



**COURSE TITLE:** Social Change Theories  
**COURSE NUMBER:** 611, Section 001, Spring/Summer 2016  
**TIME AND PLACE:** Mondays, 8 AM-12 PM, May 9-August 1, B760 SSWB  
**CREDIT HOURS:** 3

**INSTRUCTOR:** John Mathias  
**CONTACT DETAILS:** Email: [jmathias@umich.edu](mailto:jmathias@umich.edu)  
Office: 2798 SSWB  
Mailbox: 137

**OFFICE HOURS:** Mondays 12:30-1:30 PM and by appointment

**Course Description:** This is a course on the theory and research on social change. The course is guided by three lines of inquiry: 1) what do we mean by social change? 2) Why should we enact social change? 3) What are the catalysts, processes, and consequences of change on a societal level?

**Course Content:** The course employs frameworks of social justice, intersectionality and other core social work values for the critical examination of theoretical perspectives on social change. Students will examine theories related to poverty, inequality, different forms of oppression and privilege, social change and social justice, theories of political economy and communities, organizational theory, social policy, critical approaches, and other key topics.

A range of approaches will be employed, with an emphasis on those that enhance different types of analysis and illuminate many aspects of organizations, communities, and society. A central theme in this course will be the intersection of social theory and practice. That is, we will not just theorize about social change. Rather, we will attend to cases of change and map steps toward change on an organizational and societal level.

Minimum competencies students are expected to demonstrate at the end of the course include:

- a) an understanding of major theories of social change and the development of an ability to judge critically their value, as well as their weakness, and to consider their use in organizing and interpreting research findings, and in considering strategies for action;
- b) a descriptive and analytic understanding of the forms and causes of social change, and of the mechanisms and processes associated with its development and diffusion;
- c) the capacity to pose analytic questions about the implications social change has for vulnerable groups and populations in society, and for social work's role and ethical obligations in promoting social improvements in society through the creation of social change in light of its commitments to multiculturalism, diversity and social justice; and
- d) increased ability to critically consider, and develop, proposals for achieving social change in light of what we think we know about how social change happens and its association with the realization of positive benefits for vulnerable groups and populations.

**Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Education Policy and Accreditation Standards**

**(EPAS):** This course will use a variety of pedagogical strategies, including readings, class exercises, case studies, and debates to address the CSWE Education Policy and Accreditation Standards.

- **Social Justice:** Social Justice and Social Change will be addressed within the goals and assumptions of each theoretical approach. Most of the course will focus on social justice goals and conceptualizing and operationalizing social change.
- **Multiculturalism & Diversity:** Multiculturalism and Diversity will be addressed in this course by identifying theories espoused by and compatible with different cultural traditions, by critiquing theories from different cultural perspectives, and through course examples about the uses of theory in different interest and ontological groups.
- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation:** Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation will be addressed by examining theories about social change for their relevance and applicability in each of these areas. Students will compare and contrast theories that focus on a positive vision of the future with theories focusing on existing problems.
- **Behavioral and Social Science Research:** Behavioral and Social Science Research will be addressed by examining the evidence used to build theory and test theory through its applications in practice.
- **Social Work Ethics and Values:** Students will examine theories and explore the extent to which they aid social workers with their ethical responsibilities to the general welfare of society. In particular, theories and practice examples will be critiqued with respect to the following ethical principles: preventing and eliminating discrimination, ensuring access to resources and services, expanding choices for all persons, promoting conditions that encourage respect for diversity, advocating for changes in policy to improve social conditions and promote social justice, and encourage informed participation by citizens in shaping policies and institutions.

**Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS):** This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice 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 to develop 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.

**Course Design:** This course is designed to placed emphasis on back and forth movement between theory and practice, i.e., between ideas about social change and action for social change. Each session will to be divided into two portions. The first portion will combine seminar-style discussion of readings and group exercises to explore concepts. Lecture will be minimal, but will vary according to the expressed needs of students. The second portion will be case-based, meaning the main focus in each class will be on analyzing a description of a situation likely to be faced by persons engaged with anticipating, planning, managing or evaluating some form of change.

