

## **SW 305: Theories and Practices for Community Action and Social Change**

*Instructor: Alice Mishkin, LMSW*

*Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30 pm – 4 pm, and by appointment.*

*The Program on Intergroup Relations, Room 216*

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### **About This Syllabus**

This syllabus serves as a guide to the course. You should consult this syllabus before emailing with questions about assignments, due dates, readings, etc. For the most part, we will follow this syllabus. However, I employ generative learning models, and thus sometimes make changes to our schedule in order to adapt to where we are in our learning. This means I may add or subtract readings, discussion posts, and assignments as it meets our collective learning and growth. Canvas will always be up to date with readings.

### **Course Description**

This foundation course for the Community Action and Social Change Minor is designed to prepare students to be informed and active participants in the process of community building and social change. The course uses a multidisciplinary framework to develop competencies that will help students envision what community action and social change look like, identify and implement steps towards social change, build on positive sources of power, indigenous knowledge and experiences of individuals, groups, and communities who are engaged in social change efforts.

### **Supporting Statement for Social Science Distribution**

This course meets the requirements for LS&A social science distribution in the following ways. The course material covers theories and practices of community action and social change through an interdisciplinary examination of examples in research and practice. The course focuses on individuals, groups and institutions and how they interact. The course examines empirical quantitative and qualitative studies that test social change methods and provides exposure to and experience with qualitative research methods such as ethnographic observation and interviewing and qualitative data-gathering. Students are engaged in a critical and contrasting assessment of community organizing and other social change methods.

### **Course Competencies and Goals**

1. Students will examine their own identity development (race, class, gender, sexual/relational orientation, religion, nationality, ability, other), recognize multiple social identities, and engage in critical analysis of power, privilege and oppression.
2. Students will explore the meaning of community and social change.
3. Students will develop skills in interviewing, relationship-building, and group facilitation.
4. Students will gain awareness of historical frameworks and theories regarding community action and social change.
5. Students will engage in policy and structural analysis with regard to community action and social change.
6. Students will develop an understanding of community-building and organizing skills.

### **Philosophy on Classroom Learning and Teaching**

I believe that having a clear set of expectations and values supports a productive learning environment. We will speak in more detail about our classroom guidelines. Below are a few of the philosophies I use to teach that I would like to highlight:

- All of us come to this course with various experiences, skill sets, backgrounds and values. No one set of experiences is “better” or “worse” than any other. It is important that we listen to and consider diverse opinions and perspectives, even those we strongly disagree with.
- Curiosity is the root of growth and learning. Being intellectually curious often means taking risks, asking uncomfortable questions, and engaging deeply with the course material. I expect and encourage us to have open and respectful disagreements and difficult conversations.
- Intellectual integrity and honesty matter. I expect you to use course readings and other learning material to frame and contextualize your opinions. I expect you to build thoughtful and cogent arguments to support your positions.
- The course material will affect each of you in different ways. While I don’t often offer trigger warnings, some of you may experience moments that recall a prior personal, painful, negative or traumatic memory. I encourage you to stay with the conversation and the class when these challenging moments occur, and I encourage you to let me know and/or take care of yourself when these moments cross into trauma for you. I expect that each of you will be cognizant of the impact of your words on your classmates. I expect each of you to assume that your fellow classmates are not intending to purposefully harm or offend with certain language, actions, etc.
- I expect you to arrive to class on time, prepared and ready to engage with your peers. Participation is a large part of this seminar, and thus I expect you to participate in a multitude of ways. Participation expectations are outlined later in this syllabus.
- I am strongly committed to student learning and appreciate when students visit me in office hours to ask questions, pose ideas, and discuss their learning. Please do stop by office hours, or arrange another time to meet with me.

