



# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

## SW 504: Diversity and Social Justice

University of Michigan

Fall 2017

Section 010: Tuesdays 6:00-9:00pm, B770SSWB

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 3 – 5pm

and by Appointment

2866 East Hall

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.
3. Describe the dynamics of difference and dominance/oppression and how they impact human functioning and social relations within and across diverse groups.
4. Describe how structural differences in society are shaped by historical, psychological, social, and political factors.
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.
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.
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.

### *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.

*This is the HBSE course that provides the knowledge base for Critical Intersectionality and PODS capacities (skills, knowledge, habits of mind and action):*

- Social justice, barriers to that (privilege/oppression), what sustains and disrupts these, and how these operate differently in different groups and contexts. Knowledge related to cross-cutting principles: multi-system levels, boundaries, intersectionality, and power.
- Skills for theorizing and critical contextual thinking; learning about and applying multiple theories, paradigms and frameworks
- Social change, and what helps systems to change, especially towards justice. 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, working within and across multiple group boundaries.

## Class Policies

### *Class Climate*

Class is a place for you to ask questions, think critically, challenge ideas, receive support from your peers, and engage in the course content. We all come from different backgrounds and different levels of experience. At the beginning of the course, we will create a set of guidelines together that we will all follow to create a supportive learning environment. It is up to all of us to contribute to a supportive class environment.

### *Use of Electronics*

Please be respectful in your use of electronics during class. All use of cell phones is *expressly prohibited during section time* and may result in a reduction of your attendance grade. Laptops and tablets are allowed for note-taking purposes, but please note that I reserve the right to request that you put them away (with the exception of disability accommodations).

### *Disability Accommodations*

Students with documented special needs must notify me within the first two weeks of the semester (i.e. by September 19<sup>th</sup>) so that I can make appropriate arrangements.

### *Due Dates and Formatting*

Assignments are due by 11:59 pm via Canvas on the evening before class. Except in extenuating circumstances, such as bereavement or documented severe illness, late assignments will be deducted 1 pt from your total score per day late. Assignments should be in Times New Roman 12pt font, double spaced, 1 inch margins, following American Psychological Association (APA) format.

## Communication

### *E-Mail*

E-Mail is the best way to contact me during the semester. Please keep in mind these policies:

1. Make sure the answer to your question is not in the syllabus.
2. When e-mailing me, write SW 504 in the subject line.
3. If you send me an e-mail before 5pm on a weekday, I will respond by the 5pm the next weekday, with the exception of holidays.
4. I will not answer e-mails regarding assignments sent after 5pm on the due date.

### *Office Hours*

Office hours are another great way to touch base about the course. You do not need to make an appointment, but it is extremely helpful if you e-mail me ahead of time to inform me that you will be coming to office hours and to let me know of any specific questions you might have.

## Academic Integrity

Suspicious of academic dishonesty (i.e. cheating, plagiarism) may be reported to the Associate Dean for Educational Programs. This could result in failure of the assignment and potentially the entire class. Make sure you are familiar with university policies on academic integrity. See <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/> for more information. The library also has resources on plagiarism if you need further information: <https://www.lib.umich.edu/academic-integrity/understanding-plagiarism>

## Course Requirements

### *Attendance (12 pts)*

You will earn 1 pt of attendance for each day that you attend class and sign-in. If you arrive more than 15 minutes after the start of the class, you will be given half-credit that day. If you forget to sign in, you have 24 hours to e-mail me and have your attendance noted for that day. As there are 14 classes during the semester, this means that you can miss two days and still receive full credit. You do not need to provide documentation for these two absences, although I will appreciate an e-mail to let me know you are not attending. Examples of reasons not needing documentation are brief illness, travel, personal events such as weddings, or mental health days.

Absences beyond two will require documentation of a legitimate reason (i.e. religious holiday, illness, bereavement), a conversation with the professor, and potentially a makeup assignment in order to receive credit for attendance. Personal events such as weddings or travel do not count as legitimate reasons for these absences.

### *Participation (40 pts)*

Active course participation is an important part of building a learning community for this course. You can earn participation points through any combination of the following options:

*Weekly reflections (4 pts each)* – A short paragraph, approx. 100-150 words, that includes: 1) What you believe to be the most important take-home points from the readings that week and 2) One question you have about the course content that week. Reflections should be thorough (covering the main points from all the readings), specific (identifying particular points of interest within the readings), and thoughtful (not just summarizing, but engaging with the readings).

*Class facilitation (12 pts)* – Once during the semester, facilitate or co-facilitate a 30-minute class activity about weekly readings.

*Present final project (12 pts)* – Present your final course project to your peers at the end of the semester. There will be both individual and group options for this presentation.

*Self-Reflection (6 pts) – Due 09/18 at 11:59pm*

Your first written assignment is a 2-3 page self-reflection on why you are pursuing a social work degree, following the prompt, “Why I’m here ...” Your written reflection will not be shared with the class, although we will have a general discussion on this topic in the class, at which point you would only be required to share what you are comfortable sharing with your peers.

*Final Project Abstract and Bibliography (12 pts) – Due 10/30 by 11:59pm*

You will be required to turn in an abstract (200-250 words) outlining your final project, including its intersectional focus (i.e. which identities you will focus on), format (i.e. poetic, essay, performed), theoretical orientation, and a brief summary of conclusions. You will also need to include a bibliography in APA format with a minimum of six references. Of these references, at least two must relate to the historical construction of the identities you will be focusing on, and an additional two must be from academic, peer-reviewed articles. The remaining two may be from articles we’ve read in class, or any additional reference material you choose. Each student must write and complete this assignment on their own, even if they will be completing the final project in pairs or in a group. More detailed instructions will be provided as the term progresses.