Throughout, the focus of assigned readings and classroom interaction will be on developing students' abilities to a) examine their own theoretical assumptions, 2) analyze theories embedded in practices, 3) develop new theories and defensible positions with respect to major existing theories, and 4) develop change strategies that are well thought out.

## **Case Method Contract<sup>1</sup>**

This syllabus as a whole should be thought of as a contract laying out expectations for both instructor and students. Because case method teaching is uncommon in social work, is particularly important to make sure the contract is clear. My part of the contract is that I will guide students through challenging and important subjects at a level comparable to the best universities in the world in ways that rely on and are designed to fit with the students' experience and background. The students commit to prepare for each class and to participate actively. In doing so, they take responsibility not just for their own learning, but for that of their classmates.

In case method teaching, student participation will involve interactive discussion. There are two components to participation: quality and quantity. The quality of comments will be judged by relevance, clarity of thought and insight. As far as quantity, as a rule of thumb, I would expect to see your hand raised many times in each class and you should participate substantively at least twice each class. If you feel you are having difficulty doing so, please let me know.

This is not a course about memorization. Thinking on your feet and listening to your colleagues counts here, as it does in the workplace. Without work experience, you will be at a (surmountable) disadvantage in this course but also in a position to learn disproportionately more. Try to think about your own performance in class: was it the best you could do? Was it constructive? Insightful? Are you as active as your fellow students? In your career, you are unlikely to get regular formal feedback. This course is an opportunity to develop an ability to objectively assess your performance in collaborative problem-solving.

## **Required Readings**

There is no required text. Readings consist of articles and case studies assigned on a week by week basis (see Class Schedule below). The articles and certain case studies (called ethnographic journeys) will be available for downloading through the canvas website. Some case studies are provided under the auspices of Harvard Business Publishing; each will cost approximately \$4.00, which is paid at time of retrieval. I will discuss how this works in the first class. There will be no charge for the first case on May 9.

Readings and other course materials will be made available through the "modules" function of Canvas. Using this function, short notes and guiding questions will be appended to the readings. Often, these notes will be crucial to understanding why a particular reading has been assigned. In addition, they often contain suggestions for where to focus your attention. The purpose of these is to help you to move through the readings more efficiently and effectively.

Additional material (such as poems and short videos) pertaining to various themes and topics may be distributed or assigned from time to time by the instructor. These will sometimes be included in modules. I will indicate in class whether they are required reading or not.

## **Housekeeping**

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andersen and Schiano, 2014, Teaching with Cases: a Practical Guide

### *Accommodations for students with disabilities*

If you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know as soon as possible. Many aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and teaching methods can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress throughout the semester. I will make every effort to use the resources available to us, such as the services for Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site, and the like. If you disclose your disability, I will (to the extent permitted by law) treat that information as private and confidential.

### *Religious Observances*

Please notify me if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

### *Plagiarism*

Sometimes, crises lead students to unwise decisions. In classes, panic or other issues causes some students to take short cuts or plagiarize work. That's an incredibly bad idea. Don't do it. This is a zero tolerance class: Detected and documented plagiarism for any class related assignment leads to automatic failure of the course. I want your own learning, writing, and thinking in the class. It is amazingly easy to plagiarize in today's Internet connected world. It is also extremely easy for any instructor to detect and document plagiarism in seconds if not minutes. Also, don't recycle your own papers (self-plagiarize) or other students' work.

### *Cell Phones, Laptops, Video and Voice Recorder Policy*

Cell phones should be muted at the beginning of each class and stored appropriately; laptop use is to be confined to course-related work. Please avoid email and social media during class time. You may, however, find Wikipedia, Google searches, or other web resources useful for informing your contribution to discussion. Video and voice recorders are not allowed except with express permission from the instructor. No audio or image recordings are to be posted online.

