



<b>Course title:</b>	Theories and Principles of Socially Just Policies	
<b>Course #/term:</b>	SSW 638 001, Winter 2021	
<b>Time and place:</b>	Tuesdays, 2pm-5pm	
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3	
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	SSW 530 and SSW 504 preferred	
<b>Instructor:</b>	Kristin Seefeldt	
<b>Pronouns:</b>	She/her/hers	
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	You may expect a response within 48 hours (unless otherwise noted)	
<b>Office:</b>	2726	
<b>Office hours:</b>	To make an appointment: go to my Google calendar: <a href="https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/selfsched?sstoken=UUdpd3hqQ1pqaHU1fGRIZmF1bHR8YjkzNzFIZmVkm2UzZmE3N2I0YzAyMjY1NDFkN2U3ODE">https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/selfsched?sstoken=UUdpd3hqQ1pqaHU1fGRIZmF1bHR8YjkzNzFIZmVkm2UzZmE3N2I0YzAyMjY1NDFkN2U3ODE</a>	

## 1. Course Statement

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### a. Course description

In this course, students will be exposed to various theoretical frameworks informing policy development, delve deeply into the role of different institutional actors in the policy process, and gain an understanding of basic economic principles frequently employed in policy debates and discussions. With this knowledge, students will be able to identify, in a more sophisticated and nuanced way, policies that promote social justice and those that do not; understand how certain theoretical frameworks and ideas have been used to oppress and to empower different groups, and identify points of interventions within existing institutions.

### b. Course content

This course will cover different concepts of justice, fairness, and equity as they apply to public policy, including Rawls' theory of justice. Students will also interrogate ideas

about neoliberalism through an introduction to concepts from economic theory that often used to promote or thwart the development of certain policies. This includes the concepts of supply and demand; market failure; and public goods. Finally, drawing upon various theories of justice, students will examine processes that can be used to promote socially just policy making.

**c. Course objectives and competencies**

In this course, students will learn how to:

- Identify how economic theories inform public policy debates and describe the consequences for social justice
- Understand the basic nature of supply and demand, markets, public goods, and other economic concepts;
- Describe and identify various theoretical frameworks of social justice and how they relate to public policy;
- Identify and explain processes that would promote socially just policy making;
- Apply the principles of social justice to critically analyze public policies;
- Determine opportunities to advance social justice within existing political and policy institutions;

**d. Course design**

This course will use multiple methods including but not limited to: lectures, case studies, readings, guest speakers, discussions, written assignments, individual and group exercises. The course will be offered primarily in person, although occasionally materials may be presented online.

**e. 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.

This course encourages students to develop critical thinking skills so that they can understand the ways in which various economic and political theories are used in the policy process and how those frameworks can promote social justice or can oppress individuals and groups (Critical Contextual Thinking; Critical Awareness). Students will

use principles of social justice to examine current public policy debates and to interrogate various institutions and economic models (Critical Contextual Thinking; Critical Awareness; Conflict, Dialog, and Community). Using knowledge gained in the course, students will be able to identify points of interventions within existing institutions to promote socially just policies (Actions Toward Social Justice Vision).

## 2. Class Requirements

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### a. Text and class materials

All readings and videos are posted in modules on Canvas, by session. Within the module, the readings are under the folder titled “Read This,” while any videos will be in a folder labeled “Watch This.”

In order for us to have in-depth and meaningful discussions, students are expected to come to class having read the assigned material. Some of the readings are dense and contain ideas about which you may be unfamiliar- just try your best and come to class with lots of questions!

### b. Class schedule

Date/Time	Agenda	Required Readings & Videos
<b>Session 1</b> <b>January 19</b>	What do we mean by “socially just” in the context of public policy? What are your criteria for “justness?”	<b>Read This:</b> Syllabus “The Social Justice Case for Cancelling Student Debt”
<b>Session 2</b> <b>January 26</b>	<b>Overview of Western theories informing public policy:</b> utilitarianism; Rawls’ principles; libertarianism; others	<b>Read This:</b> Wolff, “Social Justice and Public Policy: A View from Political Philosophy”  Rawls, “A Theory of Justice” (excerpt)
<b>Session 3</b>	<b>Understanding economic</b>	<b>Read This:</b> Wheelen, “The

Date/Time	Agenda	Required Readings & Videos
February 2	<p><b>theory.</b> Efforts to promote social justice are often constrained or hampered by economic systems. Moreover, public policy in much of the Western world is deeply influenced by economic theory. We'll spend 2 sessions examining some of the fundamental principles of microeconomics.</p>	<p>Power of Markets”  Friedman, “Capitalism and Freedom” (excerpt)</p>
Session 4 February 9	<p><b>Alternative Economic Views</b> Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) and Stratification Economics (bringing critical race theory to economics) are two alternative views of macro and micro economic functioning- do these views do a better job of promoting social justice?</p>	<p><b>Read This:</b> “What if the Federal Deficit Actually Didn't Matter?”  <b>Watch This:</b> Interview with Darrick Hamilton</p>
Session 5 February 16	<p><b>Human rights and the capabilities approaches</b> What are the strengths and weaknesses of a human rights-based approach to public policy? How can the capabilities approach be translated into policy?</p>	<p><b>Read This:</b> United Nations Declaration of Human Rights  Batliwala, “When Rights go Wrong”  <i>Sen, Development as Freedom</i>, intro and chap. 1</p>
Session 6 February 23	<p><b>Anti-colonial thought and social justice</b> This week we will read the work of Frantz Fanon, one of many thinkers whose work is rooted in the anti-colonial movement. We'll consider the Black Panthers and</p>	<p><b>Read This:</b> Fanon, <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i>, chapter 1  Bassett, “No Justice, No Health”</p>

Date/Time	Agenda	Required Readings & Videos
	their social policies as anti-colonial responses and discuss how such approaches are relevant to policy today.	<b>Watch This:</b> The Black Panthers and Social Policy
<b>Session 7</b> <b>March 2</b>	<b>Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Policy</b> Paulo Freire's seminal book is frequently used within education circles, but we will discuss its application to policy.	<b>Read This:</b> Freire, <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> , chapters 2 & 4  <b>Watch This:</b> Theater of the Oppressed NYC
<b>Session 8</b> <b>March 9</b>	<b>Feminist Thought and Policy</b> What happens when we consider policy through a gender lens? What are the limitations?	<b>Read This:</b> "Gender Budgeting"  Parker West, "Soccer Moms, Welfare Queens, Waitress Moms, and Super Moms: Myths of Motherhood in State Media Coverage of Child Care during the Welfare Reforms of the 1990s"
<b>Session 9</b> <b>March 16</b>	<b>Queer Theory and Policy</b> Queer Theory problematizes the binary and other over-generalizations of gender expression and sexuality; so what does the mean for public policy?	<b>Read This:</b> "Queer Theory"  "What About the Rest of Us?" An Overview of LGBT Poverty Issues and a Call to Action"
<b>March 23:</b> <b>Well-being break</b>	No class	
<b>Session 10</b> <b>March 30</b>	<b>Visioning Session</b> This session will be led by Prof. Danny Alvarez and will help us	<b>Read This:</b> "Centering Blackness"

Date/Time	Agenda	Required Readings & Videos
	move beyond current ways of thinking toward envisioning more socially just policies.	“Dreaming Beyond Capitalism” “To Build a Future without Police and Prisons we have to Imagine it First”
<b>Session 11 April 6</b>	<b>Transformative Policy Processes</b> Are real utopias possible? We’ll consider this question in our final session as well as revisit other theories and frameworks we’ve covered during the semester	<b>Read This:</b> “Real Utopias I: Social Empowerment and the State”
<b>Session 12 April 13</b>	Class presentations/ discussions on final projects	
<b>Session 13 April 20</b>	Class presentations/ discussions on final projects	

c. Assignments

You have three assignments for this course, one of which has three parts. Each are described more fully on Canvas under the assignments tab:

Assignment	Due date	Points
<b>Flip grid video:</b> Record a video of yourself and watch videos of your class mates!	Upload video by <b>January 22</b> ; watch all videos by <b>January 26</b>	10
<b>Applying Theory to Current Events</b> essays	<b>February 16</b> <b>March 9</b> <b>March 21</b>	20 points each (60 total)
<b>Final Project</b>	<b>April 23</b> (you’ll discuss your projects and get feedback during the last two class sessions)	30 points

d. Attendance and class participation

Learning takes place when you can engage with the material, and part of that engagement occurs in discussions with each other- and this is a discussion heavy course. Missing class deprives you of this opportunity and also affects your colleagues when they are not able to learn from you. Student attendance is therefore expected at every class session, but I also understand that you may need to miss class, or that unexpected circumstances, such as internet outages, will occur. I will record class lectures, and I urge you to contact me directly if you've had to miss class so that we can work together to make sure you have all the necessary material covered.

e. Grading

I would prefer that rather than grades, students focus on their learning goals and meeting those goals. However, grades are currently a reality in a university environment. My general approach in graduate classes is that assignments that meet expectations get a "B," with grades of higher and lower values assigned relative to how they exceed or do not meet expectations. But in the spirit of having a socially just grading policy, we will work collaboratively to determine how grades should be determined.

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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*