



Course title:	Theories and Principles of Socially Just Policies
Course #/term:	SW 638 section 03, Winter 2021
Time and place:	Tuesdays 2-5pm EST
Credit hours:	3
Prerequisites:	SSW 530 and SSW 504 preferred
Instructor:	Danny Alvarez
Pronouns:	They/them/their
Contact info:	Email: alvardi@umich.edu You may expect a response within 24 hours
Office:	Virtual meetings
Office hours:	By appointment—let me know when you want to meet!

“the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy”
bell hooks

1. Course Statement

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

In this class, I will strive to foster a learning environment where each student can participate and engage. 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, case studies, group exercises, reading discussions, written assignments, videos, and participation in experiential activities.

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).

f. Teaching Style and Course Structure

"in the context of social injustice, education can never be politically neutral: if it does not side with the poorest and marginalized sectors- the 'oppressed' – in an attempt to transform society, then it necessarily sides with the 'oppressors' in maintaining the existing structures of oppression, even if by default."

Liam Kane

In this course we are all teachers and we are all learners. My responsibility as an instructor is to help build and maintain a container for our group to engage in this work together. I will bring in activities, stories, and personal narratives to try and create an environment that is open, engaging, fun, challenging, safe, and honest. Each of you brings your own knowledge, experiences, and histories to this class which will enhance the learning of the entire group and deepen the theoretic conversations that we will have.

As adult learners it is assumed that students will be committed to their own learning and the learning of others. This commitment shows up in each of us being present (physically and cognitively) and being prepared (physically and cognitively). This includes doing your best to create a physical learning space that is conducive to focusing for the length of class, reading the assigned materials and taking time to reflect on them so you are ready to share thoughts and reactions with each other, being on time, voluntarily sharing, asking questions, and engaging in class and monitoring the participation of others to encourage their engagement. My hope is that you all commit to each other in ways that encourage you to challenge each other, to disagree, to affirm each other, to hold each other accountable for doing readings and assignments, to trusting each other enough to be honest, and to asking for support or help from each other when you need it.

2. Class Requirements

a. Text and class materials

All readings and other class materials will be posted in Canvas. You will not need to purchase any books for this class. If you ever have trouble accessing the readings reach out to me and I can send them to you in a different format or help troubleshoot. Because this course will be responsive to what is happening in the world while we are in class together, the readings may change over the semester. I may remove some and will certainly add a few here and there. I will always do my best to post new required readings a week ahead. There may be times when I post other readings that are relevant and would be great to read and I am not able to give you a whole week ahead. Those will be suggested but not required. When there are changes to readings or potentially even assignments you will receive an announcement from me on Canvas.

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

“Reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time...how expectations of ‘how long things take’ are based on very particular minds and bodies”

Alison Kafer, on crip time and disability justice

This map of the semester is a draft. I expect that this will shift and change over the course of the semester and invite you to expect the same. I do not know you all yet and do not know what unique conversations will emerge because of who we all are and what we bring when we come together. With roots in popular education, I need to have the flexibility to go in the direction that we need to go collectively, even when it is not what was “planned”. That being said, I also want to provide those of you who need it with the comfort of structure and dates. I did my best to map out our course for the semester and am committed to giving you all new information, changes, etc. as early as I can so that you can plan for it and know what to expect.

Date	Topic	Media—to do <i>before</i> this week
<p>Week 1 JAN 19</p>	<p>Intro to the course What do we mean by “socially just” in the context of public policy? What are your criteria for “justness?”</p>	<p>Read This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Syllabus - “The Social Justice Case for Cancelling Student Debt”
<p>Week 2 JAN 26</p>	<p>Overview of Western theories informing public policy: utilitarianism; Rawls’ principles; libertarianism; others</p>	<p>Read This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wolff, “Social Justice and Public Policy: A View from Political Philosophy” - Rawls, “A Theory of Justice” (excerpt)

<p>Week 3</p> <p>FEB 2</p> <p><i>*combined session led by Kristin Seefeldt</i></p>	<p>Understanding economic theory. 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.</p> <p>We'll spend 2 sessions examining some of the fundamental principles of microeconomics.</p>	<p>Read This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wheelen, "The Power of Markets" - Friedman, "Capitalism and Freedom" (excerpt)
<p>Week 4</p> <p>FEB 9</p> <p><i>*combined session led by Kristin Seefeldt</i></p>	<p>Alternative Economic Views Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) and Stratification Economics are two alternative views of macro and micro economic functioning- do these views do a better job of promoting social justice?</p>	<p>Read This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "What if the Federal Deficit Actually Didn't Matter?" <p>Watch This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview with Darrick Hamilton
<p>Week 5</p> <p>FEB 16</p>	<p>Human rights and the capabilities approach 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>Read This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - United Nations Declaration of Human Rights - Batliwala, "When Rights go Wrong" - Sen, <i>Development as Freedom</i>, intro and chapter 1
<p>Week 6</p> <p>FEB 23</p>	<p>Anti-colonial thought and social justice 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 their social policies as anti-colonial responses and discuss how such approaches are relevant to policy today.</p>	<p>Read This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fanon, <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i>, chapter 1 - Bassett, "No Justice, No Health" <p>Watch This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Black Panthers and Social Policy
<p>Week 7</p> <p>MARCH 2</p>	<p>Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Policy Paulo Freire's seminal book is frequently used within education circles, but we will discuss its application to policy.</p>	<p>Read This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Freire, <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i>, chapters 2 & 4 <p>Watch This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theater of the Oppressed NYC
<p>Week 8</p> <p>MARCH 9</p>	<p>Feminist Thought and Policy What happens when we consider policy through a gender lens? What are the</p>	<p>Read This:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender Budgeting - Parker West, "Soccer Moms, Welfare Queens,

	limitations?	Waitress Moms, and Super Moms: Myths of Motherhood in State Media Coverage of Child Care during the Welfare Reforms of the 1990s”
Week 9 MARCH 16	Queer Theory and Policy Queer Theory problematizes the binary and other over-generalizations of gender expression and sexuality; so what does the mean for public policy?	Read This: - “Queer Theory” - “What About the Rest of Us?” An Overview of LGBT Poverty Issues and a Call to Action”
MARCH 23— WELL BEING BREAK	NO CLASS	
Week 10 MARCH 30 <i>*combined session</i>	Visioning Session How can we move beyond current ways of thinking toward envisioning more socially just policies?	Read This: - “Centering Blackness” - “Dreaming Beyond Capitalism” - “To build a future without police and prisons we have to imagine it first”
Week 11 APRIL 6	Transformative Policy Processes 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	Read This: - “Real Utopias: Social Empowerment and the State”
Week 12 APRIL 13	Class presentations/ discussions on final projects	
Week 13 APRIL 20	Class presentations/ discussions on final projects	

c. Attendance and class participation

Attendance and participation in all class sessions is critical for the learning process in this course. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Active participation is essential to the small group learning community we will create. Please plan to show up each week on time, having done the readings, and ready to engage. I do, however, understand that life happens. If you must miss class please let me know with as much notice as possible. If you miss more than one class without notice it may be reflected in your participation grade.

You won't be graded for *what* you say in this class—there are no clear rights and wrongs in the kind of inquiry we'll be doing together. But you will be graded for the effort you invest in developing your skills at listening, engaging, communicating (verbally and non-verbally), and critically interrogating. “Considerate” participation necessitates respectful and engaged comments *and* body language.

I recognize that there are different learning styles. If you are having a difficult time learning and engaging because of how the material is presented or what type of participation is being encouraged please let me know via email. We can always talk through your ideas during office hours and discuss strategies that may help you with participation during class.

If for whatever reason you need further accommodations in regard to attendance and participation reach out—I am committed to each of you getting as much as possible out of this course and also committed to your health and wellbeing and I am confident we can come up with a plan together.

d. Assignments

Below is a summary of the assignments that you will do this semester. As we approach each of them, you will get a more thorough explanation of the assignment, what I am looking for, and a grading rubric. Try not to focus too much on the grades—these assignments are supposed to supplement and enhance the learning that you are doing in class and should build on what we have been talking about. You should not have to do too much additional work to prepare for them aside from the regular reading and discussions.

Participation

10 points

Your participation is the most important part of your grade in this class. In addition to class attendance and standard engagement your grade will come from two things.

Required: Flip Grid Video Introduction 4 points

Introduce yourself to the class! Preferably in a video (2-5 minutes is plenty). Since we won't be meeting in person this is an important chance to give each other impressions of our whole selves. Feel free to be creative in choosing what you want to introduce about yourself and how. It could be one specific idea or story or identity you want to focus on, or a broader intro. You can write in poem form, or a story, or a straightforward letter of introduction. Don't get caught up in editing or scripting yourself. Just talk to us as if you had raised your hand in class and been called on. I will explain further in class about how to do this.

Optional: Co-facilitation of reading discussions 6 points

After signing up for weeks and being put in groups, you will meet with the group ahead of time to talk about articles, themes, decide on how to pair up depending on strengths, and come up with questions/a process for facilitating. By the Friday at 5pm before you facilitate, send me your themes and questions to review. In class, we will split into two breakout groups. Each will have a pair of facilitators and you can use whatever tools you want to facilitate the conversation about readings for the day. You will be expected to facilitate the group for around 45 minutes.

Optional: Reaction Sheets

3 points

On canvas you will find a template for a reaction sheet under assignments. Use the template and respond to the questions. This is an opportunity to share your immediate reactions and thoughts about the most recent class we had. You should submit it within a week of the class you are reacting to. Please be thoughtful about when you do them--do not save them all until the end and then cram them in the last few weeks. These should be for classes where you feel like you actually had a reaction that is worth exploring, reflecting on, etc. The first class and the last class are not options for reaction sheets.

GRADING	points
Participation Video due Jan 22 Discussion Facilitation OR 2 Reaction Sheets	10 pts
Applying Theory to Current Events Part 1- due Feb 16 Part 2 due March 9 Part 3 due March 21	20 points each—60 points total
Final Project Due April 23	30 pts
Total	100 pts

e. Grading

I am looking to see that you are engaging in the content—that you are reading the things that I have assignment and spending the time needed to critique, react, reflect, etc. and that you are engaging with the other students in the class around the content and encouraging the same from them. The assignments for this class are not supposed to trick or quiz you, they are tools to help you integrate the things we are discussing into your life and your social work practice.

f. Zoom Etiquette

1. Please use cameras whenever you can, as it makes connection easier
2. Please remember your participation is voluntary. Please don't log in and then mute yourself and tune out, pretending to be there. If you are experiencing barriers to your attendance, please just let me know ahead of time. I want to keep this space as authentic as possible and will expect communication from you as things come up. Plus, logistically it could be awkward if you're put into a pair or small group breakout room and don't show up!
3. If you are comfortable, please provide your pronouns either by “renaming” yourself in Zoom or by changing your “preferred last name” in Wolverine Access. See this google doc (prepared by a current MSW student) for instructions on how to do this.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NEH7zibwZwCoAmngc4VZfswmUrPTWS6lBhn7zS94xZQ/edit?usp=sharing>

g. Proper use of names and pronouns

All students will be referred to by the names and pronouns they use (e.g. she, they, ze, he). If you have a name that differs from the one that appears on the roster, please let me know before the second class period so that I can use your correct name and pronouns. [Students can designate their personal pronouns on the class roster via Wolverine Access](#): Student Business > Campus Personal Information > Gender Identity.

If you happen to be on campus, there are two inclusive restrooms in the SSW building: room 1784 (1st floor, near Registrar's Office) and B833T (Lower Level). [Click here for the Spectrum Center's map of gender inclusive restrooms on campus.](#)

h. COVID-19 Statement

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](#).

i. Health Related Class Absences

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 me by email about your absence as soon as practical, so that I can make accommodations. Please note that documentation (a Doctor's note) for medical excuses is not required.

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*
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities*
- *Religious/spiritual observances*
- *Military deployment*
- *Writing skills and expectations*
- *Academic integrity and plagiarism*