## Assignments:

### **Class participation (20 points)**

Each student will be given an index card at the beginning of each class. On the index card, you will write at least three ideas, important points, or other contributions that you made to the class. At least two of these should connect to the readings in a clear way. These will be collected at the end of each class and used to assess class participation at the end of the term. You can write down your ideas ahead of time, or after you've made your contribution. You can also bring an index card from home, prepared with the points you plan to make, but at the end of class, you should cross off anything that you did not actually end up saying. A good strategy is to answer the questions from the reading guides because these will be the starting points for our discussion in class.

Grading will be based on the following:

- how well you make use of the readings
- whether you generate alternative solutions to problems and argue for them
- how well you listen to other students and constructively critique or support them

Each student is allowed one absence (other than religious and medical exceptions) without loss of class participation points. However, students must notify the instructor in advance, and they must complete a one-page reading response, due the class period following their absence. The one-page response should address one guiding question (posted on Canvas) for each reading.

### **Individual Paper: Case analysis (points) Due June 13**

Each student will submit one analysis of a case presented in class, making use of concepts from the readings. Papers are to be **5-7 pages**. The page limit for each assignment includes diagrams, charts, etc, but excludes references. Additional specifications on the focus, structure, and content of case analyses will be discussed in class.

### **Project: Theory and Design for Change (50 points)**

Individually or with a partner, you will study and contribute to a local social change initiative. The project will involve four phases:

1. Identify an organization or social change initiative. Ideally, you would draw on your experience in your field placements and choose initiative that you already are somewhat familiar with and with which you already have established some rapport.

#### **Due May 30 (5 points)**

2. Conduct research on an initiative and submit a report that includes:
  - (a) a brief overview of the organization/initiative (approx. ½ page)
  - (b) your research methods (approx. 1/2 page)
  - (c) description of the target problem (approx. 1 page)
  - (d) description of the current effort to make change (approx. 2 pages)

- (e) a critical analysis, drawing on concepts from the course, of theories of change relevant to this effort (i.e., how is change conceptualized here?) (approx. 3-4 pages)
- (f) a brief discussion of the pros and cons of this approach to change (approx. 1 page)
- (g) conclusion, indicating possible future directions for this initiative (approx. 1/2 page)

Total length: **8-10 pages**

**Due: June 27 (25 points)**

3. Design and present a change proposal. Based on your report on a local initiative, and in conversation with the organizers of that initiative, make an innovative recommendation that builds on what people are already doing. Describe the theories and concepts that are relevant to this recommendation. List concrete steps that could be taken to put your proposal into action. Length approximately 3 pages. These proposals will be made available to the whole class on Ctools, and they will also be available to future classes as a repository of ideas for change. Each student/pair will give a brief (approx. 5 minute) presentation to the rest of the class about their proposal. As a class, we will chose 1-2 proposals to act on.

**Due: July 11 (10 points)**

4. Enact your proposal. As a class, we will select 1-2 proposals to take action on. In collaboration with each other and with the organizers of a local initiative, we will take initial steps toward putting these proposals into action. This could involve identifying and drafting a proposal for a small grant, conducting a petition, protest, or letter-writing campaign, volunteering with an ongoing project, or anything at all. The only limit being our own imaginations. Grading will be collective, and will include five points of peer review and five points based on instructor assessment of both process and impact

**Due: August 1 (10 points)**

### ***I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE ASSIGNMENTS***

#### *Written assignments*

All written assignments are to be written in 12 point Times New Roman font with a 1 inch margin. Assignments are to be submitted as attachments through the Ctools web site under the Assignment Folder on the dates and by the time specified. Subfolders will be created in the Assignment Folder for this purpose. Note that the website is set up not to accept submissions after the dates and times specified here.

Students are to use APA “guidelines for each of the assignments. Each assignment needs to include appropriate attribution of authorship for paraphrases or ideas acquired from another source or appropriate citations, including page numbers, for direct quotes.

