1. Course Statement

a. 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.

b. 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).

c. Course objectives and competencies
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be better able to: 1. Describe community and organizational work for social change. 2. Demonstrate knowledge and skills for working for justice, enacting critical consciousness, and engaging and addressing issues of power and diversity. (4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7) 3. Describe the dynamics of difference and dominance/oppression are and how they impact human functioning and social relations within and across diverse groups. (4.1, 4.5) 4. Describe how structural differences in society are shaped by historical, psychological, social, and political factors. (4.1, 4.5) 5. Demonstrate knowledge of social locations, constructions, processes, and identities and the diversity within these. This includes increased knowledge about the forces that shape complex selves, relationships, and worldviews. (4.2, 4.3) 6. Demonstrate skills in critical contextual thinking, applying multiple theories and frameworks to illuminate underlying assumptions, biases and possible opportunities, and engaging in praxis. 7. Demonstrate awareness of the sources of power, how to mobilize power towards positive change, and ways to challenge oppressive assumptions, biases, and prejudices (4.2, 4.3) 8. Describe methods for continuing a life long process of recognizing our biases, learning how to change oppressive behaviors and structures, and building a more socially just multicultural society. (4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7)

d. 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.
e. Curricular themes

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.

f. Relationship to social work 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.

g. Intensive focus on PODS

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.

2. Class Requirements

a. Text and class materials

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings, videos, and other digital materials will be posted to Canvas, or hyperlinks will be provided.

- To fully engage in the course topic and become a competent and skilled social work practitioner, it is expected that students will complete all required readings. However, if you are unable to complete the readings word-for-word, please come prepared to discuss the broad strokes.
- The readings will be discussed and debriefed in class.
- You will use the readings and course lectures as the basis of your three self-reflexive journals.

b. Class schedule

Course topics and readings are subject to change. Notice for any revisions will be posted to Canvas.

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<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Required Readings &amp; Assignments</th>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Health &amp; Bodies</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Community, Safety, &amp; Borders</th>
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<td><strong>DUE:</strong> Journal 2</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Prisons, Protection, &amp; Power</th>
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<td>Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>November 27</td>
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DUE: Journal 3  
KYD Presentations |
| Week 15  | December 11   | Last day of class              | DUE: KYD Presentations  
KYD Paper |
c. Assignments

**Attendance**: 20% (70 points)

**Participation**: 20% (70 points)

**411**: 10% (35 points)

**Self-Reflexive Journals (3)**: 13% (45 points, 15 points each)

**Power Analysis**: 17% (60 points)

**KYD Group Presentation**: 20% (70 points)

350 points possible

Submission of Assignments

*All assignments must be submitted online via Canvas at or before the time it is due* as indicated on the syllabus. If you are unable to submit online for any reason, email the instructor your assignment directly. If you do not contact the professor to explain that Canvas is not working, and do not email the assignment, your assignment will be considered late.

**Attendance (20%)**

This course depends greatly on the nature and the strength of the classroom-community, to which each student greatly contributes. The majority of the learning happens during class. Accordingly, please plan to attend every class and stay for the duration. Attendance is worth 20% of the final grade.

Students are expected to arrive on time; excessive lateness (over 30 minutes late) without speaking to the instructor ahead of time will result in a loss of points. If you miss more than 2 hours of class time, you will be marked absent for that day.

Please notify the instructor if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Understanding that some students may encounter a situation that might necessitate missing a class, students should inform the instructor of an absence by email at least 24 hours prior to the expected absence or within 24 hours of an unexpected absence arising from an emergency. Every student will be allowed one excused absence no questions asked. While you will not lose attendance points for the first absence, you will not receive participation points for that day. Further excused absences will require documentation.

More than three absences (excused or unexcused) 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. Any request for modification of the attendance policy should be discussed with the instructor as soon as possible.

If students are scheduled to present material 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. Please consult the Policy on Class Attendance found in the MSW Student Guide for the SSW’s official attendance guidelines.

**Participation (20%)**

Participation is broadly defined. Participation refers showing up to class (in a timely manner), asking questions, applying course concepts to questions about your own experiences, contributing to the learning of others, participating in online discussions, providing accurate and respectful feedback to others, identifying any unique learning needs or problems to the professor, and utilizing office hours/email communication when necessary to ask for clarification or assistance in fulfilling course expectations and assignments. Class contributions should focus on relevant course concepts and professional practice experiences. Monopolizing space or contributing off-topic is not considered participation. Simply attending class alone is not enough for a successful participation grade.

