



# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

**Course Title:** Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work  
**Course Number:** SSW 504, Section 13  
**Time & Place:** Mondays, 6:00 - 9:00 PM | B684  
**Credit Hours:** 3  
**Instructor:** Rachael Wiener, LLMSW  
**Pronouns:** She, Her, Hers  
**Contact Info:** E-mail: [rlwiener@umich.edu](mailto:rlwiener@umich.edu)  
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**Office Hours:** Email for appointment - Happy to meet!

## Course Information

### 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** Multiculturalism and diversity is addressed from the perspective of critically considering how diverse dimensions (such as ability; age; class; color; culture; race/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** 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** This theme 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** This theme 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.

## Materials Provided and Needed

### **Text & Class Materials:**

Challenging Oppression and Confronting Privilege, Bob Mullaly --- chapters will be provided on Canvas

Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice: Putting Theory Into Action, Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas --- chapters will be provided on Canvas

**Between the World and Me, Ta-Nehisi Coates- please rent or purchase by CLASS 5**

### **Electronic Devices**

Please bring your laptop to class each week. There will be many in-class activities that will require collaborative and individual work using laptops. It is at the discretion of the instructor when laptop use is not allowed. Cell phones should be set to vibrate or silent during class. If you must answer a phone call please step outside the classroom as to not interrupt the learning environment.

### **504 In-Class Journals**

On the first day of class I will provide you with a journal that will serve as your individual '504 Journey Journal.' We will discuss several uses for these throughout the course. You may choose to have me read your journals or not; you may use them to continue to process in class activities, as feedback for the future, or reminders of issues or topics you'd like to revisit.

## Classroom Culture, Policies, & Practices

### **Attendance, Participation**

Attendance and participation is expected, required, and critical for the learning process at all class sessions. Exceptions will be considered for extenuating circumstances. Students are responsible for connecting with the instructor to make arrangements for missed material. In addition to attending class, students are expected to arrive prepared to actively participate in their learning process. This includes not simply sitting quietly and listening/observing, but posing questions and comments to the professor and other students, as well as answering questions and addressing comments posed by the professor and other students during our class discussions. While vocalizing opinions or concerns may be culturally relative, being silent and not actively engaging in class discussions (only learning through listening) is a privilege one

cannot often employ in social work practice. Students who are not actively involved in class discussions will not receive full engagement credit/points in this course. Learning through discussion and the interrogation of multiple diverse sources can be uncomfortable, but the discomfort stemming from respectful, inclusive, and well-facilitated discussion is not a cause for students to feel “unsafe”. Students are expected to engage in an open and respectful dialogue, use the classroom environment as practice for professional interactions with clients and colleagues, and maintain civility in in-class, online, email, video, and all other forms of communication with both the instructor and class colleagues. Inappropriate behaviors could result in a loss of participation/engagement points.

### **Proper Use of Names & Pronouns**

All students will be referred to by the names and pronouns they use (e.g., she, he, they, ze). If you have a name that differs from the one that appears on the roster, please inform me before the second class period so that I can use your correct name and pronouns. There are (2) gender inclusive restrooms in the SSW building: 1784 (1st floor, near Registrar’s Office) and near B800 in the Lower Level.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

In the event of an emergency, dial **9-1-1** from any cell phone or campus phone.

All University of Michigan students, faculty and staff are required to familiarize themselves with emergency procedures and protocols for both inside and outside of the classroom. In the event of possible building closure (i.e. severe weather conditions, public health notices, etc.) you may contact (734)764-SSWB(7793) for up-to-date School closure information.

Be Prepared. Familiarize yourself with the emergency card posted next to the phone in every classroom/meeting room. Review the information on the emergency evacuation sign (located nearest the door) and locate at least (2) emergency exits nearest the classroom. If you are concerned about your ability to exit the building in the case of an emergency, contact the Office of Student Services and/or email [ssw-ADAcpliance@umich.edu](mailto:ssw-ADAcpliance@umich.edu).

Office of Student Services

School of Social Work | Room 1748

(734) 936-0961 | [ssw.msw.info@umich.edu](mailto:ssw.msw.info@umich.edu)

For more information view the annual Campus Safety Statement at <http://www.dpss.umich.edu/>.

Register for UM Emergency Alerts at <http://www.dpss.umich.edu/emergency-management/alert/>.

### **Student Mental Health & Wellbeing**

The Office of Student Service’s Health and Wellness Program provides supportive services to MSW students which promote wellness, self-care, and maintenance of a healthy academic and mental health balance, as well as to increase disability awareness. Students may experience situations or circumstances that impede educational success and/or quality of life. Students may contact Health and Wellness Advocates Lauren Davis or Nyshourn Price regarding any health, mental health or wellness issue(s). This could include need for advocacy and/or referral to School, university, or community resources, financial resources, or counseling centers. All meetings with students are strictly confidential and can take place in the School, over coffee, or locations where the student feels comfortable and non-threatened.