*Final Project: Autoethnography (30 pts) – Due 12/15 by 11:59pm*

For the final project of this course, each student will be required to create a critical autoethnography of themselves as social workers that incorporates self-reflection and theoretical concepts learned in the course. Critical autoethnography is a written or performed reflection on the self, which includes autobiographical elements as well as social theory to critically reflect on those autobiographical elements, usually focusing on the experience of a particular intersection of identities within a selected environment. In this case, autoethnographies must include: a) a reflection on an intersection of identities and how this relates to your decision to pursue social work and/or experiences with the field of social work; b) a reflection on how these identities and experiences have influenced your social change focus (i.e. practice area and method), and c) relation to theoretical concepts learned in class. Students will have the option to complete this assignment as individuals, in pairs, or in groups. They will also have options to create autoethnographies in written, visual, or performed form. Regardless of the format chosen, all students will be required to include a written 3 page written reflection that explains their final project and discusses it in terms of theoretical concepts in the course. We will read several examples throughout the term, and complete instructions and a grading rubric for this assignment will be given out as the term progresses.

## Course Materials

*Required Text*

Marsiglia, F. F., & Kulis, S. S. (2015). *Diversity, oppression, and change: Culturally grounded social work (2nd ed.)*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books. Available at campus bookstores and in course reserves at the Shapiro Undergraduate Library.

## Grading Scale

### *Grading Scale*

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

### *Grading Justification*

"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.  
Final grades will be rounded to the nearest integer.

### *Incompletes*

Incomplete grades are for extenuating circumstances and must be arranged with the professor before the end of the semester. Students have two semesters to finish an incomplete. More information on incomplete grades is available in the MSW student guide at:

<https://ssw.umich.edu/msw-student-guide/section/1.08.01/15/grades-for-special-circumstances>

## Course Calendar

Week 1 – 09/05	Introduction and grounding <b>Fill out pre-course survey and read course description</b>
Week 2 – 09/12	Culture and identity formation * Marsiglia & Kulis: Chapter 1 * Ishibashi Martinez, “Being of two minds: Creating my racialized selves.”
Week 3 – 09/19	Defining oppression & culturally grounded paradigms <b>Self-reflection due by 09/18 at 11:59pm</b> * Marsiglia & Kulis: Chapter 2 * Lena Dominelli, “Anti-oppressive practice as a legitimate concern of Social Work.”
Week 4 – 09/26	Intersectionality, race, gender, and sexual orientation * Marsiglia & Kulis: Chapter 3 * Alexander, “Critical Autoethnography as intersectional practice.” * Video: Kimberlé Crenshaw, “The urgency of intersectionality.”

Week 5 – 10/03	Intersecting social and cultural determinants of wellbeing * Marsiglia & Kulis: Chapter 6 * Toyokawa, “How does the social environment 'get into the mind'?” * Wilkey, “My mother wasn’t trash.”
Week 6 – 10/10	Ableism and strengths-based perspectives * Marsiglia & Kulis: Chapter 7 * Morella-Pozzi, “The dis-ability double life.” * Video: Eleanor Longden, “The voices in my head.”
Week 7 – 10/17	<b>Fall study break – NO CLASS</b>
Week 8 – 10/24	Using theory to inform social work practice * Marsiglia & Kulis: Chapters 4 and 5
Week 9 – 10/31	Social work and social (in)justice <b>Abstract and bibliography due 10/30 by 11:59pm</b> * Kivel, “Social service or social change?” * LeFrançois, “The psychiatrization of our children.”
Week 10 – 11/07	Culturally grounded social work norms <b>Guest Lecture: Abigail Eiler, MSW: Therapy with Indigenous Clients</b> * Marsiglia & Kulis: Chapters 12 and 13
Week 11 – 11/14	Culturally grounded community work <b>Guest Lecture: Finn Bell, MSW: Environmental Social Justice</b> * Marsiglia & Kulis: Chapter 15 & 16
Week 12 – 11/21	Review and final project workshop
Week 13 – 11/28	Culturally grounded policy intervention <b>Guest Lecture: Lorraine Gutierrez, PhD: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy</b> * Marsiglia & Kulis: Chapter 14 * U of M SSW Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Week 14 – 12/04	Becoming a culturally grounded ally * Edwards, “Aspiring social justice ally identity development.” * Utt, “10 things allies need to know.”
Week 15 – 12/12	Course wrap up, presentations and evaluations <b>Social Worker Autoethnography Due Friday 12/15 by 11:59pm</b>



*Note: The syllabus is a contract between students and the professor, but may change with prior notice to the students.*

### **Additional Resources**

We all try to do our best, but remember that no grade is worth as much as your physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. If you find yourself struggling with the course assignments during the semester, please don't hesitate to contact me. The university also has a number of offices to provide academic and other types of support to university students across campus:

**SSW Office of Student Services Office (734-936-0961 | 1748 SSWB)**

<https://ssw.umich.edu/offices/student-services>

**Counseling and Psychological Services (734-764-8312 | 3100 Michigan Union)**

<http://www.umich.edu/~caps/>

**Services for Students with Disabilities (734-763-3000 | G664 Haven Hall)**

<http://ssd.umich.edu/>

**Spectrum Center (734-763-4186 | 3200 Michigan Union)**

<https://spectrumcenter.umich.edu/>

**Sweetland Writing Center (1139 Angell Hall)**

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/>

**The Office of Student Conflict Resolution (734-936-6308 | G121 South Quad)**

<http://www.oscr.umich.edu/>

**Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (734-998-9368 | 530 S State St. Rm 1551) <http://www.umich.edu/~sapac>**

**Student Legal Services (734-764-9920 | 715 N University Ave Suite 202)**

<https://studentlegalservices.umich.edu/>