SW 504: Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work  
University of Michigan  
Fall 2019

Section 004: Tuesdays 9:00am-12:00pm, 3629 SSWB  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12-1pm and by Appointment  
Instructor: Change Kwesele, MPH, MSW  
Email: ckwesele@umich.edu  
3760 SSWB

3 Credits, no prerequisites

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 are 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 National Association of Social Workers, 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
This course integrates Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice, 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.

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 accommodations).

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**
All students are expected to submit their own original work. If using another’s words or ideas, give credit to the source, otherwise the submission will be regarded as plagiarism. Plagiarism is taken very seriously at the University of Michigan and is grounds for expulsion. [https://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=283365](https://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=283365)

**Due Dates and Formatting**
Assignments are due by 11:59 pm via Canvas on the assigned date. Except in extenuating circumstances, see the MSW Student Guide policies on Student Grievance procedures and the policy for grading in special circumstances, *late assignments will be deducted 3 pts 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 allow 48 hours for a response (in most cases during the weekday I respond within 24 hours). When e-mailing me, please *write SW 504* in the subject line.

**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 may be coming to office hours (for me to accommodate different students). Outside of office hours, please schedule meetings at least 48 hours in advance.

**Course Requirements**

Attendance and Participation: 170 points  
Weekly Reflections: 100 points  
Social Work Self-Reflection & Inventory: 100 points  
Social Justice Interview: 100 points  
Group Presentation: 150 points  
Final Project: 200 points (proposal is 40 points, product is 160 points)  
**Total points: 820**
Attendance and Participation
As there are 13 in-person classes during the semester, attendance is important. Note: During this semester you can miss two days and still receive full credit. You do not need to provide documentation for these two absences, although I would appreciate an e-mail to let me know you are not attending. Absences beyond two will require documentation, a conversation with the instructor, and potentially a makeup assignment in order to receive credit for attendance. 5 points will be deducted for every unexcused absence.

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary Performance</th>
<th>Points (250 max)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Facilitation</td>
<td>Once during the semester, facilitate or co-facilitate a 30-45 minute class review of readings, activity or discussion. Student(s) lead a thoughtful, informative, respectful class session. Student(s) submit outline one week before facilitation.</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency of participation in class</td>
<td>Student initiates contributions more than once in each class session/online discussion, however, quality of comments is weighted over quantity. Student responds actively when invited by the professor to contribute, in person or online. Student participation does not result in exclusion of other learners.</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of comments</td>
<td>Comments in person and online are insightful &amp; constructive. Student uses appropriate terminology when referring to individuals, communities, and cultural contexts. Comments are balanced between general impressions, opinions &amp; specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions. Evidence is used to support arguments when possible. Comments are informative and relevant to the discussion at hand.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Skills</td>
<td>Student listens attentively when others present materials and perspectives, and contributes comments that build on others’ remarks. Student expresses disagreement in a professional and respectful manner.</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>170</td>
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*Modified from Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence

Weekly reflections (10 pts each) – Submit Weekly Via Canvas by 11:59 pm on Sunday. Short 1-2 paragraphs, approx. 200-300 words, which includes:
1. Take-Home Points: What you believe to be the most important take-home point(s) or something you learned from the readings
2. **Questions:** 1-2 question(s) you have from the readings for the upcoming week.

   - Who is affected?
   - What happened & has it happened before?
   - When did the event/activity take place?
   - Where did it happen/is it happening?
   - How is it relevant to the NASW Code of Ethics?

4. **Social Work Toolkit** (Optional): Weekly Resources to share with fellow social work students (e.g. thought provoking quotes, news article, social innovations)

Reflections should be specific (identifying particular points of interest within the readings and current events), and thoughtful (not just summarizing, but engaging). Also, consider diversifying current events, researching different regions/states/groups of people. **Reflections will be given full credit upon completion. However, points will be deducted from reflections which are incomplete (missing #1-3) or long-winded (e.g. beyond the word limit).**

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**Social Work Self-Reflection & Inventory** *(100 pts) – Due by 11:59 on 9/23*

**Part One: 3-4 page self-reflection:**

1) Why you are pursuing a social work degree?
2) What do you believe are essential characteristics for a social worker?
3) Who are you? (Include: Race/ethnicity, nationality, social and economic class (SES), spirituality/religion, sexual orientation, ability/disability status, other)
4) Who/what has most shaped your identities?
5) How have your identities changed over time?
6) What have you NOT said? Why not?
7) What is a social justice issue that you are most interested in and why?
8) Upon reflection, identify a cultural group that might be a personal challenge for you as you move into the profession of social work. Write and explain how/why you believe this group would be a challenge for you. The group must fit one of the cultural clusters above (SES, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, nationality, disability status, and spiritual/religious identity)