#### *Evaluation Criteria*

Following are the main criteria applied in the assessment of class presentations and written assignments:

1. Definition and maintenance of a clear focus.

2. Systematic and logical presentation of arguments
3. Appropriate use of evidence.
4. Development of relevant and interesting insights.
5. Familiarity with, and appropriate use of, relevant literature.
6. Clarity of presentation.
7. Conformity with the requirements of the assignment

**Grading:** A 100 point system is used:

A 94-100

A- 91-93

B+ 87-90

B 84-86

B- 81-83

C+ 77-80

C 74-76

C- 70-73

D 65-69

E 64 or fewer points

“A” is awarded for exceptional performance and the mastery of the material

“B” is awarded for papers that demonstrate mastery of the material

“C” is awarded when mastery of the material is minimal

“D” indicates deficiency and carries no credit

“E” indicates failure and carries no credit

## Class Schedule

### May 9: Introduction: Does change need theory?

Case: Monitor Company – Personal Leadership for Diversity

Readings:

Cole, E. R. (2008). Coalitions as a Model for Intersectionality: From Practice to Theory. *Sex Roles*, 59(5), 443-453.

Mullaly, R. P. (1997). The Imperative of Theory for Social Work *Structural social work: ideology, theory, and practice* (pp. 99-103). Toronto ; New York: Oxford University Press.  
(focus on pages 84-86, and skim the remainder)

Spencer, M. S. (2008). A social worker's reflections on power, privilege, and oppression. *Social Work*, 53(2), 99-102.

Weick, K. E. (1999). That's moving: Theories that matter. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 8(2), 134-142.

*Recommended:*

Reed, B. G. (2005) Theorizing in community practice: Essential tools for building community, promoting social justice, and implementing social change. In M. Weil (Ed) *Handbook of Community Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 84–102.

### May 16: Change for What?

Case: Tom Monaghan

Video: Malcolm X – “Democracy is hypocrisy”

Gallie, W. B. (1955). Essentially contested concepts. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 56, 167-198.

Reisch, M. (2002). Defining Social Justice in a Socially Unjust World. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 83(4), 343-354.

Rittel, H. W. J., & Webber, M. M. Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4(2), 155-169.

*Recommended:*

MacIntyre, A. C. (1981). The nature of moral disagreement today and the claims of emotivism *After virtue: A study in moral theory* (pp. 6-22). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

## **May 23: Describing and Predicting Change: Narratives, Events, and Foresight**

Case: none (Guest speakers Tam Perry and Angelique Dey)

Readings:

Polletta, F. (2006). "It was like a fever...": Why people protest *It was like a fever: Storytelling in protest and politics* (pp. 32-52). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Sewell, W. H. (1996). Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille. *Theory and society*, 25(6), 841-881.

Whitehead, A. N. (1933). *Foresight Adventures of Ideas* (pp. 87-99). New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

## **May 30: Memorial Day – no class**

### **June 6: Move forward**

Ethnographic Journey: The Izhava caste, the SNDP, and efforts for progress in Kerala, India

—In Osella, F., & Osella, C. (2000). *Social mobility in Kerala: modernity and identity in conflict*. Sterling, VA: Pluto Press. Pages: 1-9, 38-41, 189-197, and 224-226

Readings:

Addams, J. (1998). Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements *Twenty years at Hull-House* (pp. 79-88). New York, NY: Penguin. Original work published 1910

Unger, R. M., & West, C. (1998). Progressive politics and what lies ahead. *The Nation*, 23, 11-15.

Bellamy, E. (1996). Looking Backward: 2000-1887 (pp. 23-28). Toronto, ON: Dover. (Original work published 1888)

Benson, P., & Kirsch, S. (2010). Capitalism and the Politics of Resignation. *Current Anthropology*, 51(4), 459-486.

### **June 13: Fight the good fight**

Case: Rainforest Action Network and Cargill

Video: Obama's advice to Black Lives Matter

Marx, K. ([1847]1978). The Coming Upheaval. In R. C. Tucker (Ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2d ed., pp. 218-219). New York: Norton.

