



**Course title:** SW 504: *Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work*

**GRAND CHALLENGE:** HEALTH INEQUITIES, INJUSTICES & CLOSING THE GAP

**Semester:** Fall 2020

**Credits:** 3

**Course number:** 24369

**Section number:** 009

**Day:** Tuesday afternoons

**Time:** 2:00pm-5:00pm (EST)

**Format:** 100% online

**Room number & building:** n/a

**Professor:** Shari Lynn Johnson

**Preferred name:** professor (prof.) shari

**Pronouns:** she series; she, her, hers

**Email:** [lynshari@umich.edu](mailto:lynshari@umich.edu)

**Virtual office hours:** By appointment only.

\*\*\*Please note, I am unable to arrive early, or stay late, from our scheduled class time. \*\*\*

### **ABOUT YOUR PROFESSOR:**

#### **PROFESSORS TEACHING STYLE AND PHILOSOPHY:**

- PLEASE SEE STATEMENT ON CANVAS.

#### **ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR PROFESSOR:**

- Make every attempt to arrive to class on time & begin & end class as scheduled.
- Always treat each student with the dignity & respect she/he/they deserve.
- Make every/all attempts to ensure each student learns the most she/they/he can & performs at her//their/his greatest potential.
- Make every/all attempts to return all graded assignments within two (2) weeks of receipt.
- Make every/all attempts to respond to all emails within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt.
  - *This excludes Fridays, weekends & holidays unless it is an emergency! If you have a genuine emergency, please state “emergency” in the subject line of the email.*
- Make every/all efforts to ensure our virtual classroom space is a peaceful, guilt-free, non-judgmental learning environment.
- Willingly write letters/give verbal statements of support (i.e. recommendations & references) to those students who have demonstrated a dedication & adequate level of understanding of the course content.

- Comply with all pertinent FERPA (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 aka the Buckley Amendment) to the best of my ability.

### **STUDENTS ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS:**

Successful completion of this course requires every student fully participate in all fourteen (14) sessions, actively listen and participate in all class discussions & exercises, take notes as needed & submit all assignments on time. Arriving tardy to class, or leaving class early, or being unavailable &/or not visible on your camera, is not only disruptive to your classmates & professor, but negatively affects your learning experience. Not attending class at all means your voice & experiences will not be shared with your classmates & your professor. Thus, students enrolled in this course are required to attend each & every class session on time & are expected to remain in the class throughout its entirety; Any/all exceptions to this requirement must be pre-discussed & pre-approved by the professor. If, for whatever reason, you *are* tardy or absent, it is also *your* responsibility to connect with other students to receive any missed work. Please do not ask your professor.

### **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.

### **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. (4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7)
3. Describe the dynamics of difference and dominance/oppression 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 lifelong 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)

**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.

**INTENSIVE FOCUS ON PRIVILEGE, OPPRESSION, DIVERSITY & SOCIAL IDENTITIES (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.

**COURSE MATERIALS:** All required content will be listed on Canvas.

**COURSE POLICY ON ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT:**

**Attendance:**

As previously stated, attending all class session is paramount for your successful completion of this course. Please note 30% (a maximum total of 30 points) of your final course grade includes \*both\* attendance & class participation.

**Additional notes on signing in:**

1. Attendance will be taken by your professor, no later than, five (5) minutes after our class is scheduled to begin.
2. If you anticipate needing to arrive later than ten (10) minutes after our class is scheduled to begin, please inform your professor ahead of time so that you will be granted access into our virtual classroom.
3. If you should, unexpectedly, arrive later than ten (10) minutes after our class is scheduled to begin, please inform your professor, or a fellow classmate, so that you will be granted access into our virtual classroom.

4. Arriving to our virtual classroom more than fifteen (15) minutes late, or leaving our virtual classroom before our agreed upon dismissal time, for any reason & without prior approval from your professor, (unless it is our during our agreed upon break time), will constitute an absence for that class session.

### **PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT:**

Simply being in attendance for every session without participating & engaging will also hinder you from successfully completing this course. Students should arrive to class 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 all class discussions, exercises & activities.

