



## **SW 504: Social Justice and Diversity in Social Work**

*Beth Sherman, MSW, LMSW, Section 007*

*Tuesdays 2:10-5pm*

*Office: SSW 3784*

*[Shermanb@umich.edu](mailto:Shermanb@umich.edu)*

*Phone: 734 330-8703 (cell)*

*Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursdays noon to 1pm and by appointment*

3 Credits, no prerequisites    Foundation HBSE Course    Faculty Approved 4/29/14

### **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 lifelong 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/steered change approaches? (e.g., From the bottom up, one individual at a time, collective behavior Changing consciousness or symbols, natural selection, new technologies).
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.

### **Four major and inter-related streams within 504**

- Social justice, barriers to that (privilege/oppression), what sustains and disrupts these, and how these operate differently in different groups and contexts.
- Skills for theorizing and critical contextual thinking; learning about and applying theories
- Social change, and what helps systems to change. Prevention and promotion of justice and well-being within this.
- Intersectionality in knowledge of self and for working with others who are similar and different.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS AND COURSE READINGS**

There is one required text book for this course, available at Ulrich's bookstore and also available as a Social Work Library Reserve. All other course readings will be posted on the canvas site for this course. Required readings on canvas are labeled "required". Other readings are supplementary and optional. Canvas readings can be downloaded, read electronically, or printed.

Required Text: Mullaly, R. (2010). "Challenging Oppression and Confronting Privilege", 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Canada: Oxford University Press.

### **APA FORMAT AND ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Please refer to the *American Psychological Association Publication Manual* (often called the APA Style Manual) in the preparation of your writing assignments. There is some helpful information related to APA citation guidelines on the Main UM Library website at: <http://guides.lib.umich.edu/citationhelp>

It is critical to reference all sources of information or ideas you use in your writing, to do otherwise is academic dishonesty. Direct quotes in particular must be identified as such. Situations of apparent plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be reported and handled according to University policy.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

I invite any class member who has a disability that may affect his or her participation in this course to let me know. We can discuss possible modifications or accommodations in instructional format, assignments, etc. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability may let me know so we can work out ways to address. Please contact the Services for Students with Disability office at 734-763-3000 in room G-664 Haven Hall to coordinate accommodations for students with disabilities.

### **Individual issues and needs in the course/Any special circumstances**

I am very concerned that this course is accessible and relevant for everyone. I will be asking you about your preferences in terms of learning, and we will work to negotiate these among us. Please let me know (either in person in class or in office hours, or via email) if you have some particular goals or needs for the class. These may be related to your past experience or your interests, or to special agendas you have or challenges you face as a learner, in the classroom, or in relation to your health or family circumstances.

I am happy to work with you on ways to manage the classroom, learning and assignments to accommodate different learning styles, learning or other disabilities, or family or other responsibilities, and there are resources elsewhere on campus that we can access.

There are also a number of religious observances that occur during the fall that will be relevant for some of you. We should discuss how we can allow you to practice your faith and meet course obligations.

### **POLICY ON INCOMPLETES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

A grade of “Incomplete” will be given in extenuating circumstances and in accordance with SSW and University policy. Please use canvas drop box for assignments. All assignments are due by class time on the due date assigned. Late assignments, i.e., those not gotten to me on the day due, will be reduced one half letter grade for each class session they are late. Please plan your work to have things completed on time and keep me informed if any problems arise.

### **CLASS ATTENDANCE, READING, AND PARTICIPATION**

All are expected. Required readings are to be completed prior to class session. In the unlikely event that you must miss class, please call or email to inform me about your absence.

During class time, laptop use is permitted for note taking, accessing powerpoints and other course materials ONLY. During the past few years, our classes have struggled with the use of laptops for non-class related activities such as browsing the web, accessing social media, etc. When teaching, I have found these activities very distracting and also disruptive to class. I expect that each student be fully present during class time. As social workers, teachers, and learners, we need to find ways to remain engaged even during times that may seem challenging, boring, or difficult. If you are not experiencing class as engaging, please take steps to take responsibility for your learning, by finding ways to engage and give feedback. I greatly value class dialogue, so feel free to come forward in a respectful manner if your learning needs are not being met. On this basis, if a student is using media for non-class related activities during class time, this will impact their final grade. There will be no additional reminders on this policy.

