



<b>Course title:</b>	SW620 Contemporary Cultures in the United States
<b>Course #/term:</b>	[SW620, 001], [Spring/Summer, 2019]
<b>Time and place:</b>	[Weekday], [Time of Course], [Room TBA]
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	[Course Number] or permission of instructor
<b>Instructor:</b>	Jamie Mitchell, PhD, Address as “Dr. M”, “Professor M” or “Dr. Mitchell”
<b>Pronouns:</b>	[She]
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<b>Office:</b>	3847
<b>Office hours:</b>	By appointment only

## 1. Course Statement

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### a. Course description

This is one of the CSS courses that meet the advanced HBSE requirement. This course will explore the origins and development of selected social variables characterizing the diversity dimensions (ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation) in contemporary U.S. society. Social and behavioral science theories and research findings on the allocation of different roles, status, and opportunities to these populations will be studied. Students will use a multidimensional, social justice, and multicultural framework to examine power, privilege, discrimination, and oppression. This course will emphasize that effective social work practice with diverse cultural groups involves understanding professional ethics in the context of the values of both the dominant society and the ethnic community.

### b. Course content

The course content will include an exploration of historical, social, and political contexts for the study of diverse cultural groups, as gleaned from contemporary social science theories and conceptual frameworks. The current status of these cultural groups will be reviewed, including constructs such as the family, economic and educational attainment, development of informal and formal institutions within the cultural community, and modes of spiritual expression. This course will also explore the impact of multiple social group memberships on social roles, help-seeking and coping behavior, attitudes, and values. In addition, this course will contain a review of the contemporary conceptual frameworks influencing social science knowledge about intergroup relations and conflict, including but not limited to, culturally sensitive, and ethnoconscious practice. The relationships among privilege, discrimination, and oppression for selected cultural groups, and the implications of these forces for social work practice, the administration of human service organizations, and the formulation

of public policies will be covered. Individual and small group activities related to the construction of critical consciousness and praxis in social work will also be included.

### **c. Course objectives and competencies**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to: 1. Identify the historical, social, and political forces influencing the social constructions of diverse cultural groups in the United States by: a. evaluating social science frameworks for the discussion of culture; b. applying knowledge about social group memberships and identities, their histories and meanings, how they interact with each other in people's lives and the larger society, and how they are affected by particular social contexts; c. reviewing one's own social group memberships and how they have influenced opportunities and challenges. (Practice Behaviors 4.IP, 4.SPE, 4.CO, 4.MHS, 5.IP, 5.SPE, 5.CO, 5.MHS, 7.IP, 7.SPE, 7.CO, 7.MHS) 2. Discuss the influences of discrimination, oppression, and privilege on life experiences of diverse cultural groups by: a. labeling forms of discrimination, prejudice, and oppression as these differentially affect U.S. cultural groups, including gay/lesbian/bisexual, racial/ethnic, gender, transgender, religious/spiritual, differently abled, and social class groups; b. identifying sources of intragroup and intergroup conflict stemming from cultural group membership; c. describing the forces that create and maintain individual, group, organizational, and community differences in power, privilege, and oppression. d. demonstrating skills in negotiating differences and conflicts at system interfaces. (Practice Behaviors 5.IP, 5.SPE, 5.CO, 5.MHS, 7.IP, 7.SPE, 7.CO, 7.MHS) 3. Review the characteristics of selected ethnic and racial groups in the United States and identify key variables to be considered by social workers attempting to work with these populations by: a. examining historical, social, and political forces influencing the construct of family for these groups; b. locating the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, and ability status for these groups; c. critiquing the social science literature on social identity groups; d. examining variables, such as immigration and migration, cultural norms and roles, acculturation and assimilation, help-seeking behaviors, employment and income, educational attainment, and the establishment of informal and formal institutions within these cultural groups; (Practice Behaviors 4.IP, 4.SPE, 4.CO, 4.MHS, 5.IP, 5.SPE, 5.CO, 5.MHS)

### **d. Course design**

This course will include such pedagogical strategies as small group exercises, role plays, case analyses, video demonstrations, and didactic presentations. Experiential activities will be central to the structure and process of this course.

### **e. Curricular themes**

#### **Theme Relation to Multiculturalism & Diversity**

Multiculturalism and Diversity issues will be central to this course, which will provide students with a foundation for examining these issues within advanced practice courses.

