



Course title:	Understanding Social Issues of Our Time
Course #/term:	Social Work 200, Section 001 – Fall 2021
Time and mode:	Tuesday and Thursday 10-11:30 in-person
Credit hours:	3
Prerequisites:	None
Instructor:	Joseph A. Galura
Pronouns:	He, his, him
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Office:	3640c Social Work
Office hours:	Wednesday 1-4, and by appointment

1. COURSE STATEMENT

a. Course description:

The following seminar will feature a close reading and discussion of up to five contemporary bestsellers, with students choosing from a list including \$2 a Day, Hillbilly Elegy, March, Hidden Figures, American Born Chinese, Persepolis, The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, Tuesdays with Morrie, and Just Mercy.

- How does the content of these books inform the public discourse on social issues such as poverty, rural America, civil rights, diversity, loss and grief, and the death penalty?
- Can the values, theories, and practices of Social Work broaden and deepen our understanding of these social issues, and if so, in what specific ways?

Students will also be introduced to the concept of integrative learning and develop an ePortfolio over the course of the semester.

b. Course content:

The particular social issues selected for discussion will change from year to year depending on faculty interest and the contemporary context. Selected topics may include poverty, homelessness, family violence, divorce, mental illness, juvenile delinquency, inequality, racism, child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, community development, and managed care. The opening sessions of the course will briefly overview the social context for the kinds of roles, interventions, and fields of service that the profession generally operates from, before

exploring in depth the professions response to each selected social issue. Important professional themes such as multicultural sensitivity, empowerment, prevention, and value based intervention will also be reviewed in this course. Note: this course is distinguished from a more traditional course on social issues since it focuses specifically on a limited number of selected social problems and probes social work's professional involvement in preventing and assuaging each issue.

c. Course objectives and competencies:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the various roles, levels of intervention, and fields of service from which social workers practice.
2. Describe the various value dilemmas, political controversies, and societal challenges that the profession of social work faces when it approaches selected social problems.
3. Explain why diversity, empowerment, and strengths-based perspectives are critical to the way social workers approach social problems.
4. Critique the social work profession's response to selected social problems.
5. Engage in activities that use integrative learning principles to facilitate knowledge transfer and link classroom, fieldwork, and personal experiences.
6. Identify, document, and link knowledge and skills across educational, professional, and personal experiences.
7. Create a beginning e-portfolio by completing the assignments listed below utilizing the Seelio platform, and present this to the class at the end of the course.
8. Demonstrate basic skills for integrative learning, generative interviewing, appreciative inquiry, giving and receiving feedback, and personal reflection.
10. Reflect on how social justice principles and processes are reflected in the readings and their lives and how this can be strengthened.

d. Course design:

Class sessions are scheduled for an hour and a half, twice weekly. Varied pedagogical strategies are utilized in this course including, but not limited to: traditional lecture/discussion format, small group activities, guest speakers, video clips, podcasts and other online resources.

e. Curricular themes:

Multiculturalism and Diversity issues will be explored as students identify self-knowledge and skills for regularly monitoring their practice within the context of their work. The PODS (Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice) lens will be applied to practice situations and students will have an opportunity to discuss relevant field issues related to the diversity dimensions (ability, age, culture, economic class, ethnicity, family structure, gender, gender identity and expression, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation).

Social Justice and Social Change issues will be addressed by helping students to critically assess their commitment to and skills for enacting change towards social justice goals. The role of the social worker will be discussed as reflected by their individual experiences and reflection.

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation approaches will be addressed within the context of the student's orientation to practice. Small group discussions will allow the student to discuss, review, compare, and contrast alternative approaches and frameworks while reflecting on their individual work and experiences.

Behavioral and Social Science research approaches will be addressed within the context of the student's orientation and method. Small group discussions will allow the student to discuss, review, compare, and contrast alternative approaches and frameworks while reflecting on their individual work and experiences.

f. Relationship to social work ethics and values:

This course introduces the concept that professions act within a value and ethical framework. This framework shapes the kinds of interventions that the social work professions can employ in addressing social problems. Elements of the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics and other ethical frameworks are discussed to help students understand the opportunities and parameters of the profession.

g. Intensive focus on PODS:

See "e. Curricular Themes," first paragraph.