### **GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS**

Several methods will be utilized to assess your learning and progress toward the class objectives. These methods include class attendance and participation, two papers, and one group presentation. The relative weight of each assignment will be as follows:

Class Attendance and Participation	25%
Assignment 1	20% (October 11)
Assignment 2	30% (Sign up in class)
Assignment 3	25% (Dec. 13)
Total	100%

Grading will be based on mastery of assignment content, organization, and scholarly presentation.

## Assignments

### Assignment 1- Reflection Paper 3-5 pages (20 % of grade, Due October 11)

Choose one or two areas of privilege and one or two areas of oppression from your life and reflect upon how these have impacted your thoughts, feelings, and opportunities. Include some brief examples of how you became aware of your own privilege and oppression and describe some of the thoughts and feelings related to this awareness. Reflect upon ways that these experiences and understandings may impact your social work practice. Please remember to include introductory and concluding paragraphs.

### Assignment 2- "Theory" Assignment (30%). Application of Social Science and other theories to SW and social justice (Sign up in class, due throughout term)

You will complete this assignment in a group with 2 to 4 other students. Early in the term, you will indicate your choices of theories and we will cluster you into workgroups. Each workgroup will determine your own criteria and approaches and produce the "products" below.

Your **tasks** are several:

- A. Develop your group contract and working procedures
- B.
  - 1) Collect information about, and work to understand the conceptual framework/theory, its key components and concepts.
  - 2) Consider how it can assist you to think about social work--with clients, within organizations and communities, and with regard to social policies.
  - 3) Prepare a session for the class to educate them about your theory and applications and implications.
  - 4) Should include a handout for the class that explicates key elements of the "theory" (see categories below), its application and how they can learn more about the theory;

#### **What you should consider/include in your work, education session and resources:**

1. The history of the concept(s)/theory--roots, key people involved in the development, what they were trying to explain.
2. What "research"/knowledge development methods have been used to produce the body of knowledge? What are the strengths and limitations of these methods?
3. How have these concepts been applied within social work (and why not if not).
4. In what ways can this theory/set of concepts inform social justice/intersectionality/anti oppression work? What are the theory's limitations with regard to intersectional/anti-oppression/social justice perspectives?
5. What aspects of social work practice does this theory/set of concepts illuminate/inform? Social policy, Community, Organizational Groups, Individual/family.
6. What elements does this theory/set of concepts miss or obscure that are important for social work practice at the various levels?

- C. Conduct an education session with the class to assist them to understand the theory and its applications. You should plan this to take 30 minutes. You can use whatever format you want, in order to educate the class on your theory and its implications. It is possible for you to have more time, but this needs to be cleared with the instructor, and will

depend on what you propose to do and how many other education sessions need to occur on any given day.

Your classmates will provide feedback on what they learned during the session.

- D. Prepare an individual critique (3-4 pages) of your group's work, including
- what you learned (about the theory, yourself, the education session, group work)
  - an assessment of class members' evaluation of your presentation,
  - any limitations of your learning and your group's work, and
  - how you intend to keep learning.

You should produce this (3- 4 pages) and submit it to canvas shortly after your group's education session.

### **Assignment 3: Final Reflection Assignment (Due December 13)**

**WHAT?** What have you learned through this course? What stands out to you, feels new to you, excites you, or challenges you? **Include, and cite, examples from at least 4 of our readings AND integrate at least 4 points made during class discussions or lectures.**

**SO WHAT?** Why does this learning matter to you as a developing social worker. Why does it stand out to you? Why is it important - to you personally and professionally? What difference did it make in terms of how you think about yourself as a social worker and in relation to the people, populations, communities, and organizations that you serve?

**NOW WHAT?** What do you do from here? How will you take this learning with you? How does this learning change your perspective, and your areas of academic or professional interests or plans?