#### **Theme Relation to Social Justice**

Social Justice and Social Change issues will be discussed throughout this course; however, those skills listed under the second course objective are particularly pertinent to this curricular theme. The relationships among injustice, conflict, and social change will also be discussed.

## Theme Relation to Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation approaches will be addressed within the section examining selected social identity groups in the United States. Students will use a strengths approach which links professional human service delivery systems with those formal and informal systems historically and currently available to these diverse cultural groups.

## Theme Relation to Behavioral and Social Science Research

Behavioral and Social Science Research will be used throughout this course and will provide a foundation for evaluating the knowledge base of the diverse dimensions in research and practice.

### **f. Relationship to social work ethics and values**

This course will operationalize the NASW Code of Ethics, as it applies to ethical responsibilities to service consumers (clients), colleagues, and organizations. Other social work codes of ethics will also be examined in the treatment of these ethical responsibilities for selected cultural groups nationally and internationally.

### **g. Intensive focus on PODS**

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self knowledge and self awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

## 2. Class Requirements

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### **a. Text and class materials**

**Required Text:** Coates, T. (2017). *We were eight years in power: An American tragedy*. New York, NY: Random House.

**ISBN-10:** 9780399590566 **ISBN-13:** 978-0399590566

- The book is available in hardcover and eBook for purchase or rent at most online and retail bookstores in addition to Amazon, Google Books, Kindle, etc.
- Expectations for reading: To fully engage in the course topic and dialogue with course colleagues in class and online, it is expected that students will complete all required readings.
- Readings will be discussed according to the course calendar
- Additional weekly readings will be assigned (see course calendar) and can be found on Canvas and or live links in the course calendar.
- This course will feature significant media content to supplement the text and discussions in the form of assigned podcasts, documentaries, news and long-form articles/blogs etc.
- Supplemental readings and content links will be posted at least one week in advance when possible.

## b. Class schedule

Whenever possible, necessary changes to the course calendar will be communicated via announcement in class and on Canvas at least a week in advance. Please turn on Canvas notifications. \*Journals due by 11:59pm on assigned date, extensions approved by email request at least 24 hours in advance.

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment
<b>May 13</b>	*Introductions *Who is Ta-Nehisi Coates? *Challenging the comfortable narrative around race  *Learning about courage and vulnerability in difficult conversations  Media: PBS Documentary on Reconstruction	<b>Book Introduction:</b> “Regarding Good Negro Government” <b>And</b> Notes From the First Year  <b>Article:</b> The Hard Truths of Ta-Nehisi Coates <b>Article:</b> There’s Nothing Virtuous About Finding Common Ground <b>Article:</b> How to Talk to People, According to Terry Gross  <b>Podcast:</b> WTF w/ Marc Maron: Interview w/ Brené Brown: <a href="http://www.wtfpod.com/podcast/episode-1012-bren-brown">http://www.wtfpod.com/podcast/episode-1012-bren-brown</a>  <b>Podcast:</b> Henry Louis Gates Jr. Points To Reconstruction As The Genesis Of White Supremacy: <a href="https://www.npr.org/2019/04/03/709094399/henry-louis-gates-jr-points-to-reconstruction-as-the-genesis-of-white-supremacy">https://www.npr.org/2019/04/03/709094399/henry-louis-gates-jr-points-to-reconstruction-as-the-genesis-of-white-supremacy</a>	
<b>May 20</b>	*Respectability *Internalized Racism *Pathologizing Blackness *Code switching *Black exceptionalism #MeToo for Black women Black maternal mortality Media: Selected parts of “Surviving R. Kelly”	<b>Essay 1:</b> “This is How We Lost to the White Man” <b>Article:</b> “Bill Cosby’s Famous ‘Pound cake’ Speech, Annotated <b>Article:</b> R. Kelly and the Cost of Black Protectionism <b>Article:</b> R. Kelly’s Victims Were Ignored for 30 Years. It Has ‘Everything to Do With the Fact That They Are Black Women.  Notes from the Second Year <b>And</b> <b>Essay 2:</b> “American Girl” <b>And</b> <b>Article:</b> “How The News Media Distorts Black Families” <b>Article:</b> Why America’s Black Mothers and Babies Are in a Life-or-Death Crisis <b>Article:</b> Nothing Protects Black Women From Dying in Pregnancy and Childbirth <b>Article:</b> The Article That Could Help Save Black Women's Lives  <b>Podcast:</b> The Longest Shortest Time: The Political Power of Black Motherhood: <a href="https://longestshortesttime.com/episode-192-the-political-power-of-black-motherhood/">https://longestshortesttime.com/episode-192-the-political-power-of-black-motherhood/</a>	
<b>May 27<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Memorial Day- No Class</b>		
<b>June 3</b>	*Revisionist history *The Confederate flag and monuments  *Gentrification	Notes from the Third Year <b>And</b> <b>Essay 3:</b> “Why do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?” <b>And Uncivil podcast:</b> Episode 5: The Spin <a href="http://uncivil.show/episode-the-spin.html#transcript">http://uncivil.show/episode-the-spin.html#transcript</a>  <b>Article:</b> Brazil’s long, strange love affair with the Confederacy ignites racial tension	

