SW 504: Social Justice and Diversity in Social Work

Fall, 2015 section 012
Tuesdays 5:00 – 8:00 pm
Room 3752, SSWB
Foundation HBSE Course, 3 cts

Instructor: Relando Thompkins-Jones, MSW, LLMSW
rthompki@umich.edu
Office hours by appt.

Required Texts

Course Description
This required foundation course is designed to increase students’ awareness, knowledge, and critical skills related to diversity, human rights, social and economic justice. The topics of this course include developing a framework for 1) engaging diversity and differences in social work practice and 2) advancing human rights and social and economic justice. We will explore the knowledge base that underlies skills needed to work towards justice. These include types and sources of power, multiple social locations, social constructions, social processes, social identities, conflicts, and how all these interact. A major emphasis is on developing skills in critical contextual thinking and analyses, and in praxis, learning to use knowledge and theory to recognize and critique underlying assumptions and paradigms, and inform working for change. Multiple kinds of boundaries are especially important—across groups, between organizations and system levels, and within and between people, related to intersecting social locations.

Course Content
Students will actively explore how societal power and diversity characterize and shape the human experience, and are critical to the formation of social structures, cultural understandings, group and organizational processes, and identities. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. In this course, students will learn how current experiences of privilege and oppression are shaped by historical forces, societal structures, social constructions, group and interpersonal processes, and human understandings, including an understanding of the institutional, organizational, policy, and socio-cultural arrangements that contribute to them. Additionally, this foundation course will explore formulations of human rights, including positive rights, and negative conditions that need to be eradicated. This course also studies how social justice and injustice occur in organizations, institutions, and society, relevant theories that can inform work for justice (e.g., critical race theory, and components of many theories), and how mechanisms of oppression and privilege work (e.g., marginalization, exploitation, violence, cultural hegemony, and powerlessness).
Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be better able to:

1. Describe community and organizational work for social change.
2. Demonstrate knowledge and skills for working for justice, enacting critical consciousness, and engaging and addressing issues of power and diversity. (4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7)
3. Describe the dynamics of difference and dominance/oppression and how they impact human functioning and social relations within and across diverse groups. (4.1, 4.5)
4. Describe how structural differences in society are shaped by historical, psychological, social, and political factors. (4.1, 4.5)
5. Demonstrate knowledge of social locations, constructions, processes, and identities and the diversity within these. This includes increased knowledge about the forces that shape complex selves, relationships, and worldviews. (4.2, 4.3)
6. Demonstrate skills in critical contextual thinking, applying multiple theories and frameworks to illuminate underlying assumptions, biases and possible opportunities, and engaging in praxis.
7. Demonstrate awareness of the sources of power, how to mobilize power towards positive change, and ways to challenge oppressive assumptions, biases, and prejudices (4.2, 4.3)
8. Describe methods for continuing a life long process of recognizing our biases, learning how to change oppressive behaviors and structures, and building a more socially just multicultural society. (4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7)

Course Design

This class will strive to foster a learning environment where each student can reflect critically on sources of power and mechanisms of oppression and privilege, construct a framework for justice, and examine sources of their beliefs and perspectives. This course will work to create a climate that supports critical analyses, mutual learning, engaging within and across differences and examining sources of power and knowledge. It involves lectures, video, and participation in experiential activities. Additionally, this course will provide a forum to critically examine how our multiple status locations, societal constructions, and social processes shape our beliefs, assumptions, behaviors, and life experiences. Special attention will also be given knowledge about justice and change, and principles of change towards justice.

Theme Relation to Multiculturalism & Diversity

is addressed from the perspective of critically considering how diverse dimensions (such as ability; age; class; color; culture; ethnicity; family structure; gender - including gender identity and gender expression; marital status; national origin; race; religion, spirituality or worldview; sex; and sexual orientation) are socially constructed, embedded in societal structures across system levels, and maintained through social processes and intra and interpersonal relationships and schemas.

Theme Relation to Social Justice

is addressed from the perspective of critically analyzing theories and conceptualizations of justice, current trends and ethical issues and their implications for promoting social justice and social change, by considering the influence of normative rules and conditions. Additional focus will be directed towards how structural and institutional conditions affect the opportunities and well-being of different populations (advantaged and disadvantaged groups) in society.

Theme Relation to Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation
is addressed from the perspective of critically considering how varied ideological, theoretical and empirical perspectives influence the definition of social problems and, subsequently, the ways in which institutional policies and practices address access, promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

**Theme Relation to Behavioral and Social Science Research**
will be reflected in the theory, social science literature and research covered characterizing and analyzing macro-level structures, processes and their bearing and implications for the well-being of different vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and populations in society, as well as how marginalized groups exert agency and influence society.