### **Technology**

I have a very strict no-technology policy. Therefore, students should not use laptops, cellphones, iPads, etc. during class, except when indicated by the instructor. Your texting/snapchatting/etc. distracts your learning, your peers’ learning, and my teaching. Students who use technology during class will be given one warning, and then will receive a 2% reduction in their participation grade for each instance in which I see them use technology. If you desperately need to check your phone, please step out of the classroom to do so. *Any student who requires the use of technology for any reason should contact me at the beginning of the semester.*

### **Email Policy**

All emails regarding course questions should include “SW 305” in the subject line. Prior to emailing me, you should a) search for an answer in the syllabus b) search for an answer on Canvas. While I am generally quick on email, do allow at least 24 hours to receive a response from me. I do **not** respond to emails about assignments within 48 hours of an assignment’s due date.

### **Academic Integrity & Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a very serious issue and will be treated as such. Plagiarism is easy to detect and can result in failing the class or dismissal from the University. If you are having trouble writing, please see me. I am happy to help you get the resources you need to improve your writing. If you have questions about whether or not something is plagiarism, please contact me *in advance* of submitting a paper or assignment. Do familiarize yourself with the LS&A Academic Integrity website and its standards: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/index.html>

### **Writing Support**

This is not a writing course. However, I expect you to write in a way that clearly and cohesively articulates your experiences, ideas and opinions. I know that writing norms are often racist, classist and sexist. I also know that the ability to clearly express one's self through writing is hugely important in making change, and thus I am committed to supporting you in your writing development. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the Sweetland Writing Center. 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.

### **Incompletes**

Incompletes are given only when it can be demonstrated that it would be unfair to hold the student to the stated time limits of the course. The Student Guide, Vol. 1, Sec. 8.01 states that an "I" grade is used when illness or other compelling reasons prevent completion of work, and there is a definite plan and date for completion of course work approved by the instructor. *The student must formally request an incomplete from the instructor prior to the final week of classes.*

### **Students in Need of Accommodations**

If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please notify 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.

### **Religious/Cultural Observance**

If you have any religious or cultural observances which conflict with this class, please let me know by September 12<sup>th</sup> so that we can discuss appropriate arrangements. I encourage you to honor your cultural and religious holidays, however, if I do not hear from you about this by September 12<sup>th</sup>, I will assume that you have no religious or cultural observances that conflict with our class meetings.

### **Student Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The University of Michigan is committed to the wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is in need of support, services are available. For help, contact **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** at (734) 764-8312 and <https://caps.umich.edu/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also find **Wolverine Wellness**, located in University Health Service (UHS) to be a useful resource: <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/wolverine-wellness>. As a social worker, I am connected with some mental health providers in the community. I am happy to provide referrals and support in finding the mental health care you need. Please let me know if you would like support.

## **Course Grading**

Assignment #1, Statement of Purpose, 15%

Assignment #2, Organizing Meeting Report and Reflection, 15%

Assignment #3: Learning from History, 20%

Assignment # 4: Group Action Project, 30%

Assignment #5: Participation + Discussion Forums, 20%

The class grading structure is: A=94-100; A-=90-93; B+=87-89; B=84-86; B-=80-83; C+= 77-79; C=74-76; C- 70-73; D=67-69

## **Readings**

All course material is available on Canvas. Students are responsible for reading all material. Assigned readings provide the foundation for classroom activities and assignments and therefore, are required of all students. We may not always discuss specific readings in class but you are responsible for their content and they should frame your thinking as we have class discussions.

Additional handouts or short readings may be assigned throughout the course to supplement the material. The instructor will supply these readings. Students are responsible for reading any additional materials assigned by the instructor. I am very careful in the selection of course readings and believe that each reading assigned is crucial to your learning in the class. I know that depending on your course load, readings can often feel overwhelming. *Please see me if you are having a hard time keeping up with the required reading for this course. There are many resources on campus to help you with time management.*

## **Graded Assignments and Contributions**

Major assignments and contributions are briefly explained below, and explained in much more detail on Canvas. I do not provide grading rubrics for assignments, as I believe they limit your intellectual curiosity, and thus your learning and growth. However, I do provide a thorough set of guiding questions and important themes to touch on in each assignment. We will also discuss each assignment in class. If you have questions about assignments, please take the initiative to ask for clarification *well in advance* of the assignment's due date. I encourage you to come to my office hours to talk about course assignments. *Late assignments will result in a reduction in grade.*

Unless otherwise stated, all written assignments should be double-spaced and used a standard font size and style. All written assignments should use full citations, utilizing APA Style Formatting. All assignments have a reflective component, and thus while your papers should be formally written, it is appropriate to use the first person.