		<p>Notes from the Fourth Year <b>And</b>  <b>Essay 4:</b> "The Legacy of Malcolm X"  <b>And</b></p> <p><b>Podcast:</b> "There Goes the Neighborhood" Episode: "They Want My House" <a href="https://www.npr.org/podcasts/555340969/there-goes-the-neighborhood">https://www.npr.org/podcasts/555340969/there-goes-the-neighborhood</a></p> <p><b>Article:</b> Poverty Is a Bigger Problem Than Gentrification  <b>Article:</b> The Criminalization of Gentrifying Neighborhoods:  <b>Article:</b> Chicago's Awful Divide  <b>Article:</b> From Segregation to Gentrification  <b>Article:</b> How Homeownership Became the Engine of American Inequality</p>	
<b>June 10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Affirmative action</li> <li>*The "Twice as Good" Myth</li> <li>*Class vs. Race</li> <li>*Segregation</li> <li>*Predatory housing policy</li> </ul> <p>Documentary:  Against All Odds, the Fight for a Black Middle Class</p>	<p>Notes on the Fifth Year <b>And</b>  <b>Essay 5:</b> "Fear of a Black President" <b>And</b>  <b>Article:</b> Making Affirmative Action White Again  <b>Article:</b> The Myth of Reverse Racism  <b>Article:</b> The Rise and Fall of Affirmative Action</p> <p>Notes on the Sixth Year <b>And</b>  <b>Essay 6:</b> "The Case For Reparations" <b>And</b>  <b>Article:</b> How Ta-Nehisi Coates turned reparations from a punch line into a policy objective  <b>Article:</b> Affluent, Black, and Still Trapped by Segregation  <b>Article:</b> How to Cash In on a Crappy Home  <b>Article:</b> A House You Can Buy, But Never Own</p>	
<b>June 17</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Mass Incarceration Part I</li> </ul> <p>Documentary: The 13th</p>	<p>Notes from the Seventh Year <b>And</b>  <b>Essay 7:</b> "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration"  <b>Article:</b> The Moynihan Report: An Annotated Edition (61 pages)</p>	<b>Journal 1 Due by 11:59pm on Canvas</b>
<b>June 24</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Mass incarceration part II</li> <li>*School-to-prison pipeline</li> <li>* Documentary: The Kalief Browder Story</li> </ul>	<p><b>Article:</b> The school-to-prison pipeline is getting worse for black and brown girls  <b>Article:</b> "Michigan Remains a Battleground in a Juvenile Justice War Keeping Hundreds in Prison"  <b>Article:</b> "From Ferguson to Baltimore: The Fruits of Government-Sponsored Segregation"</p>	
<b>July 1</b>	<p>Mass Incarceration III  Media: When They See Us: Part 1 and 2</p>	<p><b>Article:</b> The Heavy Burden of Teaching My Son About American Racism and Media Discussion</p>	
<b>July 8</b>	<p>Mass Incarceration IV  Media: When They See Us: Part 3 and 4</p>	<p><b>Article:</b> Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys: Media Discussion</p>	<b>Journal 2 Due by 11:59pm on Canvas</b>
<b>July 15</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Sexism</li> <li>*Acculturation</li> <li>*Educational disparities</li> <li>*Racism as slander</li> </ul> <p>Documentary: Teach Us All</p>	<p>Notes on the Eighth Year <b>And</b>  <b>Essay 8:</b> "My President Was Black" <b>And</b>  <b>Podcast:</b> The Atlantic Interview: A conversation with Nikole Hannah-Jones about race, education, and hypocrisy:  <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/12/progressives-are-undermining-public-schools/548084/">https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/12/progressives-are-undermining-public-schools/548084/</a></p> <p><b>Article:</b> The Resegregation of Jefferson County  <b>Article:</b> The Radical Self-Reliance of Black Homeschooling</p>	