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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary Performance</th>
<th>Points (70 max)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of participation in class</strong></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 does not comment overzealously or to the exclusion of other learners.</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of comments</strong></td>
<td>Comments in person and online are always 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>30</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Listening Skills</strong></td>
<td>Student listens attentively when others present materials and perspectives, and contribute comments that build on the discussion.</td>
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The 411 is an individual oral presentation in which you will be expected to present a news article to the class. The purpose of the assignment is to draw connections between course readings, issues related to social justice, and real-world events presented in the news media. You will be expected to: (a) select and read a digital news article published in a local newspaper in the city, state, or region that feels most like home to you; (b) provide a 4-minute synopsis of the story, why you selected it, and how it relates to social justice; (c) take 1 question from the class; and (d) pose 1 question to the class relating to the story and its connection to social justice or any readings, concepts, or topics covered in the course. The subject of the article should relate to the primary topic to be covered in 504 that week; check the syllabus to ensure you select a presentation date corresponding to subject matter you’re interested in. The rubric will be posted on Canvas. This assignment is intended to be informal and conversational. Additional information:

- The story should be no longer than six months old by the time you present.
- Submit a 2 paragraph synopsis on Canvas that summarizes the article and articulates its connection to social justice.

DUE: Any session between October 2 (week 5) and November 20 (week 12) of class. Written synopsis due by 11:59pm the day you present.

3 self-reflexive journals (13%)

You will write 2-4 page long journal entries three times throughout the semester in response to the readings, activities, videos and course content reflecting on personal values, ethics, perspectives, biases and reactions to engaging with different identity groups, individuals, and potential clients, as well as different frameworks, interventions, and theories. Each entry should be self-reflective and written in first person; you will not lose points for acknowledging concerns, biases, privileges, apprehensions, etc. Rather, you are asked to be honest and forthright about your response to the class and its content. At least one reading or assigned video/material should be cited in each journal. Each journal is due by a specific date throughout the course, staggered some weeks apart. They are due by the beginning of class on their due date (but can be submitted
early) and should be submitted through Canvas. Only I will be reading these journal entries (they will not be shared with the class). The rubric will be posted on Canvas.

Social justice event: You may attend a social justice related event on-campus for one of your journals. You will be expected to submit a 2-4 page reflection journal in which you will (1) describe the event and who organized it; (2) discuss the key content; and (3) analyze the effectiveness of the event and how you feel it did or did not deliver on its objectives.

- The event must be formally organized and recognized by the university. This does not include student group meetings, social events, or other gatherings that are not publicly advertised on the University of Michigan website. If you’re unsure if an event is considered valid for this assignment, please ask.

DUE: October 2, October 30, and December 4

**Power analysis (17%)**

You will conduct a power analysis on an organization, group, institution, or collective of your choice that does work around a social justice issue. The purpose of a power analysis is to engage with how power looks and operates in a specific community or locale, and how that dynamic influences grassroots or other organizations. Your power analysis will answer the following questions: (1) who has power?; (2) how and for what do they use that power?; (3) What do unequal power relationships have to do with the problems we face?; (4) What kind of power would it take for grassroots or other organizations to win the social justice change we want? Your analysis will use publicly available materials created by the organization or other institutions to support your analysis and arguments, which you will research. The analysis should also include a completed power analysis grid (a template will be provided). The rubric will be posted on Canvas. The analysis should clearly define:

- The social justice issue, or issues on which the organization/group is focused and the group’s overarching agenda.
- Events, actions, or activities the group has used to address this issue.
- Power players in the organization’s community or elsewhere who have the power to implement the group’s agenda.
- The overarching agenda of groups or constituencies that oppose the issue at hand.
- How or why this issue continues to occur with regard to powerholders and the group’s primary strategies and tactics. What other systems, institutions, or stakeholders play a role in the existence of this issue?
- Recommendations for how this group might see movement on this issue. What changes might they implement?

DUE: November 6
KYD: a critical examination of a topic held dear (20%)

A critical skill for social workers is the ability to engage with topics or viewpoints that may be contentious, personally offensive, or conflicting with our own point of view. The purpose of the Kill Your Darlings assignment is to meaningfully engage with a topic that is personally important or central to your identity. You will use this group assignment to outline the “facts” of this topic and how it relates to social justice. You will also research and describe counterarguments that are usually (or might be) used by those who oppose the topic or issue, and then respond to each one.

You and your group members will write a paper including: the facts of the topic (i.e. prevalence, statistical information, population(s) affected, etc.); the counterarguments against the amelioration, urgency, or existence of the issue; and, your well-reasoned responses to those counterarguments. All facts and counterarguments should be well-cited.