**Part Two: 1-2 page write-up:**

Look up one job advertisement/vacancy that you are interested in for your future career. Using the NASW Code of Ethics and a Social Work Skills Inventory, answer the following questions:

1) How are NASW Code of Ethics relevant to your job of choice?
2) What is the organization’s history and current policies concerning issues of social justice? *(provide a brief statement)*
3) What skills do you already have and what skills are you lacking for your job of choice?
**Criteria** | **Exemplary Performance** | **Points (150 each)**
--- | --- | ---
**Authenticity** | Paper represents the author’s ideas, thoughts, or conclusions accurately, fairly, and eloquently. It is authentic to the author and their own experiences, and not regurgitating thoughts already shared in the class or from others. It shows willingness to be self-reflexive and vulnerable. It moves beyond simply recitation of facts and identities. | 50

**Clarity and Presentation** | Paper consistently uses precise and unambiguous wording. It has clear and lucid sentence structure. It has minimal use of quotations and effectively frames first-person perspective in the text. It is clean, correctly formatted in APA style (12-point font, Times New Roman or Arial, 1” margins), and written in full sentences, reaching minimum page length. There are virtually no spelling or grammatical errors. | 50

**Total** |  | 100

*Modified from Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence*

**Social Justice Interview** *(100 pts)- Due by 11:59pm on 10/29*

3-5 page write-up

Select a close friend, acquaintance or family member to interview. Ask them to respond to the following questions, similar to your Social Work Reflection paper. Type up the responses and answer the reflection questions. For this assignment use pseudo names for your interviewees.

1) What do you know about social work and what do you believe are essential characteristics for a social worker?
2) What is a social justice issue that you are most interested in and why?
3) What is your profession?
4) How are Social Work NASW Code of Ethics relevant to your profession? (Service; Social Justice; Dignity and worth of the individual; Importance of human relationships; Integrity; and Competence)
5) Who are you? (Include: Race/ethnicity, nationality, social and economic class (SES), spirituality/religion, sexual orientation, ability/disability status, other)
6) Who/what has most shaped your identities?
7) How have your identities changed over time?
8) What have you NOT said? Why not?
9) Upon reflection, identify a cultural group that is a personal challenge for you to work or interact with. Write and explain how/why you believe this group is challenge for you.
The group must fit one of the cultural clusters above (SES, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, nationality, disability status, and spiritual/religious identity)

*Reflection questions:* What are some of your reflections or insights from this interview? How does your interviewee reflect/not reflect your responses (from the Social Work Reflection Paper)?

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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary Performance</th>
<th>Points (150 each)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exploration &amp; Elaboration</td>
<td>Paper represents a thorough interview. It demonstrates that the author utilized all the interview questions, and recorded in-depth responses. The author shows willingness to be self-reflexive and vulnerable. It moves beyond simply recitation of facts and identities.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity and Presentation</td>
<td>Paper consistently uses precise and unambiguous wording. It has clear and lucid sentence structure. It has minimal use of quotations and effectively frames first-person perspective in the text. It is clean, correctly formatted in APA style (12-point font, Times New Roman or Arial, 1” margins), and written in full sentences, reaching minimum page length. There are virtually no spelling or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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**Group Presentation - Due 12/3 or 12/10 in class**

The final assignment will be to focus on a group of people that have been the target of subjugation and/or domination by social structures. Each group will have to decide on the group upon which they will focus. Some classroom time will be given for groups to work on these projects, and the assumption is that additional time outside of class will be spent to complete these projects. Presentations may not be longer than 30 minutes to view. There should be a visual component (poster, Powerpoint, Prezi, etc.), and all images should include a description for accessibility. Each group member should present a portion of the presentation. At the end group members will evaluate one another.

2. Historic persons (include youth leaders, if possible)
3. Current events impacting the group
4. Overview of values, norms, strengths and taboos of the group.
5. Relevant theories/frameworks to the group
6. A review of the beliefs and stereotypes about the group, past and present. Include content on the legal, political, economic, social and educational oppression the group has experienced.
7. The role of Social Work: Address how social work can/is currently working with this population from micro, mezzo and/or macro perspectives.

8. Resource list of articles, books, social media, media, artists/musicians relevant to the group, with annotations of why the link/citation is relevant.

9. A glossary of terms that includes key words, symbols, games, experiences of the group, with annotations of why the link/citation is relevant.

10. Media commentary (e.g. movie, documentary): Based on what you have learned about your group, how do you see them represented in the media? Include strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement.

