



SW 504: Social Justice and Diversity in Social Work

Fall, 2015 section 015
Mondays 6:00 – 9:00 pm
Room 2816, SSWB
Foundation HBSE Course, 3 cts

Instructor: Daniel Alvarez
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Office hours by appointment. Happy to meet!

Required Texts

- Mullaly, Bob (2010) *Challenging oppression and privilege*, 2nd Ed, Oxford University Press, 978-0-19-542970-1

Additional Readings

- All of the readings and handouts that are used in this class can be found on CTools

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

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.

Note about this course:

This is a new course, and it is my goal to fit things together, pull on readings, work with assignments, and facilitate this course in a way that maximizes your learning, engagement, and enjoyment. Because this is a new course, and because I believe in learning being dynamic, I would like the opportunity to shift the material as needed. For that reasons, some of the readings and assignments may change over the course of the semester. I will give you advanced notice of any changes and am happy to clarify along the way. I will appreciate your willingness to be flexible with me in this process!

GRADING	
Attendance and participation	25%
Who Am I: Part 1	10%
Who Am I: Part 2	10%
Reaction Sheets*	10%
Praxis Assignment: Applying social theory	20%
Out of the Box*	20%
E-portfolio	5%

**To be submitted at any point throughout the semester*

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation in all class sessions is critical for the learning process in this course. For this reason, students are expected to attend all class sessions. Active participation is essential to the small group learning community we will create. Please plan to show up each week on time, having done the readings, and ready to engage. I do, however, understand that life happens. If you must miss class please let me know with as much notice as possible. If you miss more than 1 class without notice it may be reflected in your participation grade.

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 recognize that there are different learning styles. If you are having a difficult time learning and engaging because of how the material is presented or what type of participation is being encouraged please let me know in email or in person. We can always talk through your ideas during office hours and discuss strategies that may help you with participation during class.

Reaction Sheets

Five times throughout the semester you will be expected to reflect on the class period. This should serve as a log of your own experiences and reactions to the class exercises, discussions, readings, and assignments with special attention and reflection given to how your identities and knowledge/experience around privilege and oppression may be shaping your reactions and learning process. I recommend filling them out

as soon as possible after class. You can choose to reflect on any session but please submit before the next class period. *I strongly encourage you to not wait for the last 5 classes!*

Reaction sheets will require you to reflect on your immediate feelings and reactions to class material, after thoughts and critical thinking on the issues, questions or problems raised by the material, and how the class has (or has not) helped you to integrate material, stretch your thinking and feelings, and grow as a person and social worker. **Please be brief, but specific in commenting on the readings, citing actual readings from the course that you have found interesting and relevant to the topic.**

You can find the Reaction Sheet template on Ctools. I encourage you to stick to the format for at least the first submission, however, if the prompts are limiting feel free to respond creatively. The intention is give you space to integrate the concepts we are working with, and to think critically.

Other Assignments

In depth explanations of the assignments will be posted on the Ctools page for our class.

Readings

Chapters from the Mullaly text are listed by week below. Each week there will be additional required readings that can be found in Ctools. I will send out announcements when the readings are available.

Week and Themes	Readings* and Assignments to be read and completed before class
Week 1 (Sept 14) <i>Who are we? What is this?</i>	No readings—first class!
Week 2 (Sept 21) <i>Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations</i>	Chapter 1: Theoretical Perspectives on Social Problems—PDF version available on Ctools DiAngelo, R. (2011). White fragility. <i>The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy</i> 3(3): 54-70. http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/03/calling-in-and-calling-out/ http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/a-note-on-call-out-culture http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2013/12/calling-less-disposable-way-holding-accountable/ <i>Who Am I Part 1 Assigned</i>
Week 3 (Sept 28) <i>Privilege, Oppression, Power</i>	Mullaly Preface Ch. 2- Oppression: An Overview Ch. 10-Unpacking Our Knapsack of Invisible Privilege https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-99399481/positionality-epistemology-and-social-justice-in
Week 4 (Oct 5) <i>Oppression at the Personal Level</i>	Ch. 3-Oppression at the Personal Level <i>Who Am I Part 1 Due</i>

<p>Week 5 (Oct 12) <i>Oppression at the Cultural Level and Social Construction</i></p>	<p>Ch. 4-Oppression at the Cultural Level</p>
<p>Oct 19</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>
<p>Week 6 (Oct 26) <i>Intersectionality: Personal, Cultural, Structural</i></p>	
<p>Week 7 (Nov 2) <i>Oppression at the Structural Level</i></p>	<p>Ch. 5 Oppression at the Structural Level</p>
<p>Week 8 (Nov 9) <i>Bringing together levels of oppression in place and time</i></p>	
<p>Week 9 (Nov 16) <i>Internalized Oppression and Domination</i></p>	<p>Ch. 6 Internalized Oppression and Domination <i>Praxis Assignment: Applying Social Theory Due</i></p>
<p>Week 10 (Nov 23) <i>Working for Change: Anti-Oppressive Social Work</i></p>	
<p>Week 11 (Nov 30) <i>Working for Change: Anti-Oppressive Social Work</i></p>	<p>Ch.8-Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice at the Personal and Cultural Levels <i>Who Am I Part 2 Due</i></p>
<p>Week 12 (Dec 7) <i>Working for Change: Anti-Oppressive Social Work</i></p>	<p>Ch. 9-Anti-Oppressive Social Work at the Structural Level and Selected Principles of Anti-Oppressive Social Work <i>E-Portfolio Due</i></p>