Each group will also present the KYD in 20-minute class presentation using visual aids or other materials of your choosing. Each group will receive a single grade; in extreme circumstances, an individual may lose points for lack of participation. The rubric will be posted on Canvas.

DUE:
Presentation - December 4 or December 11
Paper – December 11 by 11:59pm

d. Grading

Here is a link 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+
93-96.9= A
90-92.9= A-
87-89.9= B+
83-86.9= B
80-82.9= B-
77-79.9= C+
73-76.9= C
70-72.9= C-
67-69.9= D+
63-66.9= D
Incomplete grades will be given in extremely rare and extraordinary circumstances. Students are expected to plan ahead in starting assignments and to keep up with the coursework throughout the term. Any unusual circumstances that may impede a student’s progress in the course should be discussed with the instructors in a timely manner.

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated; if confirmed, you will receive an F for the course. We expect you to do your own original work.

Late assignments

Life happens and sometimes, we miss deadlines. Late assignments will incur a 5% reduction on the final grade for every day that it is late. This is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Missing a deadline is a stressful experience. Sometimes it’s just the result of a one-off timing issue, but sometimes it’s the result of a more persistent issue such as struggling with material, life, or other personal circumstances not always visible to the instructor. Students in this situation often blame themselves, or delay speaking to the instructor due to fear, shame, anxiety, etc. The stress snowballs as penalties and other coursework piles up. If you are in this situation, I can help.

If you are going to miss a deadline:
1. Email me whatever you have before the deadline. If I get something from you, no matter how incomplete, the first day’s late penalty will be halved.
2. Stay in contact with me until you finish. We will make a plan to get you back on track.

3. Other Policies

a. Electronics Policy

Laptops may be used for legitimate classroom purposes only, such as taking notes or looking up readings on Canvas. Using social media, online shopping, surfing the Internet, playing games, and completing work for other class and personal obligations are not considered legitimate classroom purposes. Such use is distracting to those seated around you, and if I see you using your computer for these purposes, you will
lose participation points. Excessive use of this kind will be addressed to you by the instructor via email.

Cell phones should be silent and out of sight. Please be respectful of your classmates and the instructor.

b. Inclusivity Policy

Social and economic justice is one of the key themes of social work practice, research, and education. As a social work community, we must encourage each other to critically examine issues related to power, privilege, and oppression. As a result, there will be class discussions, activities, or assignments that may be difficult or challenging. In order to have the most supportive environment possible, we must all commit ourselves to fostering an inclusive, anti-oppressive space in which each person takes responsibility for their own language, actions and interactions. It is important that we actively listen to each other about how our words and actions are affecting one another and the learning environment, knowing the impact is more important than intent. It can be difficult to navigate the dual priorities of supporting authentic free speech and being open to diverse perspectives and ideas. Slurs of any kind should never be used. Threatening or using aggressive language towards the instructor or classmates will result in you being asked to leave the class and losing participation points for that day. Throughout the course, we will negotiate other guidelines about class discussions. Please bring your best selves to our classroom space.

c. Classroom and Taking Care

If you have suggestions for how I can improve our classroom space, activities, and/or assignments to be more accessible now or in the future, please do not hesitate to let me know! This also means that you are encouraged to take care of yourself by eating in our class, taking breaks/moving your body as needed, choosing where to sit, etc.

We will sometimes discuss difficult topics, and you should expect that. However, if you find we come across material that is personally triggering, please don’t hesitate to step out of the room if necessary.

d. Parenting/Children

I recognize that many of the students in this class may be parents and/or caretakers for children. While this class is not designed to act as a space for childcare, I understand that life happens and do not want you to have to choose between parenting/caretaking
and learning. If your childcare fall through or cancels, you are welcome to bring your child(ren) to class as needed on occasion, as long as they are able to sit quietly in the corner or the hall. I’d ask that if they are crying, you move out with them into the hall. Please recognize that some members of our community are immuno-compromised, and so I asked that you not bring children if they are sick. Additionally, topics covered in class may be more mature in content; please assess this when deciding whether or not to include headphones when you set them up prior to class.

e. Accommodations for disabilities

If you are in need of any accommodations, please do let me know as soon as possible. Please make sure to provide documentation if any extensions or alterations will be needed for coursework.

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: 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

**Land Acknowledgement**

I would like to acknowledge that the University of Michigan resides on the ancestral and traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg - Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa and Bodewadmi peoples, who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. As we work, live, and play on these territories we must keep in mind the ongoing effects of colonization, the struggle for self-determination, and colonial state violence. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, I affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold University of Michigan more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.