11. Future Directions (e.g. recommendations for practice, further research on this population)

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<tr>
<td><strong>Teamwork:</strong></td>
<td>Team worked well together, and each member contributed in a valuable way to the project. Presentation reflected a high level of mutual respect and collaboration. • Team Member Input (40 points) • Instructor Assessment (60 points)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Knowledge &amp; Contribution</td>
<td>Team met all requirements and objectives, and demonstrated mastery of the course material assigned. The group facilitated lively discussion that showed preparation, critical thinking, and depth of the topic(s).</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity and Presentation</td>
<td>Team presented a clear presentation that was well-organized and easy to follow. Team responded to questions from classmates and instructor well.</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>200</td>
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*Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence

**Final Project: What is Social Justice? (200 pts) - Due 12/10 by 11:59pm**

*Rubric TBA*

*Proposals for Final Project Due 11/5*

Students can choose one of several formats for the final project to answer the question *What is Social Justice?*, including (1) Create a 1-2 day mini course/workshop (2) an illustrated blog/magazine with photographs and articles (3)Business/Social Enterprise or (4)Intergroup dialogue. Another format may be possible, but you must seek professor permission prior to the proposal.

**Intergroup dialogue (In lieu of the final project)**

*Sign up by September 9th*

- Attend 6 two-hour sessions as a part the Social Work and Social Justice Dialogue program, on 1 of 2 topics:
  - “Punishment, Prisons & Parole: Mass Incarceration in the U.S.”
OR
  o “Beyond the Borders: The State of Immigration in the U.S.
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfHuP6QF1UYNllZmrYpcJiR4_oYbeq90hLkjL1xlq5kEK_MBQ/viewform?fbzx=2876078976114884823

To get full credit, students must attend ALL six sessions AND write a 4-6 page reflection paper about their experience and how it connects to some of the concepts/frameworks discussed in class.

Course Materials

This class does not require a physical text. All readings, media, and handouts from recent social science/medical journals and pertinent news articles and/or social media publications, blogs, short videos, and other sources will be distributed to students via Canvas. This course will also include supplemental videos and social media use to enhance and support learning.

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

Incompletes
Incomplete grades are for special 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topics Covered</th>
<th>Items DUE</th>
<th>Readings – To be read prior to class</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1 Sept 3rd | • Introductions  
• Overview of Class & Syllabus  
• Basic Definitions | -Weekly Reflection  
Wilbur, M. (2013). Surviving Disappearance, Re-Imagining & Humanizing Native Peoples  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIZYzz3rEZU |
| 2 Sept 10th | • Historical Trauma and Decolonizing | |  
Wilbur, M. (2013). Surviving Disappearance, Re-Imagining & Humanizing Native Peoples  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIZYzz3rEZU |
| 3 Sept 17th | • Cultural Diversity, Intersectionality  
Quiros, L. & Dawson, B. A. (2013). The |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Linguistic Racism:</td>
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<td><a href="https://rootsofjusticetraining.org/2014/04/linguistic-racism/">https://rootsofjusticetraining.org/2014/04/linguistic-racism/</a></td>
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<td>Notes</td>
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</table>
| Oct 8th    | Gender Diversity - Weekly Reflection; - Class Facilitation #3 | Chong, Y.W. (2012). Beyond the gender binary. Retrieved from:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lm4vxZrAig  
Haimson, O. L. & Airton, L. (2019). Making space for them, her, him, and ‘prefer not to disclose’ in group settings: Why pronoun-sharing is important but must remain optional. Retrieved from  
Pasulka, N. (2015). The Case of CeCe McDonald: Murder—or Self-Defense Against a Hate Crime? Retrieved from:  
https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/05/f-mcdonald-transgender-hate-crime-murder/ |
<p>| Oct 15th   | NO CLASS – FALL BREAK         | NO CLASS – FALL BREAK                                                  |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Latinos talk about coming out (2016). Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkQ2kTa4Rgk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkQ2kTa4Rgk</a></td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Weekly Reflection</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Reading Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Dec 3rd</td>
<td>Social Justice in Action I</td>
<td>Group Presentations</td>
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</table>
| 15 Dec 10th | Social Justice in Action II  
• Course Wrap Up | Final Papers DUE                                                                  |
Note: The syllabus is a contact 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 or in need of accommodations, please do not 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**  
[https://ssw.umich.edu/offices/student-services](https://ssw.umich.edu/offices/student-services)

**The Office of Student Conflict Resolution**  
[http://www.oscr.umich.edu/](http://www.oscr.umich.edu/)

**Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center**  
[http://www.umich.edu/~sapac](http://www.umich.edu/~sapac)

**Student Legal Services**  
[https://studentlegalservices.umich.edu/](https://studentlegalservices.umich.edu/)

**Students With Children**  
[http://www.studentswithchildren.umich.edu](http://www.studentswithchildren.umich.edu)

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: [https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources](https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources). 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