Your reflection should be 6-8 pages long and should dig deeply into several aspects of your learning during this term. It should connect to academic concepts and critically examine your own development through the course content. Please remember to include introductory and concluding paragraphs.



## Fall 2016 Course Outline

(Schedule may be subject to modification with notice from instructor)

Session #1: September 6

Who are we? Class Norms, Community Building, and Overview of topics

- Why are you here? What are your motivations?
- Who are we as a class?
- How will we build community in this class?
- How will we celebrate our joys?
- How we navigate, acknowledge, heal & move forward from our challenges?
- Review of syllabus, schedule, & assignments

Session #2: September 13

Social Work Standards and Competencies related to Social Justice and Diversity in Social Work

Required Readings:

- CSWE Core Competencies-PDF on Canvas
- NASW Code of Ethics-Follow this link: <http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/code.asp>
- NASW Standards of Cultural Competency-PDF on Canvas
- UM Mission Statement-Follow this link: <https://president.umich.edu/about/mission/>
- SSW Mission statement-Follow this link: UM President Charge on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion- Follow this link <https://president.umich.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/>
- SSW P.O.D.S.-Follow this link: <http://archive.ssw.umich.edu/studentguide/2014/page.html?section=2.01&volume=3>
- Forward Space Guidelines (Hadi and Sepler)-PDF on Canvas
- From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces (Arao and Clemens) – PDF on Canvas

Session #3: September 20

Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations

Intro to conflict and multiple types and levels of analysis

- What is the difference between a theory & a perspective/framework?
- What is the Strengths Perspective?
- What is Generalist practice?
- What is social justice?
- Who are the oppressed/marginalized? Reviewing POC & People of different cultures/religious & spiritual beliefs, women & LGBTQ communities)
- What are social identities?
- What is intersectionality?
- Who are the target groups (aka minorities)?
- Who are the agent groups (aka majorities)?
- Review of major social “isms” (classism, racism, heterosexism & ageism)

Required Readings:

Text Chapter 1: Theoretical Perspectives on Social Problems

CSWE Diversity Conversation Report (June 2010) “Diversity, Critical Multiculturalism, and Oppression: Interaction and Transformation” –PDF on Canvas

Session #4: September 27 Privilege, Oppression, Power

Required Readings

Text Ch. 10-Unpacking Our Knapsack of Invisible Privilege

Text Ch. 2- Oppression: An Overview

Session #5: October 4- Research and Group Project Time- No Class Meeting

Session #6: October 11 (Assignment 1 Due)

Oppression at the Personal Level

Required Readings

Text Ch. 3-Oppression at the Personal Level

Additional Readings on canvas

October 18- Fall Study Break- No Class

Session #7: October 25 Oppression at the Cultural Level and Social Construction

Required Readings

Text Ch. 4-Oppression at the Cultural Level

Additional Readings on canvas

Session #8: November 1 Oppression at the Structural Level

Required Readings

Text Ch. 5 Oppression at Structural Level

Additional Readings on canvas

Session #9: November 8 Intersectionality: Personal, Cultural, and Structural

Ch. 7-The ‘Web’: The Multiplicity, Intersectionality, and Heterogeneity of Oppression

Session #10: November 15 Internalized Oppression and Domination

Text Ch. 6 Internalized Oppression and Domination

Additional Readings on canvas

Session #11: November 22 Working for Change: Addressing Oppression

Ch.8-Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice at the Personal and Cultural Level

Additional Readings on canvas

Session #12: November 29

Working for Change: Dynamic System Approaches and Anti-Oppressive Social Work at Structural Level

Ch. 9-Anti-Oppressive Social Work at the Structural Level and Selected Principles of Anti-Oppressive Social Work  
Additional Readings canvas

Session #13: December 6

Grace Lee Boggs' Life, Work, and Legacy  
Readings on canvas

Session #14: December 13(Assignment 3 Due)

Continued Forward Movement/Celebrating Hard Work and Closing Session

Describe methods for continuing a lifelong process of recognizing our biases, learning how to change oppressive behaviors and structures, and building a more socially just multicultural society.