### **I invite you to consider the following:**

- ❖ With the understanding that this may be culturally relative, being silent & simply listening is a privilege that not everyone has. More specifically, remaining silent & saying that you are either learning through listening or allowing space for others is in & of itself, a privilege which you will not be able to employ when practicing social work.
- ❖ There is a difference between being/feeling safe & being/feeling comfortable. Learning through the uncomfortableness is hard, but it can be when the most memorable “aha” moments occur.

### **COVID-19 & YOU:**

For the safety of all students, faculty, and staff on campus, it is important for each of us to be mindful of safety measures that have been put in place for our protection. By returning to campus, you have acknowledged your responsibility for protecting the collective health of our community. Your participation in this course, on an in-person/hybrid basis, is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University, including maintaining physical distancing of six feet from others, and properly wearing a face covering in class. Other applicable safety measures may be described in the Wolverine Culture of Care and the University’s Face Covering Policy for COVID-19. Your ability to participate in this course in-person/hybrid may be impacted by failure to comply with campus safety measures. Individuals seeking to request an accommodation related to the face covering requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the Office for Institutional Equity. If you are unable or unwilling to adhere to these safety measures while in a face-to-face class setting, you will be required to participate on a remote basis. I also encourage you to review the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the COVID-related Addendum to the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

### **Additional health care related absence considerations:**

Please evaluate your own health status regularly and refrain from attending class and coming to campus if you are ill. You are encouraged to seek appropriate medical attention for treatment. School of Social Work students who miss class due to illness of any kind will be given opportunities to access course materials online or provided with alternative learning opportunities. Please notify your professor by email about your absence as soon as practical,

so that accommodations can be scheduled as soon as possible. Please note that documentation (a doctor's note) for medical excuses is not required.

**Special note regarding religious/spiritual observances:**

Please notify your professor, ahead of time, if you have religious/spiritual observances which may prevent you from being present in class or submitting assignments on the due dates so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Special note regarding other academic commitments:**

If you are notified of another academic commitment during the same time as when our class meets, please inform me of your absence, in advance. Additional information from the professor providing the exam may also be required.

**Special note about Internet connectivity:**

You are strongly encouraged to attend this class using the strongest Internet connection possible. Repeated unresolved Internet connectivity issues, including those which affect your ability to be visible on your camera, will greatly influence your ability to successfully pass this course. If, for whatever reason (weather, etc.), you should experience connectivity issues, please notify your professor & your classmates immediately.

**Special note about audio & video recording:**

Audio and video recording of in-class lectures and discussions is prohibited without the advance written permission of the instructor. Students with an approved accommodation from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities permitting the recording of class meetings must present documentation to the instructor in advance of any recording being done. The instructor reserves the right to disallow recording for a portion of any class time where privacy is a special concern. If the instructor chooses to record a class, they will decide which classes, if any, are recorded, what portion of each class is recorded, and whether a recording is made available on the course management website. On days when classes are recorded, students will be notified a recording is occurring. Class recordings and course materials may not be reproduced, sold, published or distributed to others, in whole or in part, without the written consent of the instructor.

More info here: <https://safecomputing.umich.edu/be-aware/privacy/privacy-u-m/videoconferencing/recording-privacy-concerns>

**Special note about tardiness and absences:**

With the full understanding that the culture of this university includes the observation of "Michigan Time" (meaning, classes generally begin 10 minutes passed the posted start time), anyone arriving to class beyond this time will be considered tardy. Likewise, anyone leaving earlier than our agreed upon ending time, for *any* reason which has not been previously discussed & agreed upon with the professor, will be considered having left class early. Both of these are distracting to your learning colleagues & your professor & it *will* affect your grade.

That being said, "life happens" & so you are permitted only one (1) tardy, or opportunity to leave early without it affecting your grade. Likewise, you are also permitted only one (1)

absence, either excused or unexcused, without it also affecting your grade, which may include a failing grade.

In conclusion, please know your attendance & active participation will greatly influence your ability to successfully earn the maximum amount of points for the final grade you wish to earn. Thus, adhering to all of the above attendance & participation requirements, every class session, will ensure you earn the full 30% of the attendance & class participation points for this course.