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Lauren Davis, LMSW  
Office: SSWB 1748  
Phone: (734) 936-0961  
[laurdavi@umich.edu](mailto:laurdavi@umich.edu)

Students and faculty can also contact the Health and Wellness Program via [ssw.wellness@umich.edu](mailto:ssw.wellness@umich.edu).

Additional resources can be found in the MSW Student Guide to Health and Wellness: <http://ssw.umich.edu/student-life/health-safety>.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you are in need of an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. Please present the VISA form to me at the beginning of the term, or at least two weeks prior to the need for the accommodation (test, project, etc.).

Services for Students with Disabilities  
G-664 Haven Hall | 505 South State St.  
(734) 763-3000 | [ssdoffice@umich.edu](mailto:ssdoffice@umich.edu)

### **Religious/Spiritual Observances**

It is the University's policy that every reasonable effort be made to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious/spiritual obligations conflict with academic requirements. For religious/spiritual observances that conflict with class attendance or assignments due dates, please notify the instructor to discuss and plan appropriate accommodations.

An overview of the process for students who have conflicts with religious observances:

- Students are responsible for work acquired during their absence
- Students will have a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete any academic work
- Reasonable notice must be given to faculty before drop/add deadline of term
- Any concerns or conflicts should be brought to the Dean or Ombudsperson

### **6th Edition APA Formatting**

Any assignments presented as professional papers, presentations should utilize APA formatting. The [MLibrary APA Citation Guide](#) is a great resource.

### **Emotional Content:**

As a diverse group of learners, material may be presented or discussed that “triggers” a prior personal and potentially painful or negative memory. While “trigger warnings” will not often be used during this course, please speak and listen to the instructor and class colleagues under the assumption that there is no ill-intent to harm, “trigger” or purposely offend someone due to certain language, images, or content.

**Writing Help and Tutoring for Students:** Currently, Career Services is in the process of developing a writing assistance program for students who need remedial writing services. Graduate Student Assistants will be available to meet with students individually to help with writing problems. Tutoring in specific SSW courses is also available on a case-by-case basis. Please contact Michelle Woods at [micwoods@umich.edu](mailto:micwoods@umich.edu) for details. Advisors and instructors can also refer students to the Sweetland Writing Center, located at 1310 North Quad, 105 South State Street. Sweetland offers writing workshops, which are one-on-one meetings with Writing

Workshop Faculty. They also offer services for non-native English speakers. For more information about Sweetland, please visit <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/>, email them at [sweetlandinfo@umich.edu](mailto:sweetlandinfo@umich.edu), or call them at (734) 764-0429. Another writing resource is the English Language Institute. For more information, please visit <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli>.

### **Academic Integrity & Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is representing someone else's ideas, words, statements or works as one's own without proper acknowledgment or citation. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Using or otherwise taking credit for someone else's work or ideas.
2. Using the language of another without full and proper quotation or source citation.
3. Implicitly presenting the appropriated words or ideas of another as one's own.
4. Using Internet source material, in whole or in part, without careful and specific reference to the source.
5. Borrowing facts, statistics, or other illustrative material without proper reference, unless the information is common knowledge or in common public use.
6. Self-plagiarism, that is, reusing one's own work without acknowledgment that the text appears elsewhere (e.g. in a paper for another current or previous class).

More information on this policy can be found in the MSW Student Guide ([Volume 1, Chapter 13, Section 2](#)).

### **Grading:**

The University of Michigan, School of Social Work, Master's Program is on a 9.0 grading scale, which translates as follows:

A+ -----9.0	A -----8.0	A- -----7.0
B+ -----6.0	B -----5.0	B- -----4.0
C+ -----3.0	C -----2.0	C- -----1.0
D -----0	E -----0	

Letter grades from "A" through "E" are given for class performance. "A" grades are given for exceptional individual performance and mastery of the material. The use of "A+", "A", and "A-" distinguishes the degree of superiority. "B" grades are given to students who demonstrate mastery of the material. "B+" is used for students who perform just above the mastery level but not in an exceptional manner. "B-" is used for students just below the mastery level. "C" grades are given when mastery of the material is minimal. A "C-" is the lowest grade that carries credit. "D" grades indicate deficiency and carry no credit. "E" grades indicate failure and carry no credit. GRADING SCALE (by percentage): 97-100=A+ 93-96=A 90-92=A- 87-89=B+ 83-86=B 80-82=B- 77-79=C+ 73-76=C 70-72=C- 67-69=D+ 63-66=D 60-62=D-

# Assignments

Students will be required to complete the following:

Assignment	In/Out of Class; Group/Indv.	Points	Due
Who Am I - Personal Philosophy and Reflection Paper	In and Out; Individual	30	Session 4 - Oct. 3
Pick One - External	Out of Class; Individual	25	Session 6 - Oct. 24
Pick One - Internal	Out of Class; Individual	25	Session 10 or 11 - Nov. 21 or 28
Anti-Oppressive Pitch	In and Out; Group	60	Session 12 or 13 - Dec. 5 or 12
<b>Weekly Assignments</b>			
Weekly Questions Forum	Out of Class	20	10 out of the 13 sessions
Attendance and Participation		40	

**\*\* See Canvas for detailed assignment information and rubric**

**The Weekly Questions Forum** The purpose of the forum is to give us a sense of where curiosities, confusions, excitements and controversies lie in our readings, so that we can guide ourselves to and through them efficiently (and maybe even effectively!) in class each week. You'll post 1 question by 10 pm Sunday night before class. These are due each week, but you do get a freebie week to miss (you need to post 10 total). Ask questions you really want us to answer or explore! I will be selecting some of the questions each week to focus our conversation in the classroom. You are more than welcome to respond to others' questions and comments, but this is not required. You can also post links or add images or videos in your comments, to extend the conversation with more resources (but you still need to write your own words, too). Questions must be on time to receive credit—a late post does not contribute to our class, since we want to use our contributions to inform our class sessions.

# Class Schedule

**\*\* Note About Readings:**

This class will evolve and flow based on who we are as a class, what our interests are, what we bring to the space; additionally, what occurs in the world will impact us as people and as social workers. Because of this, readings listed here are a baseline. We will discuss before class any additional readings or media that may be assigned or swapped before or during class.

“Readings” might be podcasts, videos, blogs, traditional articles, etc.

We will discuss your interests on the first day and I will bring these topics to class through readings, activities, and/or assignments. This course topic is dense. We cannot cover everything- to attempt to do so could hinder our ability to dig into anything at all. I encourage you to bring your interests to our classroom space through in-class participation, assignments, our individual journals, or meetings with me individually.

Session	Topic	Readings	Due and Notes
1 - Sept. 12	Defining and Intention Setting	*No readings due for class	
2 - Sept. 19	Social Work and Social Justice; Values and Ethics	Ch1 Morgaine Capous-Desyllas 'Conceptualizing SJ in SW- Morgaine' 'Eye on Ethics'- Reamer  <b>In Class: Who Am I Workshop</b>	
3 - Sept. 26	Theoretical Perspectives and Considerations	Ch 3 Morgaine Preface and Ch. 1 Mullaly  <b><u>In Class: Professor Beth Glover Reed Theory Presentation (Meet in ECC)</u></b>	End early-- debate viewing party
4- Oct. 3	Oppression at the Personal Level	Unpacking White Privilege - McIntosh White Fragility - DiAngelo Ch. 2, 3 & 10 Mullaly (Excerpts provided on Canvas)	Who Am I Assignment Due
5 - Oct. 10	Oppression at the Cultural and Structural Level	Ch. 4 & 5 – Mullaly <b><u>In Class: Current Events Session</u></b>	
<b>FALL BREAK</b>			



6 - Oct. 24	Construction of Difference: Race, Ethnicity, Class	Coates: Part 1 "The Ever-Growing Gap" Asante-Muhammad, Collins, Hoxie, Nieves  <b><u>In Class Guest: Mat Despard, Intersection of Race and Wealth</u></b>	Pick One – External Assignment Due
7 - Oct. 31	Construction of Difference: Gender, Sexuality	"Approaches to Research on Intersectionality: Perspectives on Gender, LGBT, and Racial/Ethnic Identities" "Transgender Youth of Color and Resilience: Negotiating Oppression and Finding Support" NYT: Black Doctor Says Delta Flight Attendant Rejected Her; Sought 'Actual Physician'"  <b><u>In Class Guest: Intersection of Gender, Sexuality, and Health— Program Manager for Gender and Sexuality Clinic at UM Hospital</u></b>	
8 - Nov. 7	Critical Intersectionality	Coates: Part 2 & 3 'Intersectionality and SW: Omissions of Race, Class, and Sexuality in Graduate School Education'- Bubar Toward a Continuum of Intersectionality Theorizing for Feminist Social Work Scholarship - Gita Mehrotra	
9 - Nov. 14	Critical Intersectionality	<b>In Class: Infographic Activity</b>	
10 - Nov. 21	Anti-Oppressive Practice with Indv., Families, Groups	Ch. 4, 5, 6 – Morgaine (excerpts on Canvas) <b>In Class: Some group work time</b>	Pick One Internal Assignment Due OR
11 - Nov. 28	Anti-Oppressive Practice with Organizations and Communities	Ch 7 & 8 – Morgaine <b>In Class: Some group work time</b>	Pick One Internal Assignment Due
12 - Dec. 5	Policy, Advocacy, Catalysts for Change; Presentations	Ch. 9 Morgaine	Group Presentations
13 - Dec. 12	Next Steps; Presentations		Group Presentations