### **Assignment#1: Statement of Purpose. Due September 25<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm**

Write a 2-3 page paper reflecting upon and critically analyzing your experiences in and motivations for community action and social change. This will grow out of in-class activities we complete in the first few weeks of class.

### **Assignment #2: Attend an Organizing Meeting. Due October 5<sup>th</sup> @12:30 pm**

Select an organizing meeting to attend. This should be a meeting that you do not already regularly attend. Write a 2-3 page summary and reflection on the meeting, using the guiding questions on Canvas as a framework for your response.

**Assignment #3: Learning from History. Due October 31<sup>st</sup> at 12:30 pm**

Select an historical social justice movement, key social change leader, or organization. Conduct research and write a 5-7 page double spaced paper based on your research that addresses the following questions:

**Assignment #4: Action Project. Proposals Due October 1<sup>st</sup> @11:59 pm, Final Projects Due December 6<sup>th</sup> @ 11:59 pm**

In a group, develop a semester-long project based on your passion or interest/desire to learn about or further your own efforts in Community Action & Social Change. The primary goal of this project is to learn to plan and implement an idea that relates to your interests in collaboration with others. Examples of past projects and further assignment descriptions can be found on Canvas.

**Assignment #5: Constructive Class Participation + Discussion Post Engagement***Attendance and Participation*

Full attendance is expected. Please notify me as soon as possible if you are not able to attend class. Attendance is important because of the nature of the activities conducted in class. I know that speaking in class causes anxiety for some people. While I encourage you to challenge yourself to speak, I also stress that participation is based off of a number of components including but not limited to:

- Attending each class for the full class period. This means arriving on time, not leaving early, and limiting the frequency with which you leave class during the class period.
- Coming to class having completed the assigned readings.
- Demonstrating active listening skills while your peers and the instructor are speaking.
- Asking probing or clarifying questions, and contributing thoughtful comments to the discussion.
- Completing discussion posts in a thoughtful and timely fashion.
- Refraining from using technology.

You may miss two classes without penalty. Missing more than two classes will result in a lowered grade, with 3 points subtracted from your participation grade for each additional class period missed. Missing five or more classes will result in a failing grade unless there are extenuating circumstances discussed with the instructor in advance of the semester's end. Excessive tardiness will count as a missed class.

**Discussion Posts**

In advance of one class per week, you will post your thoughts on the readings for that class in response to the prompts provided. This must be done in advance of class, and late responses will not be accepted. This is meant to prepare you for your engagement in class discussion. This post should be brief, 100 – 200 words. Your participation in discussion posts will be included in your overall participation grade. Missing more than two discussion posts will result in a reduction of your overall participation grade. I encourage you to reply to one another and begin your conversation online for the class discussion.

**Reading Schedule and Course Themes:** *Please note these readings are subject to change. Canvas will always have the most up to date readings.*

**Phase One: Building Community, Understanding Identity, and Sustaining Ourselves**

**Tuesday, Sept. 5: Building Community**

- *Forward Spaces*, Hadi and Sepler

**Thursday, Sept. 7: Contextualizing our Learning**

- NASW code of ethics
- CASC essentials
- Pharr, S. Readings for Diversity and Social Justice

**Tuesday, Sept. 12: Considering Identity**

- Tatum, B. The Complexity of Identity
- Diverse Democracy Worksheet
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**Thursday, Sept. 14: Unpacking Social Justice and Oppression**