July 22	*Identity politics *Tribalism <b>Cultural Conversation Presentations</b>	<b>Essay 9: The Epilogue <u>And</u> Article: “The Year in Diversity Fatigue”: Article: Ta-Nehisi Coates Is an Optimist Now</b>	
July 29	<b>Cultural Conversation Presentations</b>	<b>Wrap Up and Evaluatons</b>	

**c. Assignments**

Assignment	Points	%	Details
2 Journals	2 x 20 points= 40 points	20%	Topics assigned-see calendar for due dates and rubric
1 Group Cultural Conversation	100 points	50%	See rubric and templates
Engagement	60 points	30%	See rubric
Total	200 points		

**Journal Assignments Rubric** (submitted via Canvas only)

Students will construct a journal on a specific topic related to the course readings or discussion as assigned by Dr. Mitchell. Students will select and cite an external source of information (as required) on the assigned topic and critically analyze the issue, including questions and concerns that you have about the issue and possible next steps. Sources may include: News articles, scholarly journal articles, newspapers, Internet blog/opinion posts, and similar resources. Students should include a copy/live link of the source at the bottom of the journal in a “references” section. Students are expected to draw relevant, cohesive, and logical linkages between the topic, source, and course readings and/or discussions. **Students are expected to write in “first person”**, and supply personal reactions/insights regarding the assigned topic. The word count **maximum** will be noted in journal instructions on Canvas. When required, properly cite and reference external sources using APA style, 6th edition. References listed at the end of the Journal are not included in the word count. No title page is required.

Criteria	Exemplary Performance	Points
Accuracy	Paper represents the authors’ ideas, evidence or conclusions accurately, fairly and eloquently. Shows a firm understanding of the implications of each author’s argument(s).	<b>5</b>
Argument	Paper fully meets requirements of assignment. Explores implications of chosen ideas for the assigned topic in thoughtful and/or original ways. Makes convincing and personalized case for why selected key ideas connect and/or contradict texts, class discussions, and/or lectures.	<b>10</b>

Clarity and Presentation	Consistently precise and unambiguous wording, clear and lucid sentence structure. Minimal use of quotations, first-person perspective is effectively framed in the text and explicated where necessary. Paper is clean, correctly formatted in APA style 6 <sup>th</sup> edition (12-point font, Times New Roman or Arial, normal margins), and written in full sentences. All citations are properly attributed and cited in a consistent style. Virtually no spelling or grammatical errors.	<b>5</b>
Total (per journal)		<b>20</b>

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### **Cultural Conversation (100 Points)**

Students will collaborate with a conversational partner to analyze and present an issue (broadly defined) covered within the extensive course text that addresses issues of justice and/or the conditions of a marginalized population or community. Students will construct and produce a 15-20 minute “cultural conversation” as experts on the topic with mutual involvement (but not necessarily mutual expertise) from both parties. The conversation will feature:

- An outline of the conversation topic and potential interview questions to be submitted beforehand.
- A brief but thorough historical context of the issue including relevant policy etc.
- An evidence-based and historically relevant argument, defined point of view, or perspective
- Next steps for advancing the issue, including political realities and recent updates
- An engaging and informative discourse among conversational partners with roughly equal contributions, grounded in the text and external sources.
- Thoughtful responses to audience Q&A

#### **d. Attendance and class participation**

**MSW** [Policy on Class Attendance](#) Link: Please reference for additional Details

### **Course Engagement Rubric**

Both class attendance and active, purposeful, and high quality participation in class discussion and activities are paramount for the successful completion of this course. As a reflection of this importance, a significant proportion of the final grade will consist of course engagement according to the rubric below:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Exemplary Performance</b>	<b>Points (50 max)</b>
Frequency of participation in class	Student initiates contributions more than once in each class session, however, quality of comments is weighted over quantity. Student responds actively when invited by the professor to contribute. Student does not comment overzealously or to the exclusion of other learners.	<b>10</b>
Quality of comments	Comments are always insightful & constructive. Student uses appropriate terminology when referring to individuals, communities, and cultural contexts. Comments are balanced between general impressions, opinions & specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions. Evidence is used to support arguments when possible. Comments are informative and relevant to the discussion at hand.	<b>30</b>

Listening Skills	Student listens attentively when others present materials and perspectives, and contribute comments that build on others' remarks. Student expresses disagreement in a professional and respectful manner.	<b>20</b>
Total		<b>60</b>