**Relationship to SW Ethics and Values**
The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to give students direction about ethical issues as they relate to the experience of marginalized groups. The course will focus on social workers’ responsibility as professionals to promote general welfare by working toward the elimination of discrimination, expanding choices for all persons, encouraging respect for diversity, advocating for progressive changes in social policies, and encouraging informed participation by the public.

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

**Important Questions for SW 504**

1. What comprises and defines social justice?
   - What theories and assumptions underlie different formulations of justice?
   - What do we know about what creates and sustains socially just situations, contexts, practices?
   - What makes for competent, resilient, and socially just communities, and institutions/organizations within those communities?
   - How is social justice related to such concepts as promotion of health and well-being, individual and community resilience, prevention of various social problems?

2. How is society possible? What defines society? What are important components of society?
   
   [e.g., class conflict, social solidarity, ideas, culture (symbols, rituals), social affiliations, shared and conflicting values, social structures, coercion and constraint]
   
   What factors within these levels and components of society keep recreating and sustaining inequality?

3. What explains social behavior? How are macro and meso level behaviors and forces embedded in and influenced by macro contexts, and vice versa?
   
   [e.g., early socialization, on-going socialization, statuses and roles, social structures, rewards and punishments, conformity, audience reaction]
4. What creates and sustains inequalities, injustice, oppression, privilege? Why are some social locations and categories associated with unearned privilege and others with disadvantage? What are different types and consequences of different forms of oppression, and implications for working for justice?

5. How do societal institutions work? What is important for me as a social worker to know about different types of institutions in order to be effective in my workplace and in reaching justice and other practice goals, with or on behalf of clients and in working with others?

   [e.g., families, organizations and communities and their functions, government and “the state”, the global political-economy]

6. How do societies and institutions change? General theories, planned change approaches?

   [e.g., From the bottom up, one individual at a time, collective behavior, changing consciousness, symbols, natural selection, new technologies, external forces, crises, economic markets and forces (capitalism)]

7. What’s the role of government (the State) in funding and regulating behavior and social institutions, maintaining or reducing inequality?

8. How have and do micro, meso, macro structures and processes shape and influence me? How can I use knowledge about these forces to increase my critical consciousness, and work with diversity?

9. What is the role of theory, theorizing, and knowledge about all the above, in improving my practice, and in creating more just situations and more effective human services and communities?

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 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.

Course Policies (the fine print)

Emailing the Instructor: I usually check email once a day Monday to Friday and try to respond within 48 hours. If I will be away from email you will receive an out-of-office reply.

Late assignment policy: One point will be deducted for each day an assignment is late, including weekends. If an extension is needed, arrangements can be made with the instructor up to 24 hours before the assignment’s due date. However, late forum posts cannot receive credit.

Accommodations: Please let me know of any accommodations that may help to enhance your learning experience, preferably at the beginning of the semester. For reference, the Office for Services for Students with Disabilities is located in G664 Haven Hall; http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/

UM’s Code of Academic Conduct: Acts of plagiarism, cheating, double submission of essentially the same paper to different classes, paraphrasing from the internet, etc. are considered acts of dishonesty that violate the rights of other members of your community. Here are a few definitions for reference:

Plagiarism: Submitting a piece of work (for example, an essay, research paper, assignment, lab report) which in part or in whole is not entirely the student’s own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source.
Double Submission of Papers: Submitting or resubmitting substantially the same paper for two or more classes in the same or different terms without the express approval of each instructor.

SECTION 012 POLICIES

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<th>GRADING</th>
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<td>Attendance and participation</td>
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<td>• Class participation</td>
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<td>Out of My Box Exercise</td>
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<td>Current Events Presentation</td>
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<td>Praxis Assignment: Reflective Analysis</td>
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<td>E-portfolio</td>
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ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
Attendance and participation in all class sessions are critical for the learning process in this course. For this reason, students are expected to attend all class sessions. Exceptions will only be made for extreme circumstances.

Active participation is critical to the small group learning community we will create. Please do what you can do show up each week, on time, having done the readings, ready to engage.

I invite you to consider the following:

- With the understanding that this may 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 practicing social work.
- 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.

You won’t be graded for what you say in this class—there are no clear rights and wrongs in the kind of inquiry we’ll be doing together. But you will be graded for the effort you invest in developing your skills at listening, engaging, communicating (verbally and non-verbally), and critically interrogating. “Considerate” participation necessitates respectful and engaged comments and body language. Please remember to turn off your cell phones and other distracting electronic devices.

