



<b>Course title:</b>	Theories and practices of community change	
<b>Course #/term:</b>	SW650, 001, Fall, 2021	
<b>Time &amp; place:</b>	Tuesdays, 9-12, online	
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3	
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	Foundation essentials or permission of instructor.	
<b>Instructor:</b>	Odessa Gonzalez Benson, PhD, MSW	
<b>Pronouns:</b>	She, her hers	
<b>Contact info:</b>	<b>Email:</b> odessagb@umich.edu	<b>Phone:</b> 734-763-6250
	You may expect a response within 48 hours	
<b>Office:</b>	3828	
<b>Office hours:</b>	By appointment	

## 1. Course Statement

### a. Course description

This class will focus on the theories and practices for community change, with emphasis on the relationships between theory and practice (“praxis”). It will familiarize students to a range of critical change theories and core concepts and help students to develop their own understanding of frameworks for community change. Students will engage with different theories in examining community change, which may include critical intersectionality, critical race, empowerment and liberation, social movement, and feminist theories, as examples. It will also look to historical and contemporary examples of community and social change movements to explore theory and practice including US and global community change movements, and the work of organic intellectuals and social change leaders (e.g. Grace Lee Boggs, Ella Baker, Myles Horton, ACT-UP, Black Lives Matter, #metoo, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Zapatistas, #GirlsLikeUs, World Social Forum, Climate Change).

Throughout the class, students will also use these examples to examine and understand the major range of models and practices for engaging in community change, for example: community organizing, community development, community-based policy advocacy, and popular education, and be able to assess the differences, purposes, and theoretical basis for the practices. For Community Change Pathway participants: We strongly recommend that this course be taken before or concurrently with the other required pathway class

### b. Course objectives and competencies

1. Describe, compare, and contrast several types of critical theories about social and community change. (EPAS 7)
2. Identify theories relevant to particular goal and problem areas, and critique their strengths and limitations. (EPAS 7)

3. Critique different theories as to their assumptions, origins, relevance for different social problems, and relevance for marginalized and oppressed groups inclusive of a broad range of intersecting diversity dimensions. (EPAS 4, 5)
4. Apply particular theories to different areas of social work practice. (EPAS 7)

**c. Course design**

This course will use varied format including:

- Small group & whole group engaged learning activities
- Innovative designs- web-based, videos, flipped classrooms
- Discussion and interactive formats, e.g. book clubs, presentations, debates
- Historical case-studies to examine community change
- Praxis- focused, linking theory to practice and action.

**d. Intensive focus on PODS**

This course integrates Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice or PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of community change theories that will help students explore the connections between race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, and psychological and physical functioning, well- being and community change. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will provide students with tools to understand and apply theories to practice with diverse populations.

This course encourages students to develop critical thinking skills to explore theories and practices of community change. Students will gain an understanding of various concepts, history, and approaches that inform community change practices and how those frameworks engage issues of privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice to promote or limit community change. Students will learn a range of classic and contemporary social justice theories and historical practices of community change using a framework of context, history, meaning, and possibility to examine theories and practices of community change.

Above is the course description approved by the faculty last spring. This is a new course, piloted this year, so we may have some adjustments.

## 2. Class Requirements

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### 1. Text and class materials

There is no text required for this course. All materials are in the Canvas course site.

Materials are in 2 locations in Canvas:

- (a) Home or Module tab -- for that week.
- (b) Files tab -- with the corresponding Session #;

Books, with chapters available in Canvas.

- bell hooks. 1984. *Feminist theory: From margin to center*.
- Christens, B. 2019. *Community Power and Empowerment*. Oxford University Press.
- Finn, J. 2019. *Just Practice: A social justice approach to social work*. Oxford University Press.
- Forde, C. & Lynch, D. 2015. *Social Work and Community Development: A Critical Practice Perspective*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Mullally, R. 2019. *New Structural Social Work*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford University Press.
- Nelson, A. 2011. *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Pincock, K., Betts, A. & Easton-Calabria, E. 2020. *The Global Governed? Refugees as Providers of Protection and Assistance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pyles, L. 2014. *Progressive Community Organizing*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Weil, Reisch & Ohmer. 2013. *The Handbook of Community Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

### 2. Class schedule

Summary/Overview of the semester:

Framing		
1	Jan 19	Theory
2	Jan 26	Power, Empowerment
3	Feb 2	Frameworks / Theories of Change
4	Feb 9	Epistemology, Paradigms, Meta-theory: Positivism, Constructivism, Postmodernism
5	Feb 16	Postmodernism, Critical theory, Governmentality
6	Feb 23	Post-development, Innovation, Complexity
Deepening		
7	Mar 2	Constructivism: Interpretive, narrative, discursive approaches
8	Mar 9	Marxist, Conflict theory
9	Mar 16	Decolonizing theory and methodologies
10	Mar 23	No class: U-M wellness day
11	Mar 30	Queer theory, Feminist theory
12	Apr 6	Critical Race Theory
Synthesizing		
13	Apr 13	Synthesis, Review, Concept Maps
14	Apr 20	Last day- Futurism, Radical Imagining
	Apr 30	Finals

Date	Agenda	Required Readings
Sess 1 Jan 19	Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finn 2019. <u>PAGE 140-149</u>. Ch 4: What is Theory.</li> <li>- Weil et al 2013. <u>PAGE 2-5</u>.</li> <li>- Reed, B. G. 2005. <u>PAGE 84-102</u>. Theorizing in Community Practice. Ch 4, In M. Weil, Handbook of Community Practice. Thousand Oaks, CA.</li> </ul>
Sess 2 Jan 26	Power, Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christens 2019. <u>Chapter 2</u> Community Power.</li> <li>- Christens 2019. <u>Chapter 3</u> Empowerment.</li> <li>- Weil et al 2013. <u>PAGE 9-11</u>: Empowerment theory and participation.</li> <li>- OPTIONAL: Cornwall, A. (2008) Unpacking ‘Participation’: models, meanings and practices. <i>Community Development Journal</i>, 43(3), 269–283.</li> </ul>
Sess 3 Feb 2	Frameworks/ Theories of Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weil et al, 2013. <u>PAGE 24-28</u>.</li> </ul> <p><i>JIGSAW: You will be assigned to 1 of 5 five readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christens 2019. <u>PAGE 177-195</u>. Chapter 8: Designing Research &amp; Action.</li> <li>- Finn 2019. <u>PAGE 177-183</u>. Just Practice: An integrated framework.</li> <li>- Forde &amp; Lynch 2015. <u>PAGE 90-99</u>. Cycle of community development.</li> <li>- Pyles 2014. <u>PAGE 61-77</u>. Chapter 5: Organizing Spectrum.</li> <li>- Tuck, E. (2009). <u>Especially PAGE 55-64</u>: Indigenous theories of change. Re-visioning action: Participatory action research and Indigenous theories of change. <i>The Urban Review</i>, 41(1), 47-65.</li> </ul>
Sess 4 Feb 9	Epistemology, Paradigms, Meta-Theory: Positivism, Constructionism, Postmodernism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Green, T. L. (2017). From positivism to critical theory: School-community relations toward community equity literacy. <i>International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education</i>, 30(4).</li> <li>- Thomas, M. L., O’Connor, M. K., &amp; Netting, F. E. (2011). A framework for teaching community practice. <i>Journal of Social Work Education</i>, 47(2), 337–355.</li> </ul>
Sess 5 Feb 16	Postmodernism, Critical Theory, Governmentality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mullaly 2019. <u>PAGE 173-186</u>.</li> <li>- Weil et al 2013. <u>PAGE 7-9</u>.</li> <li>- Finn 2019. <u>PAGE 161-166</u>.</li> <li>- Foucault -TBD</li> <li>- Ungar, M. (2004). Surviving as a Postmodern Social Worker: Two Ps &amp; Three Rs of Direct Practice. <i>Social Work</i>, 49(3), 488–496.</li> </ul>
Sess 6 Feb 23	Post-Development, Complexity, Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pincock et al 2020. Chapter 2 Theoretical framework.</li> <li>- Gonzalez Benson, O. (2020). On becoming ‘essential’: Coronavirus lessons of ontology (from migrant farmworkers and us who consume the fruits of her labor). <i>Qualitative Social Work</i>.</li> <li>- more articles TBD</li> </ul>
<p>DEEPENING Session 7-12: DUE: Theory Presentations: Group</p>		
Sess 7 Mar 2	Constructionist Theory: Interpretive,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finn 2019. <u>PAGE 166-168</u>.</li> <li>- Forde &amp; Lynch 2014. Chapter 3: Beyond dominant discourses.</li> <li>- Pyles 2014. Chapter 8: Language matters.</li> </ul>

Date	Agenda	Required Readings
	narrative, discursive approaches	Case: #metoo
Sess 8 Mar 9	Marxist Theory, Conflict Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mullally 2019. Chapter 6.</li> <li>- Pyles 2014. <u>PAGE 28-30.</u></li> </ul> - Case: World Social Forum and transformative economies
Sess 9 Mar 16	Decolonizing Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tuck, E. (2009). Re-visioning action: Participatory action research and Indigenous theories of change. <i>The Urban Review</i>, 41(1), 47-65.</li> <li>- Tuck, E., &amp; Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. <i>Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education &amp; Society</i>, 1(1).</li> </ul> Case: Storytelling
Sess 10 Mar 23	No class	No readings, no assignments
Sess 11 Mar 30	Feminist Theory, Queer Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mullally 2019. <u>PAGE 160-168.</u></li> <li>- Finn 2019. <u>PAGE 171-172.</u></li> <li>- Pyles 2014. <u>PAGE 30-32.</u></li> <li>- bell hooks 1984 feminist theory: from margin to center: TBD</li> </ul> Case:
Sess 12 Apr 6	Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delgado, R., &amp; Stefancic, J. (2001). <i>Critical race theory: An introduction</i>. New York University Press.</li> <li>- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. <i>Stanford Law Review</i>, 43(6), 1241–1299.</li> <li>- Du Bois, W. E. B. (2008). <i>The souls of black folk</i> (B. H. Edwards, Ed.). Oxford University Press.</li> <li>- Mullally 2019. <u>PAGE 169-172.</u></li> <li>- Finn 2019. <u>PAGE 172-175.</u></li> </ul> CASE: -Nelson 2011. <u>PAGE 1-21.</u> Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party - The Permanence of Black Lives Matter: A new policy platform from a coalition of activists signals a new stage in the protest movement. <i>The Atlantic</i> . August 3, 2016 <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/movement-black-lives-platform/494309/">https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/movement-black-lives-platform/494309/</a>

Date	Agenda	Required Readings
SYNTHESIZING		
Sess 13 Apr 13	Synthesizing, Reviewing, Concept Maps	DUE: Theory / Concept Maps
		Guest speaker: thepeople.org
Sess 14 Apr 20	Last Day: Futurism, Radical Imagining	- Ytasha Womack: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlF90sXVfKk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlF90sXVfKk</a> - Choose one story: <i>Octavia's Brood : Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements</i> , edited by Walidah Imarisha, and adrienne maree brown, AK Press, 2015. <i>ProQuest Ebook Central</i> . <a href="https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=1996052">https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=1996052</a>
Apr 30	Finals week	DUE: Theory Narrative

### 3. Assignments

Assignment	Due date	Grade
<b>Weekly Assignments</b>		
1. Critical Questions CQ	DUE Sunday nights 11:59pm. Choose any 3 weeks for Weeks 3-6 Choose any 3 weeks for Weeks 7-12.	3 pts each x 6 weeks = 18 points
2. Online Discussion Posts	DUE Monday nights 11:59pm. Choose any 8 weeks for Weeks 2-12.	1 pt each x 8 weeks = 8 points
3. Participation	Weekly	18 points
<b>Summative Assignments</b>		
4. Theory Presentation	Assigned date: Week 7-12 Group work. 90 mins presentation.	26 points
5. Theory / Concept Map	DUE April 13	10 points
6. Theory Narrative	DUE April 30 finals week 5-6 pages, double spaced.	20 points

## 1. Critical Questions

DUE Sunday nights 11:59pm.

3 points for each Critical Question x 6 weeks = 18 points total.

Choose any 3 weeks for Weeks 2-6.

Choose any 3 weeks for Weeks 7-12.

Practice week: Session 2 is for practice; graded but not recorded. But if you're happy with this grade, you can choose to use this week's grade as one of the three CQs for Weeks 2-6.

Three sentences that reflect critical thinking about readings for the coming week. The last sentence should be a question. The point of the assignment is to ensure that you read critically and engage with the views and ideas offered by the writers. It is not asking you to record your reactions or personal reflections.

Write three sentences:

One or two sentences to summarize or contextualize the specific part/s in the readings you are addressing. Make sure you put the reference so that we will know where to look, when we are thinking about your Critical Question or CQ. Reference means (a) for readings: the author and page number, or (b) for videos: the speaker and time point (exact time point as much as possible).

And then 1-2 sentences for your CQ.

Do not summarize the readings. Instead, outline your ideas, observations, and perspectives applied to the views and positions presented in the readings. Reading and engaging critically means (in this context) exploring, investigating, challenging, testing your responses to the reading and the viewpoints/ideas posited by the writer.

The following questions may be useful as entry points to the assignment:

Which ideas did you find problematic? Why?

What kinds of counter-arguments to these perspectives can you offer?

What questions/ideas related to the session topic are missing from the readings?

*We will use Critical Questions for Online Discussions and live discussions.* Your name will not be shared as attached to your Critical Question. The aim is to facilitate open discussions. But you can voluntarily share this and give more explanation during class discussions, as you wish.

*Clarifying Questions---* In addition to Critical Questions, you can send as many clarifying questions as you wish, if something is unclear or confusing. Not graded.

*Grading: three points automatically, but with these deductions as relevant:*

0.50 Points deducted for *'what-can-social-workers-do?'* questions – Do not submit broad questions such as, 'what can social workers do to address this?' or "what are some interventions" or "how can we resolve these issues/ problems" or a variation of these. These questions are relevant and important; but, these types of questions are not what are intended.

0.50 Points deducted for *'what-are-the-implications-or-impact?'* questions – Do not submit broad questions about impact, like "how does this impact clients" or "what are implications for practice" or "how does this affect mental health" or a variation of these. These questions are relevant and important; but, these types of questions are not what are intended.

0.50 Points deducted: if the question summarizes main points of readings, rather than critical thinking.

0.25 Points deducted: if more than 3 sentences.

0.25 Points deducted: if no reference or citation (speaker + minute; author + page#)

0.25 Points deducted if submitted late after due date and time 11:59pm. It's not a big deal or not a problem at all if you're late, but please just send me a quick email. We need timely submission of CQs, because our Online Discussions are based on CQs.

## 2. Online Discussion Posts

DUE Monday nights 11:59pm.

1 point each x 8 weeks = 8 points total

Choose any 8 weeks in the sem.

No other instructions, other than please conduct with respect and camaraderie. The aim is to engage everyone in discussion; your posts will not be graded or evaluated for content, simply for participation. Two or three Critical Questions from classmates will be Discussion questions each week.

## 3. Participation

DUE weekly during class time. 18 points.

Participation is a component of the grade for this course and is very important since work for community change requires collaboration/working with others, as does working and theorizing for justice. The pedagogical approach aims for a flipped classroom, and so weekly discussions are student led. You will be assigned particular readings each week for jigsaw activities. Attendance, being engaged in class, in the large group and in workgroups, are important components of participation.

## 4. Theory Presentation - Group

DUE on assigned date, Week 7 to 12.

Group work with 3 or 4 people. 90 minutes educational session for the class.

Conduct a 90-minute education session for the class with a discussion, in-class activity, and resource materials.

During Session 2, we will select groups. You will have class time each week to meet as a group. I am available to meet with each group anytime.

### 1. Discussion of the theoretical framework, set of concepts, theory.

A. Consider the following elements in your discussion, engaged session and resources: You don't have to cover all of these deeply one by one; you can be more selective.

- a. The history of the concept(s)/theory--roots, key people involved in the development, what they were trying to explain.
- b. What "research"/knowledge development methods have been used to produce the body of knowledge? What are the strengths and limitations of these methods?
- c. How have concepts been applied within social work and for community change (and why not if not)?
- d. In what ways can this theory/set of concepts inform critical justice/intersectionality/anti oppression work? What are the theory's limitations?
- e. What aspects and types of community change does this theory/set of concepts illuminate/inform?
- f. Different approaches and goals, intra and interpersonally, structurally and culturally, in relation to social processes, particular issues, types of conflict, and so forth.
- g. What elements does this theory/set of concepts miss or obscure that are important for community change and different approaches?

B. Use one of the frameworks from Session 3 to do a case analysis. This can be a program, org, movement, etc.

I provided recommendations in the syllabus, but you can choose a different case. You can conduct interview/s with actors, time and circumstances permitting; I will provide a \$50 stipend to each interviewee.



## 2. Engaged activity with classmates in-class.

Conduct an engaged activity with the class to assist in understanding the theory & applications. You should plan this to take 30-45 minutes out of the total 90 minutes. Use whatever format you want.

## 3. Resource materials for classmates.

Create handout/s for the class that explicates key elements (see elements a-g above), its application and how they can learn more about the theory.

## 4. Groupwork Contract

Due Session 3 Feb 2, after the second day of groupwork.

Create a groupwork contract and share with the Instructor. This can take any form that works for your group.

## 5. Reflective Essay

Write a 1 to 3-page reflection about the assignment, double spaced, Times New Roman, 1" margins.

Due by midnight of the day you present.

- what you learned (about the theory, yourself, the education session, groupwork)
- an assessment of each group member's contributions,
- an assessment of class members' evaluation of your presentation,
- any limitations of your learning and your group's work, and
- how you intend to keep learning.

Evaluation.

Rubric or more details to be provided, and the following will be considered:

- classmates' assessment of the clarity and usefulness of the presentation, handout, & discussion
- your own assessment of your learning and performance as a group and individual contributions
- instructor's assessment

## **5. Theory / Concept Map**

Due Apr 13, to be shared with classmates, and submitted to instructor. 10 points.

Creative product that depicts the themes of the course.

With option to combine the Theory Narrative (see below) as 3-4-page narrative explaining / interpreting the map.

Assessment criteria / grading rubric available in our Canvas site.

A concept map is a visual (or physical) representation of key concepts and relationships among them. It is intended to help you to integrate and think about how you will use elements of this course as a whole. This is meant to be a generative assignment, and would be a good artifact for a portfolio if you decide to do one.

The map should:

- Integrate, synthesize, apply and reflect on core concepts or components of course (including theories and analytical thinking, key elements of community and change, different approaches to community change, including critical justice goals and processes)
- Demonstrate relationships and connections among various elements of the course
- Allow you to be creative and integrate your interests
- Help foster a sense of community/ common purpose, and increase learning among students through sharing, and seeing multiple applications of course concepts.
- Have citations.
- Celebrate your learning and creativity.

The map can incorporate your specific interests, and be done in many formats. There are many resources on the web about concept mapping, and several examples in our Canvas site.

More details about Concept Maps and assessment provided separately in our Canvas site.

## 6. Theory Narrative

Due Apr 30 finals week. 20 points.

5-6 pages (not including citations), double spaced, Times New Roman, 1" margins.

Assessment criteria / grading rubric available in our Canvas site.

3 options: (a) narrative for Concept Map, (b) narrative for Group Presentation, (c) other narrative of your choice

### a) Narrative for Concept Map

A written explanation or analysis of Concept Map, using course concepts.

The paper should explain the foci, rationales, and components of the Concept Map, what is meant to be represented, how it was developed, how course streams and concepts were incorporated, what applications are included, and especially what you learned by constructing it. You can also talk about anything you had to leave out, and how you will apply what you learned going forward and will keep learning.

### b) Narrative for Group Presentation

A written explanation or analysis of some aspect of your Group Presentation, using course concepts.

You can choose to summarize and critically analyze the theory, and/or write about theory application to the case.

### c) Other narrative of your choice

You can create your own assignment, using class concepts or concepts/theories not covered in class. Let's chat.

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## 4. Attendance

Sometimes attendance is not possible for various reasons. Please communicate with me ahead of time if possible, so we can work out alternatives. See Policy on Class Attendance in the MSW Student Guide for additional information about school-wide policies.

## 5. Grading

Assessment/grading rubrics to be provided. See Assignment descriptions for grading.

Please refer 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.

## 6. Class Recording and Course Materials

Audio and video recording of in-class lectures and discussions is prohibited without the advance written permission of the instructor. Students with 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 materials may not be reproduced, sold, published or distributed to others, in whole or in part, without written consent of the instructor.

## 7. 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.

#### 8. 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.

9. 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*