This course will focus on strategies to protect and promote civil rights, as part of social justice movements in society. We will examine the changing context of civil rights in a society that is becoming more segregated and more diverse, and compare earlier civil rights movements with approaches that are arising in the streets. We will explore inequalities, power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, and other forces which affect the struggle for rights among social groups – and the roles of social workers in the process.

At a time when bigotry is increasing - and expected to intensify during the upcoming presidential campaign - there is need for people who can respond to bigotry and organize against hate in a deeply divided society.

**Course Objectives**

1. Define and critically analyze strategies to protect and promote civil rights.
2. Examine the changing context of civil rights, including present and emergent issues and populations concerned about them.
3. Identify the forces which facilitate and limit efforts to strengthen civil rights.
4. Analyze the relationships between civil rights, social justice, and anti-bias frameworks, e.g., identity, diversity, justice, action.
5. Examine the roles of change agents at various levels of practice.

**Relationship of Course to Curricular Themes**

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity**: Students will identify ways in which comprehending and engaging in civil rights discourse acknowledges multifaceted dimensions of groups, and individuals by promoting an inclusive and democratic society.

- **Social Justice and Social Change**: Emphasis will be placed on how civil rights can strengthen social justice and create community change.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation**: Knowledge about civil rights will be analyzed as an intervention to challenge inequalities that affect individuals, groups, and communities.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research**: Critical analysis of relevant research from diverse social science disciplines and professional fields will contribute to understanding of empirically based practice.

- **Ethics and Values**: We will address ethical and value issues, including ones that relate to the code of ethics of the social work profession.
Illustrative Topics

What are rights?

Rights are things which everyone should have simply by being human. Some rights are written into laws, but even the best-written laws are no guarantee without building support for implementation. Other rights are claimed, but not yet written down, and they require consciousness-raising, community organizing, policy advocacy, and other practice.

Written laws or community organizing?

Laws are too important to be left to lawyers, but require organizing to become real. If a lawyer says something is or is not a law, then they are naïve in their definition.

Traditional or modern?

The course will examine the changing historical contexts and various meanings of civil rights and civil rights movements, both “traditional” and “modern.”

Rights documents

We will identify key documents, e.g., International Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, and U.S. Constitution for deeper interrogation to explore their similarities, differences, and application in a democratic society. These documents will be assessed to unpack individual level rights versus the rights of practitioners in institutional and community settings.

Responding to bigotry

There are increasing reports of swastikas at schools, racist taunts, hate-fueled attacks, and other acts of intimidation. These acts cause fear and anxiety, especially for target groups.

Preparing a new generation

Civil rights practice is instrumental to social justice, and too many people lack answers to the most basic questions. Civil right education has been deemphasized in schools, including schools of social work. Social workers are yearning to participate in civil rights initiatives, but are too often unprepared.

Roles of social workers

We will discuss the roles of social workers in efforts to protect and promote rights. We might also discuss the roles of others – e.g., lawyers, teachers – but our primary focus is on social workers.

Anti-bias framework
Employing a framework from the Southern Poverty Law Center, we will discuss connections between social identities, conflict within groups, and dialogic models of change that drive reconciliation between individuals, groups, and society.

Class Climate

We want to create an educational climate in which everyone can experiment with new ideas or skills; explore their own concerns and their implications for social and political action; work on a projects; and identify areas for future learning. We will discuss online guidelines.

Zoom Etiquette

Start on time, keep audio on mute until you want to speak, raise your hand and wait to be called upon, mindful of surroundings, mute when not speaking.

Academic Integrity

We will follow the Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct in the School of Social Work Student Handbook. Web resources on academic integrity developed by the University’s Center for Research on Learning and Teaching can be found at their website.

Safety and Emergency Preparedness

In the event of an emergency, dial 9-1-1 from any cell phone or campus phone. All Michigan students, faculty and staff are required to familiarize themselves with emergency procedures inside and outside of the classroom. In the event of building closure e.g. severe weather, contact (734)764-SSWB (7793) for up-to-date school closure information.

If you are concerned about your ability to exit the building in the case of an emergency, contact the SSW Office of Student Services 734-936-0961 and/or email ssw-ADAcompliance@umich.edu.

Disability Concerns

If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000.

Contacting the Instructor

My e-mail is barrych@umich.edu my office is 3840 SSWB, and my home telephone is 734.668.0117. I am available through e-mail, telephone, and by appointment.

ASSIGNMENT
(Select one of the following. 5-pages, due Your paper should be empirically-based and include at least 5 sources)

**Assignment 1**

Write a paper in which you analyze an organized effort to strengthen social justice and/or promote and protect the rights of a population group on a problem or issue that concerns them.

- Who is the population group?
- What is the problem or issue that concerns them?
- Who are the organizers?
- What is their basic strategy?
- What are the engagement activities?
- What outcomes or effects?
- What factors facilitate or limit them?
- What is your conclusion?

Examples: Me Too (freedom from sexual violence); March for Our Lives (gun violence); Black Lives Matter (freedom from violence and anti-Black racism); Right to Vote (suffrage, suppression).

**Assignment 2**

Write a paper in which you propose a strategy or organized effort to strengthen social justice and/or promote and protect the rights of a population group on a problem or issue that concerns them.

- Who are the organizers?
- What are the goals?
- Who is the population group? What are the characteristics of the group?
- What is the problem or issue that concerns them?
- What is the basic strategy?
- What are the engagement activities?
- What factors will facilitate or limit them?
- What is your conclusion?

Examples: Freedom from sexual violence; safe schools and stop gun violence; freedom from violence and anti-Black racism; police brutality; universal suffrage or suppression.

**Readings and Resources**

You will receive a short list of readings or resources, and should use online resources to the extent possible. The readings are largely on your own, and part of the assignment is your ability to find, use, and refer to them.
Illustrative Outline

(Simply for illustration, we will not address all of them and might add others.)

Opening
Getting Acquainted
Segregation and Diversity
What is Social Justice?
What are Rights?
Rights Documents
Why Shod We Care?
Past and Present Rights Movements
Everyday Experiences
Responding to Hate
Preparing a New Generation
Anti-Bias Framework
Roles of Social Workers
Class Assignment
Closing