as needed and submit all assignments on time. Arriving tardy to class or leaving class early, is not only disruptive to your classmates & professor, but negatively affects your learning experience. Not attending class at all means your voice & experiences will not be shared with your classmates & your professor. Thus, students enrolled in this course are required to attend each & every class session on time & are expected to remain in the class throughout its entirety. Any/all exceptions to this requirement must be pre-discussed & pre-approved by the professor. If, for whatever reason, you *are* tardy or absent, it is also *your* responsibility to connect with other students to receive any missed work. Please do not ask your professor.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This foundation course for the Community Action and Social Change Minor is designed to prepare students to be informed and active participants in the process of community building and social change. The course uses a multidisciplinary framework to develop competencies that will help students envision what community action and social change look like, identify and implement steps towards social change, build on positive sources of power, indigenous knowledge and experiences of individuals, groups, and communities who are engaged in social change efforts. The course is taught by a team representing different disciplinary perspectives who will work with students to integrate different ways of thinking based on the various disciplinary perspectives to achieve social change.

### **COURSE THEMES WE WILL REPEATEDLY DRAW UPON:**

- ❖ Difference between dialogue, discussion, debate & discourse.
- ❖ Difference between equity, access & equality.
- ❖ Difference between intent & impact.
- ❖ Difference between action & service \*AND\* charity work & change work.
- ❖ Difference between change & progress.
- ❖ Difference between revitalization & gentrification.
- ❖ Difference between empowerment & agency.
- ❖ Difference between activism, advocacy, allyhood & solidarity.
- ❖ Difference between being a change agent & a “fixer”/”do-gooder”/helper/savior.
- ❖ Difference between a riot, rebellion, revolt, uprising & chaos.

- ❖ [Difference between community organizing, \(re\)building & development.](#)

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE DISTRIBUTION:**

This course meets the requirements for LS&A social science distribution in the following ways. The course material covers theories and practices of community action and social change through an interdisciplinary examination of examples in research and practice. The course focuses on individuals, groups and institutions and how they interact. The course examines empirical quantitative and qualitative studies that test social change methods and provides exposure to and experience with qualitative research methods such as ethnographic observation and interviewing and qualitative data-gathering. Students are engaged in a critical and contrasting assessment of community organizing and other social change methods.

**CORE COMPETENCIES:**

1. Students will examine their own identity development (race, class, gender identity/expression, sexual/relational orientation, religion, nationality, ability, other), recognize multiple social identities, and engage in critical analysis of power, privilege and oppression.
2. Students will explore the meaning of community and social change.
3. Students will develop skills in interviewing, relationship-building, and group facilitation.
4. Students will gain awareness of historical framework and theory regarding community action and social change.
5. Students will engage in policy and structural analysis with regard to community action and social change.
6. Students will develop an understanding of community-building and organizing skills.

**COURSE MATERIALS:**

- **Readings:**  
There is no required textbook for this course. There are, however, required readings. They are on Canvas & labeled by the class date for review with the request, & expectation, that you read all of it \*before\* arriving to class.
- **Additional readings and handouts:**  
There may be additional readings & handouts from recent & pertinent texts & other sources distributed to students (via Canvas) which should also be read & noted as being just as important as the required readings.
- **Speakers:**  
There may be speakers invited to present information on the related discussion topic for that course session. Please be aware that speakers are *voluntarily* offering their time to share with us. Your respect & appreciation of this through active listening and appropriate questions will be most appreciated. Please note that any information shared with you by the speaker is also pertinent & should be listened to/read as such.
- **Videos:**  
There will be supplemental, but pertinent, videos shown during class. Please note these videos will add to your educational experience & knowledge base of the course subject matter & should be noted as important & viewed as such.

## **COURSE POLICY ON ATTENDANCE AND ACTIVE CLASS PARTICIPATION:**

### **Attendance:**

As previously stated, attending all class session is paramount for your successful completion of this course. Please note 30% (a maximum total of 30 points) of your final course grade includes \*both\* attendance & class participation. All students are expected to sign in upon entering the classroom.

### **Additional notes on signing in:**

1. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet at the beginning of every class.
2. Students are not to sign in for one another.
3. Not signing in on the day you were present, means you will be marked absent for that day. Please do not expect me to remember you were present.
4. Signing in and then leaving the classroom, for any reason and for any length of time, without prior approval from your professor and unless during our agreed upon break time (s), will also constitute an absence.

### **Participation and engagement:**

Attending every session without participating & engaging will also hinder you from successfully completing this course. Students should arrive to class prepared to *actively* participate in their learning process. This includes not simply sitting quietly & listening/observing, but posing questions & comments to the professor & other students, as well as answering questions & addressing comments posed by the professor & other students during our class discussions. Class participation also involves completing take home assignments, attending any field trips & participating in class exercises & activities.

### **I invite you to consider the following:**

- ❖ With the understanding that this may very well be culturally relative, being silent & simply listening is a privilege that not everyone has. More specifically, remaining silent & saying that you are either learning through listening or allowing space for others is in & of itself, a privilege which you will not be able to employ when engaging with communities.
- ❖ There is a difference between being/feeling safe & being/feeling comfortable. Learning through the uncomfortableness is hard, but, it can be when the most memorable “aha” moments occur.

### **Special note about tardiness and absences:**

With the full understanding that the culture of this university includes the observation of “Michigan Time” (meaning, classes generally begin 10 minutes passed the posted start time), anyone arriving to class beyond this time will be considered tardy. Likewise, anyone leaving earlier than our agreed upon ending time, for *any* reason which has not been previously discussed & agreed upon with the professor, will be considered having left class early. Both of these are distracting to your learning colleagues & your professor & it *will* affect your grade.

That being said, “life happens” & so you are permitted only two (2) tardies or opportunities to leave early without it affecting your grade. Likewise, you are

also only permitted two (2) absences, either excused or unexcused, without it also affecting your grade, which may include a failing grade. In summation, you are permitted either one (1) tardy & one (1) absence, but not two (2) tardies or two (2) absences.

In conclusion, please know your attendance & active participation will greatly influence your ability to successfully earn the maximum amount of points for the final grade you wish to earn. Thus, adhering to all of the above attendance & participation requirements, every class session, will ensure you earn the full 30% of the attendance & class participation points for this course.

**Special note regarding religious/spiritual observances:**

Please notify your professor, ahead of time, if you have religious/spiritual observances which may prevent you from being present in class or submitting assignments on the due dates, please speak with me so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Special note regarding athletic participation:**

If you are an active member of a university-sponsored athletic team which may prevent you from being present in class (this does not pertain assignments as they may be submitted ahead of the due date), please speak with me so that we can make appropriate arrangements. Additional information from the coach may also be required.

**Special note regarding other academic commitments:**

If you are notified of another exam during the same time as when our class meets, please let me know of your absence, in advance. Additional information from that professor may also be required.

**Special note about inclement weather:**

Your professor will follow the standard inclement weather policies of the university. This means, if the university is closed on the day & during the time this class is to meet, there will be no class. If, however, the university is not closed & you still believe the weather to be too inclement for you to safely arrive to class, you are welcome to use one of your allowed absences; unless it is also the day an assignment is due in class, which you will, unfortunately, not be excused from.

**STATEMENT ON CONFIDENTIALITY AND CLASSROOM DECORUM:**

Due to the possible sensitive nature of some of this course content for some students, all students are expected to maintain confidentiality on all matters discussed in class; though there is no guarantee that all students will follow this expectation. All students are also requested to understand everyone has a different opinion & that we can, & will, discuss what may be perceived as controversial topics without being insulting or dismissive to your professor or fellow students. Students should also recognize that this is an undergraduate level social work course, there is no undergraduate social work program, thus, no students in this course currently studying social work. This means there will be students from multiple disciplines present in one classroom who are all learning what it means to be a community organizer & agent of change. With that, please remember, the professor is not asking you to alter your personal value system, opinions or ideas, but will be assessing whether, or not, you understand & comprehend

the social change concepts, theories & methodologies discussed in this course. Also, all students are also expected to analyze & question information or opinions which vary from theirs through respectful & non-judgmental dialogue. Additionally, all students are expected to refrain from *intentionally* stating stereotypical & prejudicial remarks as well as engaging in any distracting side bar conversations. Lastly, & again, all students are requested to maintain confidentiality of what may be shared in this class; though there is no guarantee that all students will adhere to this request.

**Special note about “triggering” (warning against details for language, content & images):**

As stated earlier, we are diverse group of learners. As such, we may, on occasion, “step on one another’s toes”. I encourage you to, please, speak & listen to one another with the assumption that there is no ill-intent to purposely wound or harm one another.

**I invite you to remember the following:**

- ❖ We are all at varying stages of our learning process & journey.

**Additionally, students are asked to please adhere to the following requests:**

- Silence, or put on vibrate, all cell/mobile phones, and any other electronic devices, & limit all phone usage (including texting) to emergencies only; outside of the classroom, please.
- Please keep all side-bar to a very, bare minimum as they are, not only distracting to your fellow learning colleagues, but, to your professor.
- Permission is granted to eat/drink in class, with the request to please do so quietly & neatly & with the expectation that students will clean up after themselves.
- Permission is granted for laptop computer usage for occasional note taking purposes only; completing other assignments or “surfing the net” during class time is not permitted, at any time.
- Please do not bring children or adult guests to this course without first consulting with the professor; ahead of time.
  - ***Any student not following the above will be asked to leave immediately & will be marked absent for that morning.***

**COURSE POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS:**

I will not accept late assignments (including homework &/or assignments) without a confirmed medical &/or legal documentation, under any circumstances. Likewise, I will not permit make-up presentations without confirmed medical &/or legal documentation. All of this is at the discretion of your professor.

*Students anticipating, or unexpectedly, not submitting an assignment on time or presenting the project on time, must contact their professor within 24 hours before it is due/scheduled to make other arrangements. Failure to do so will result in the student earning an automatic zero for that assignment. Additionally, even if permission is granted to submit the assignment late or present the project late, for any reason, that student may receive an automatic five (5) point reduction per day that the assignment is late. All of this is at the discretion of your professor.*

**STATEMENT ON EXTRA CREDIT:**

There are no extra credit assignments in this course. Please prepare & study accordingly so that you can do your best, the first time.

**STATEMENT ON MID TERM GRADES:**

Your college experience should be a wonderful combination of learning &/or improving upon your education & life skills. One very important life skill is responsibility for self. Thus, as opposed to the instructor adding up your grades, I strongly encourage you to do so. Since everything in this course equals 100 points, this should not be a difficult task. However, if you require assistance &/or wish to verify your results, please do not hesitate to ask your professor.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- Attendance & engagement=30 points
- Semester-long *Seelio* portfolio=25 points
- Research paper=30 points
- Final reflection/learning assignment=15 points

**TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE=100 points**

**GRADING RUBRIC:**

Scores on the preceding assignments are cumulative and will be converted to a final letter grade at the end of the semester according to the following scale:

95-100 =A  
91-94 = A-  
88-90 = B+  
84-87 = B  
81-83 = B-  
78-80 = C+  
74-77 = C  
71-73 = C-  
67-70 = D+  
64-66 = D  
60-63 = D-