- Reisch, M. – Ch. 1 Defining Social Justice in a Socially Unjust World, Educating for Social Justice
- Hardiman & Jackson, Conceptual Foundations for Social Justice Education
- Bell, Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice

**Tuesday, Sept. 19: Storytelling and Organizing**

- Pyles, Ch. 2- Self-Aware Organizer, Progressive Community Organizing
- Szakos & Szakos, We Make Change – Chapter 1

**Thursday, Sept. 21 No Class, Rosh Hashanah**

*Discussion post due by 12:30 pm*

- Kahn, S., Ch. 7 Strengthen the Story, Creative Community Organizing
- Watch: The Danger of a Single Story

**Tuesday, Sept. 26 Statement of Purpose Due**

- No Readings, In Class Share Outs

**Thursday, Sept. 28 Sustaining Our Work**

- Domingue, K Self-Preservation as Resistance, Tips for Practicing Self-Care and Social Justice
- Come to class prepared to finalize your group proposal

**Phase Two: Frameworks, Approaches and History**

**Tuesday, Oct. 3: Organizing Frameworks**

- Checkoway, B. *Six Strategies of Community Change*
- Pyles – Chapter 5, *Critical Organizing Frameworks*

**Thursday, Oct. 5: Organizing Frameworks**

- hooks, b. *Teaching to Transgress*, chapter 5
- Warren, *How Community Organizing Works*

**Tuesday, Oct. 10: Centering Marginalized Voices**

- Combahee River Collective Statement
- Saloman, L. *Roots of Justice*

**Thursday, Oct. 12: Resources, Services and Organizing**

- Shepard, B. *Community Projects as Social Activism*
- Katrina vs. Harvey, A comparison

**Tuesday, Oct. 17 No Class, Fall Break**

**Thursday, Oct. 19: Wins and Failures**

- Readings TBD based on student interest. Check Canvas.

**Tuesday, Oct. 24 A Case Study: Understanding Context**

- Readings TBD based on speaker availability. Check Canvas.

**Thursday, Oct. 26 A Case Study: Knowing How You Show Up.**

- Readings TBD based on speaker availability. Check Canvas

**Tuesday, Oct. 31: History Papers Due**

- No Readings, In Class Share Outs

**Phase Three: Skills and Practices for Social Change**

**Thursday, Nov. 2: Hard Skills**

- *Organizing for Social Change*, Chapter 4

**Tuesday, Nov. 7: Relationship Building**

- *Roots for Radicals*, Chapter 2 *The Relational Meeting*
- *Interpersonal Social Work Skills for Community Practice*, Chapter 2

**Thursday, Nov. 9 Coalition Building and Entering Communities**

- Sen, R. – *Stir it Up*
- Lawthom and Whelan, *Understanding Communities*

**Tuesday, Nov. 14: Intersectionality**

- Crenshaw, *Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis*
- Lorde, *There are no Hierarchies of Oppression*

**Thursday, Nov. 16: Allyhood**

- Edwards, Allyhood for Social Justice
- Ferguson, "Calling in: A quick guide on when and how."
- A message to aspiring allies

**Phase Four: Sustaining the Work and Moving it Forward**

**Tuesday, Nov. 21: Sustaining the Work**

- Johnson, What Can We Do
- Harro, B. Cycle of Socialization
- Campus Organizing Guide

**Thursday, Nov. 23 NO CLASS Thanksgiving**

**Tuesday, Nov. 28: Self and Community Care**

- Loewe, B. - An End to Self Care
- Kateel, S. - Care is the Core of Change
- Review: Domingue, K. – Self-Preservation as Resistance, Tips for Practicing Self-Care and Social Justice

**Thursday, Nov. 30: Humility + Vulnerability**

- Fisher, R. A Case for Humility

**Tuesday, Dec. 5: Problem-solving lab**

- Students will be asked to bring current challenges within their work to class for collective problem-solving

**Thursday, Dec. 7, Presentations**

- No Readings

**Tuesday, Dec. 12, Presentations**

- No Readings