I realize that some people feel less comfortable or confident speaking up in class. If this applies to you, please let me know in person or via email. We can always talk through your ideas during office hours and discuss strategies that may help you with participation during class. I also realize that some people are very comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions. Their challenge will be to choose when to actively listen instead of talking, even when they might be able and willing to contribute a lot each class. Experimenting with changing up your style of participation might have surprising benefits to you, as well as to the class.
**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**
We have a lot of small assignments that are designed to support us in creating an effective co-learning community as a class. Please remain on top of them, out of respect for your own learning and for the hard work and contributions of your classmates.

**Outside of My Box Exercise**

This is a simple exercise in concept. For a 3 – 5 hour period (or longer if you choose), experience the world outside the box of your social identities.

The activity should take you outside of your own comfort zone. Perhaps you will pursue an ally action that stretches you. Perhaps you will place yourself in a position where you’re feeling “othered” in regards to aspects of your identity that would normally prevent you from experiencing that feeling. All people can be allies to someone. Pursue an ally or “othering” activity that is new to you based on the many diverse intersectionalities we have discussed in class.

**During this exercise, each student should think about their personal safety and be careful.** Hate crimes and discriminatory practices are common against people from marginalized identities. If what you want to do is unsafe, please write your thoughts on why you made the choice not to act out the exercise. Include your emotions, thoughts and considerations. Please write a description of your experience in a paper, approximately 3 pages (double-spaced, 12pt. font).

1. What did you do?
2. What was the experience like for you?
3. What did you learn about yourself through participating (or not participating) in this experience?
4. What did you learn about the world around you through participating (or not participating) in this experience?
5. What are you going to do with the information you learned from participating (or not participating) in this experience?

This assignment will be due on or before December 2nd, 2015

**Current Events Presentation**

During the course of the semester, students are expected to stay informed about current events relevant to discussions and topics in the class. Students will present to the class one newspaper, magazine, or online article that covers multiculturalism, racism, classism or another *ism*, discrimination, or oppression of a minority group. Examples can cover local, national, or international events, but must be obtained from reliable and valid sources. A few examples of relevant topics include elections of politicians, LGBT legal rights, illegal immigration, the Arab American community post-9/11, or other highly publicized events. Current events will provide balance and relevance to the social and historical topics discussed in class and in the readings. The presentations should last approximately 5 minutes with a few additional minutes for discussion and questions. To facilitate this, students will to develop 2-3 questions to pose to the class regarding the article/topic. The presentations will be scheduled in class and will occur throughout the semester.
Students will:

- Select an article or news story that is current and relevant
- Student describe the article/story in their own words (no reading word for word)
- Develop 2-3 thought-provoking discussion questions
- Be prepared and demonstrate an understanding of the article/story’s content

**Praxis Assignment: Reflective Analysis (5 parts, 30% all together)**

The first four should be 3 pages, with reasonable margins, font size no smaller than 11, and double spaced. This means you will have to work to consider what the main points and arguments should be, select your examples carefully, and be concise and clear.

**Part 1. Boundaries, conflict and analytic perspectives—5 %, Due October 14th**

Think about your own life and experiences, in different environments and contexts over time, in connection with our readings and class activities. Consider core concepts about social work and various communities relevant for you—of place, interest, and identity—groups and organizations you have been part of, and the multiple boundaries within yourself and within and between all those social systems. Using the 5 perspectives and other readings, and/or class experiences, analyze key boundaries, sources of support and conflict, and their influences on you and others, social justice issues, and promoting positive goals.

**Part 2. Social Constructions, paradigms, and some implications -- 5%  Due October 28th**

Articulate what your values, beliefs and questions are on the various topics we have covered. Discuss forces that shaped these and how they worked together, using concepts like intersectionality. You can also continue to use the five perspectives, power, boundaries, change, etc. Overall, how do both of these relate to your goals in Social Work and programs and policies important to you? What have you learned so far about underlying assumptions, sources of knowledge, oppression and privilege, and different ways of understanding ourselves and contexts?

**3 Social justice, social categories, privilege, oppression and critical consciousness.—5 %, Due November 11th**

a) Create your own definition(s) of social justice and identify where this definition fits among those you may have read about and discussed. Discuss some of the implications of this definition. You may want to discuss and critique other definitions.

b) Articulate your major social locations and areas of unearned privilege and oppression. Discuss what has been your experience with these, and how these are embedded within macro, meso, micro structures and forces, with examples of how the categories intersect and create synergies, and how privilege and oppression are continuously recreated. You should include how much you have explored each, your awareness of relevant categories, and implications for yourself as a social worker and theorist.

c) What do theories of social justice, privilege, oppression, intersectionality contribute to conceptualizing and implementing your professional goals?