Alinsky, S. D. (1971). *Rules for radicals: A practical primer for realistic radicals*. New York, NY: Random House.  
— Read Ch. 1 “The Purpose” (pp. 3-23) and Ch. 4 “The education of an organizer” (pp. 63-80)

Piven, F. F., & Cloward, R. A. (1979). *Poor people's movements: why they succeed, how they fail*. New York: Vintage books.  
— Read Ch. 1 “The Structuring of Protest” (pp. 1-40)

*Recommended:*

Baldwin, J. 1966. A report from occupied territory. *Nation*  
DuBois, W.E.B. (1919). “Let us reason together.” *Crisis Magazine*, September.  
Armstrong, E.A. and S.M. Crage. (2006). Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth. *American Sociological Review*, 71 (5) 724-751.

**June 20: Scale it up (or down)**

Case: Fair Trade USA: Scaling for Impact

Guest speaker: Peggy Lynch

Readings:

Gandhi, M. K. (2008). Equal distribution of wealth. In J. M. Brown (Ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi: The Essential Writings* (pp. 94-96). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Original work published in 1940

Mathias, J. (In preparation). Scales of value: Insiders and outsiders in environmental organizing in Kerala India.

Osella, F., & Osella, C. (2000). Micro-politics, or the political life in the personal *Social mobility in Kerala: modernity and identity in conflict* (pp. 220-246). Sterling, VA: Pluto Press.

Weick, K. E. (1984) Small wins: Redefining the scale of social problems. *American Psychologist*, 39, 40-49.

*Recommended:*

Rohgalf, J. (2013). Democracy of the many? Occupy Wall Street and the dead end of prefiguration. *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 14(2), 151-167.

**June 27: Develop and improve**

Case: The Environment, Development and Participation: the Dilemmas of Asociacion Civil Labor

Video: Truman’s inaugural address – the fourth point

Readings:

Rostow, W. W. (1960). Ch. 1: Introduction, Ch 2: The five stages of economic growth - a summary *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto* (pp. 1-16). Cambridge: Cambridge university press. Original work published 1960

Li, T. (2007). Ch. 7 Development in the Age of Neoliberalism *The will to improve: governmentality, development, and the practice of politics* (pp. 230-269). Durham: Duke University Press.

*Recommended:*

Fisher, W. F. (1997). Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26, 439-464.

Roy, A. The cost of living – the greater common good

**July 4: Independence Day – no class**

**July 11: Raise consciousness**

Case: PSI India--Will Balbir Pasha Help Fight AIDS? (A)

Video: Balbir Pasha PSA

Sarachild, K. (1970/2000). A program for feminist consciousness-raising. In B. A. Crow (Ed.), *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader* (pp. 273-276). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.

— Read “Preface” and “Chapter 1” (pp. 17-53)

*Recommended:*

Spivak – what is to be done in “tidal”

**July 18: Cooperate**

Case: Melissa Daylon

Guest speaker: Jaimie Philip

Readings:

Hardin, G. (1968). Tragedy of Commons. *Science*, 162(3859), 1243-1248.

DiStefano, J. J. & Maznevski, M. I. (2000) Creating value in diverse teams in global management. *Organizational Dynamics*, 29, 45-63.

Warshaw, M. (2007) The good guy's (and gal' s) guide to office politics. *Fast Company.com*

### **July 25: Lead (or not)?**

Cases: Coach Knight: The will to win; Coach K: A Matter of Heart.

Machiavelli, N. (1952). Of cruelty and clemency and whether it is better to be loved or feared. *The Princei*. NY, The New American Library of World Literature, Ch. 17, pp. 89-91.

MacGregor, D. M. (1957) The human side of the enterprise. *Management Review*, 46, 22-28, 88-92

### **August 1: Tweet tweet...**

Case: none

Shirk, C. 2011. The Political Power of Social Media Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change. *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.panzertruppen.org/documentos/pdf/3.pdf>

Valenzuela, S., A. Arrigada and A. Scherman. 2012. "The Social Media Basis of Youth Protest Behavior. The Case of Chile. *Journal of Communication*, 62 (2): 299-314.