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### **Attendance and Engagement in the Course:**

Both class attendance and active purposeful participation in class discussion and activities are paramount for the successful completion of this course. As a reflection of this importance, 30% of the final grade will consist of course engagement. This course covers a content domain that is extensive, and given the time framework of the course each class moves quickly in discussing information. It is necessary that students attend each class and attend class for the entire time period. Prompt arrival for class is expected; those who arrive late miss important information and disturb others. **This class begins at 8:00am sharp unless noted in Canvas announcement or on course calendar.**

### **Please be mindful of and adhere to the following course policies and considerations:**

- (1) Be present at the beginning of class when attendance is recorded and remain for the duration of class.
- (2) The instructor reserves the right to deduct 5% from the student's final grade per unexcused absence and more than three absences will result in a failing grade. This policy is subject to modification should a student experience a life situation that warrants alteration of the policy, such as severe illness, their own or that of an immediate family member, or death in the family. Should any such circumstance occur, request for modification of the attendance policy should be discussed with the instructor as soon as possible and changes will be documented in writing.
- (3) Understanding that some students may encounter a situation that might necessitate missing a class, students should inform the instructor of an absence by email (or voicemail if necessary) at least 24 hours prior to the expected absence or within 24 hours of an unexpected absence arising from an emergency.
- (4) If students are scheduled to present material or lead class discussions on the day of an absence, documentation will be required to prove the necessity of an absence before the student will be allowed to make up that presentation opportunity for points.
- (5) In order to be courteous to classmates, cell phone use should be restricted to vibrations—no rings. Students should be discrete in their use of tablets, laptops, and other portable devices for note taking, so as not to disturb the class.
- (6) **Audio and video recording of in-class lectures and discussions is prohibited without the advance written permission of the instructor.** Students who require audio recording as an accommodation for a diagnosed disability should present the instructor with documentation from the University's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) before the end of the third week of classes.
- (7) In addition to attending class, students are expected to arrive prepared to *actively* participate in their



learning process. This includes not simply sitting quietly listening/observing, but posing questions & comments to the professor & other students, as well as answering questions & addressing comments posed by the professor & other students during our class discussions. Class participation also involves completing take home assignments, & participating in class exercises and activities.

- (8) 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.
- (9) 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”.
- (10) Class will begin “on the hour” as stated in the syllabus and schedule of classes.
- (11) Please notify your professor, ahead of time, if you have religious/spiritual observances that may prevent you from being present in class, submitting assignments on the due dates so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- (12) Standard inclement weather policies of the university will be followed such that if the university is closed on the day & during the time this class is to meet, there will be no class. If, however, the university is not closed & you still believe the weather to be too inclement for you to safely arrive to class, you are welcome to use one of your allowed absences.
- (13) As a diverse group of learners, material may be presented or discussed that “triggers” a prior personal and potentially painful, negative, or traumatic 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.
- (14) Please eat and drink quietly and clean up after yourself.
- (15) Please do not bring children or adult guests to this course without permission of the instructor ahead of class.
- (16) Late assignments and rescheduled presentations are not accepted without pre-approval of the professor and extensions of existing due dates are provided at the discretion of your professor.
- (17) There are no extra credit assignments in this course. Please prepare & study accordingly so that you can do your best, the first time.
- (18) Grades will be posted to Canvas within two weeks of assignment due dates, you are strongly encouraged to keep track of your own academic progress, the instructor will not calculate mid-semester grades.
- (19) 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, e-mail, video, and all other forms of communication with both the instructor and class colleagues. Inappropriate behaviors with regard to any of the aforementioned contexts could result in a loss of participation/engagement points.

**\*NOTE: Students who do not adhere to the stated course policies may be asked to leave class and be marked absent for the session.**

## e. Grading

Please reference these links to the MSW Student Guide policies on [Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction](#) as well as [Student Grievance procedures](#) and the [policy for grading in special circumstances](#).

### 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-

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This course adheres to the Standard School and University Policies. Please familiarize yourself with the online resources, information, and policies regarding the following areas:

They include:

- *Safety and emergency preparedness*
- *Mental health and well-being*
- *Teaching evaluations*
- *Proper use of names and pronouns*
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities*
- *Religious/spiritual observances*
- *Military deployment*
- *Writing skills and expectations*
- *Academic integrity and plagiarism*

Link to Standard Policies and Resources:

<https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources>