SW 611—Theories of Social Change
Section 002
Spring/Summer 2016
Monday 8am-noon, May 9th-August 1st

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Office Hours:
Mondays, 1:30-3:30pm and Thursdays 10:30-11:30am by appointment only

Course Description:
This course will review theories and research from the social sciences on social change, focusing especially at the societal level. Theories of social conflict, interest groups, and social movements, and such processes as consciousness-raising will be covered. Dynamics of the diffusion of innovations in society will also be addressed. Examples will be drawn from areas of practice in which social workers are involved, such as mental health and chemical dependency, child and family welfare, civil rights, health care, and consumer protection.

Course Content:
The main goal of this course is to address the questions of why and how social change occurs. Students will compare and contrast different theoretical approaches to the understanding of social change. Comparative dimensions will include the theory’s scope; the cultural contexts, societal arenas, and problem areas from which the theory was developed and in which it has been applied; and the assumptions of a theory about society and how social change occurs. Emphasis will be given to the types of empirical evidence available about each theoretical approach and the types of inquiry used to develop and critique different theories.

Although the primary emphasis will be on societal level change, this course will also consider theories of change at the individual, group, community, and organizational levels, and in particular how changes at different system levels affect each other. Students will consider the extent to which different theories are, or are not, compatible with each other and the implications of these relationships for the usefulness of particular theories for different purposes. Change theories will be selected from each of the social science disciplines, and students will consider how scholars and activists from different disciplinary perspectives have used and critiqued each other’s work. [Note: some of the theories we will consider originated in the natural sciences and the humanities]

Different bodies of thought about change will be critiqued for their relevance to the issues facing privileged, marginalized and oppressed groups within U.S. society and for their usefulness cross-culturally. Students will consider how different theories have been applied or could be applied and critique existing types of practice from particular theoretical perspectives and lenses that recognize the impact of privilege, oppression and social justice on the change process. Particular attention will be given to the impact of a diverse society on social change inclusive of diversity dimensions such as ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality,
sex, and sexual orientation. Students will explore the theories that have been important within human service goal and problem areas of interest to them.

**Course Objectives:**
Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe, compare, and contrast several types of theories about social change.
2. Identify theories relevant to particular goal and problem areas, and critique their strengths and limitations.
3. Critique different theories as to their assumptions, origins, relevance for different social problems, and relevance for marginalized and oppressed groups inclusive of a broad range of intersecting diversity dimensions.
4. Apply particular theories to different areas of practice.
5. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to social change theories.

**Course Design:**
This course may use a variety of pedagogical strategies, including readings, class exercises, case studies, and debates. Students will focus on cognitive and analytic tasks, skills in the use and application of theory, and identifying underlying value and attitudinal issues related to particular theories.

**How we will implement curricular themes and intensive focus principles**

- **Theme: Relation to 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.

- **Theme: Relation to Social Justice (and social change):**
  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.

- **Theme: Relation to Promotion (of positive goals), 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.
• **Theme: Relation to 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.

• **Relationship to SW 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.

**Intensive Focus on P.O.D.S (Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice):**

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 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.

**Cell Phones, Laptops, Video and Voice Recorder Policy:** Cell phones should be turned off at the beginning of each class and stored appropriately; laptop use is to be confined to taking/making notes. Students requiring an exemption from these rules for any given class should discuss this with the instructor prior to the beginning of that class.

**Grading and Requirements:** The overall grade for the course will be based on the following:

1. Class participation (20%)
2. Group theorizing project (30%)
3. In class peer learning (10% of grade)
4. Social change application (40% of final grade)

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>81-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>64 or fewer</td>
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"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

Submitting written assignments: Written assignments should be submitted via Canvas by 11:59 pm on the day it is due.

PLEASE NOTE:
- If you are differently-abled or have a condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, 734-763-3000.
- Although the University of Michigan, as an institution, does not observe religious holidays, it has long been the University's policy that every reasonable effort should be made to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious obligations conflict with academic requirements. Absence from classes for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss in-class assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent. Such notice must be given by the drop/add deadline of the given term. Students who are absent on days of class assignments shall be offered an opportunity to make up the work, without penalty, unless it can be demonstrated that a make-up opportunity would interfere unreasonably with the delivery of the course.
- 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.
- **IF YOU PLAGIARISE IN THIS COURSE YOU WILL FAIL IT**
  Plagiarism includes:
  - Taking credit for someone else’s work (i.e. paraphrasing their work without citing them, or using text from their work without attributing it to them)
  - Turning in work you’ve submitted for a grade in another course
  - Please review the Student Guide section on “Ethical Conduct in the University Environment.” This section specifically addresses plagiarism and the possible consequences for engaging in this behavior. The University of Michigan Library system has an on-line resource that can assist you in preparing proper citations for assignments using APA format. Go to: (http://www.lib.mich.edu/ug/research/cititonguide/APA/)

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

1. **Class participation (20%)**. I believe in the power of peer learning, teaching, and consulting and the impact of interacting, generating and applying ideas. This component includes attendance, preparation, punctuality, participation in class activities, contributing to the learning of others, consultation and collaboration on assignments and projects, and sharing
your theories and projects with the class. This sharing will happen orally, and in writing. These will be assessed in various ways throughout the term, and I will pay attention to class attendance and participation.

2. **Group theorizing project** (30%). This includes a project with two to four 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 the 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.

3. **In class peer learning** (10%). Starting in Week 4, three students will sign up to assist in their peers’ learning for the week. Each student will take one of the readings to summarize, critique, and develop discussion questions and activities. Generally, each student should plan on presenting for 20-30 minutes, but this may vary some weeks.

4. **Social change application and reflection** (40%). The final project has some flexibility, depending on student interests. We will discuss more in the coming weeks and details will be posted on Canvas.

### CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

**5/9/16—Introduction to Course**


**5/16/16—Theorizing on Oppression and Social Change**


5/23/16—Critical Intersectionality


5/30/16—Memorial Day, no class

6/6/16—Critical Consciousness and Transformational Social Change


6/13/16—Hegemony and Resistance


6/20/16—Collective Action and Social Movements


6/27/16—Feminist and Queer Theories


7/4/16—Independence Day, no class

7/11/16—Race and Postcolonial Theories


7


7/18/16—Structuralist and Post-Structuralist Theories


7/25/16—Complexity and Systems Theories


8/1/16—Social workers as agents of social change or tools of social control?