**4 Application of concepts of differences and social justice 5% Due December 2nd**
to a) one or more locations of intersectionalities, b) sources, types and mechanisms of power, oppression, privilege, and agency, and c) consider implications for individuals, family, groups, organizations, communities, and social policies. Consider different ways of understanding differences, boundaries and bridges at various societal levels and representing different intersectionalities. You may want to consider one or more groups, subgroups within these, and some larger contexts (e.g., organizations, communities) with which you are familiar and apply concepts from readings and experiences in class to illuminate key issues and their influences. Pay special attention to social justice goals and issues, and how they might be recognized and addressed. Try to locate yourself within all these. “Where do I fit in all of this? What role do I play?”

5. Working and theorizing for change—10%, Due December 9th (or before if you want).

Should be about 4 pages double-spaced, font size no smaller than 11 and margins (1 inch)

A major emphasis in this assignment should be on social change for social justice, building on the readings and your experiences in class, and other relevant experiences over the course of the term. Develop a set of principles for working for change, drawing on class readings, handouts and activities, emphasizing social justice goals and processes and intersectionality components.

Consider a) how different levels and types of social systems, constructs and processes can help to catalyze or inhibit change at individual, family, group, community, organizational, and societal levels, and b) working for change. Consider definitions of social justice and their evolution and influence and the implications of paradigms, different types of theories, social entrepreneurship issues, and recommendations in readings. You can also use materials I or classmates introduced in addition—class activities, intersectionality, promotion of positive goals/levels and types of prevention, approaches to policy work, etc.

You can include diagrams, or some other way of depicting key elements, or have it be only an essay.

E-Portfolio

Students will synthesize their writings, reflections, and learnings for the semester for display on their own Seelio webpage, tying together themes learned in the course.

- Seelio Student Portal: http://students.seelio.com/
- Contains many resources that will help your students get started on Seelio
- Seelio 101: http://students.seelio.com/intro-to-seelio/
- An introductory tutorial with videos for both students and faculty, located on the Student Portal
- Seelio Support email: support@seelio.com A team from Seelio monitors this email for support requests from students and faculty. They can handle any questions you might have about how to use Seelio.

A note on the emergent nature of this course:
This is a new course, and not just because of that I reserve the right to—and also commit to you that I will—change the readings, assignments, and activities planned for this course to best suit our needs and goals as a learning community. That means that the readings listed below are likely suggestions of what we’ll be reading this term, but they are subject to change (with adequate notice for you to adjust!).
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week and Themes</th>
<th>Readings (to be read before class)</th>
<th>Assignments (to be completed before class)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> (Sept 16)</td>
<td>TED TALK Chimimanda Adichie: Danger of a Single Story</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 4</strong> (Oct 7)</td>
<td><strong>Ch. 3-Oppression at the Personal Level</strong> Levins Morales, A. (1998). History as Curandera in <em>Medicine stories: history, culture, and the politics of integrity</em>. Cambridge, MA, South End Press. Take Implicit Association test at: <a href="https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html">https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html</a></td>
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<td><strong>Week 7</strong> (Oct 28)</td>
<td><strong>Ch. 5 Oppression at the Structural Level</strong> Smith, A. Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy OR Smith, A. Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy</td>
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<td>Week 8 (Nov 4)</td>
<td>Bringing together levels of oppression in place and time</td>
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<td>Russo (2011) skwadi’lic, Board Feet, and the Cedar Tree (17 p)</td>
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<td>Optional: Paperson: The Postcolonial Ghetto</td>
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<th>Week 9 (Nov 11)</th>
<th>Internalized Oppression and Domination</th>
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<td>Ch. 6 Internalized Oppression and Domination</td>
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<td>Reflective Analysis Part 3 Due</td>
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<th>Week 10 (Nov 18)</th>
<th>Working for Change: Anti-Oppressive Social Work</th>
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<tr>
<td>Leondar-Wright, B. (2014) Missing Class: How Seeing Class Cultures Can Strengthen Social Movement Groups—Chpt 1 and 2 (Or just 1)</td>
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| Nov 25 No Class |

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<tr>
<th>Week 11 (Dec 2)</th>
<th>Working for Change: Anti-Oppressive Social Work</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ch.8-Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice at the Personal and Cultural Levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective Analysis Part 4 Due</td>
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<td>Outside of My Box Assignment Due</td>
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<th>Week 12 (Dec 9)</th>
<th>Working for Change: Anti-Oppressive Social Work</th>
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<td>Ch. 9-Anti-Oppressive Social Work at the Structural Level and Selected Principles of Anti-Oppressive Social Work</td>
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<td>E Portfolio Due</td>
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<td>Reflective Analysis part 5 Due</td>
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