### **STATEMENT ON CONFIDENTIALITY AND CLASSROOM DECORUM:**

Due to the possible sensitive nature of some of this course content for some students, all students are expected to maintain confidentiality on all matters discussed in class; though there is no guarantee that all students will follow this expectation. All students are also requested to understand everyone has a different understanding & that we can, & will, discuss what may be perceived as controversial topics without being insulting or dismissive to your professor or fellow students. With that, please remember, the professor is not asking you to alter your personal value system, opinions or ideas, but will be assessing whether, or not, you understand & comprehend the social change concepts, theories & methodologies discussed in this course. Also, all students are also expected to analyze & question information or opinions which vary from theirs through respectful & non-judgmental dialogue. Additionally, all students are expected to refrain from *intentionally* stating stereotypical & prejudicial remarks. Lastly, & again, all students are requested to maintain confidentiality of what may be shared in this class; though there is no guarantee that all students will adhere to this request.

### **COURSE THEMES WE WILL REPEATEDLY DRAW UPON:**

- ❖ Difference between dialogue, discussion, debate & discourse.
- ❖ Difference between access, equity & equality.
- ❖ Difference between intent & impact.
- ❖ Difference between action & service \*AND\* charity work & change work.
- ❖ Difference between change & progress.
- ❖ Difference between empowerment & agency.
- ❖ Difference between activism, advocacy, allyhood, comradeship & solidarity.
- ❖ Difference between being a change agent & a “fixer”/”do-gooder”/helper/savior.
- ❖ Difference between a chaos, riot, rebellion, revolt, (civil) unrest, uprising.
- ❖ Difference between community organizing, (re)building & development.

### **Special note about “triggering” (warning against details for possibly disturbing language, content &/or images):**

As stated earlier, we are diverse group of learners. As such, we may, on occasion, “step on one another’s toes”. I encourage you to, please speak & listen to one another with the assumption that there is no ill-intent to purposely wound or harm one another.

### **I invite you to remember the following:**

- ❖ We are all at varying stages of our learning process & journey.

### **STATEMENT ON EXTRA CREDIT:**

There are no extra credit assignments in this course. Please prepare accordingly.

**STATEMENT ON MID TERM GRADES:**

Your college experience should be a wonderful combination of learning &/or improving upon your education & life skills. One very important life skill is responsibility for self. Thus, as opposed to the instructor adding up your grades, I strongly encourage you to do so. Since everything in this course equals 100 points, this should not be a difficult task. However, if you require assistance &/or wish to verify your results, please do not hesitate to ask your professor.

**STATEMENT ON MID TERM TEACHING EVALUATIONS:**

Your professor will distribute a mid-term evaluation which is solely for her own information. Your cooperation in completing this evaluation is not required, but greatly appreciated.

**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*

**COURSE ASSIGNMENT CALCULATIONS:**

Attendance and engagement=**25%**

Out of the class reflection #1=**10%**

Out of the class reflection#2=**10%**

Final project=**55%**

**TOTAL=100%**

**COURSE GRADES:**

The University of Michigan, School of Social Work, Master's Program is on a 9.0 grading scale, which translates as follows:

A+ -----9.0 B+ -----6.0 C+ -----3.0 D -----0

A -----8.0 B -----5.0 C -----2.0 E -----0

A- -----7.0 B- -----4.0 C- -----1.0

Letter grades from "A" through "E" are given for class performance. "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 which carries credit. "D" grades indicate deficiency and carry no credit. "E" grades indicate failure and carry no credit.

**You are strongly encouraged to read through the links below regarding grading:**

<https://ssw.umich.edu/msw-student-guide/chapter/1.08/grades-in-academic-courses-and-in-field-instruction>

<https://ssw.umich.edu/msw-student-guide/chapter/1.18/student-grievances>

<https://ssw.umich.edu/msw-student-guide/section/1.07.01/15/grades-for-special-circumstances>

[https://crlt.umich.edu/testing\\_and\\_grading](https://crlt.umich.edu/testing_and_grading)

**GRADING SCALE:**

100-95=A

94-90=A-

89-87=B+

86-83=B

82-80=B-

79-77=C+

76-73=C

72-69=C-

68-65=D+

64-60=D

*Please note this syllabus serves as an agreement between the professor and the student but is subject to change. However, the professor will make every attempt to give ample notification to students.*