2. CLASS REQUIREMENTS

a. Text and class materials:

1. Required texts – available electronically through the U-M Library
March (ISBN: 978-1603093002)
Just Mercy (ISBN: 978-0812994537)
\$2 a Day (ISBN: 978-0544303188)
2. "Class Picks One"
Persepolis
Hillbilly Elegy
Hidden Figures
American Born Chinese
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
3. "Student Picks One" – each student, in consultation with the instructor, will pick an additional book to incorporate into the Final Presentation
4. Additional resources are available on Canvas

- “To fully engage in the course, it is expected that students will complete all required readings.”
- Required readings will be discussed/debriefed in class, as will the topics of written assignments and/or prompts for works to be posted your ePortfolio.
- Additional readings may be assigned and could be handed out in class or posted on Canvas.

b. Class schedule:

Please review the University's [Wolverine Culture of Care](#) statement prior to our first class.

Following is an overview of each week:

Dates	Topic	Required readings & assignments
Week 1 31 Aug & 2 Sep	The Pedagogy of Fandom...Race, Racism & Anti-racist?	Syllabus, Satterly (31 Aug) Satterly ...Online Discussions 1 (2 Sep)
Week 2 7 & 9 Sep	M is for March?	March, vol 1& Reading Guide, Journal 1 (7 Sep)...Online Discussions 2 (9 Sep)
Week 3 14 & 16 Sep	March, Democracy & Debate?	March, vol 2 & Journal 2 (14 Sep)...Online Discussions 3 (16 Sep)
Week 4 21 & 23 Sep	A March Medley?	March, vol 3 & Journal 3 (21 Sep)...Online Discussions 3 (23 Sep)
Week 5 28 & 30 Sep	Evolution of Values, Concepts and Community Practice Approaches?	Gamble & Weil (ch 3) & Journal 4 (28 Sep)...Online Discussions 4 (30 Sep)
Week 6 5 & 7 Oct	Mercy, Mercy Me?	Just Mercy (Intro-Ch 8), Teacher's Guide & Journal 5 (5 Oct)...Online Discussions 5 (7 Oct)
Week 7 12 & 14 Oct	Mercy, Abolition, Policing?	Just Mercy (Chs 9-16) & Journal 6 (12 Oct)...Online Discussions 6 (14 Oct)

Weeks 8 & 9 21 Oct 26 & 28 Oct	Integrative Learning – “Who Am I?”	Midterm Presentations (26 & 28 Oct)...Online Discussions 7 (Good with Words, Portfolium tutorials – 21 or 26 Oct)
Weeks 10 & 11 2 & 4 Nov 9 & 11 Nov	Poverty Solutions?	\$2 a Day (Chs 1-3), Discussion Guide & Journal 7 (2 Nov)...Online Discussions 8 (4 Nov)...\$2 a Day (Chs 4-6) & Journal 8 (9 Nov)...Online Discussion 9 (11 Nov)
Weeks 12 & 13 16 & 18 Nov 23 Nov	“Class Picks One’	Online Discussion 10 (18 Nov)
Weeks 15 & 15 30 Nov & 1 Dec 7 & 9 Dec	“I Read, Therefore I Am?”	Final ePortfolio Presentations (30 Nov or 1 or 7 or 9 Dec) Journal 9 (10 Dec)

c. Assignments:

This course is terraced or scaffolded around three types of questions, building towards midterm and final in-class presentations of students’ ePortfolio. The three types are:

- **WHAT?** What does our close reading of these assigned texts say about particular social issues?
- **SO WHAT?** Can the values, theories, and practices of Social Work broaden and deepen our understanding of these social issues, and if so, in what specific ways?
- **NOW WHAT?** Who am I and how does this ongoing conversation affect my purpose and passion as a change agent?

Following are the specific assignments. Please note that the Journals, Midterm and Final are graded with the anticipation that we will discuss them in person at that particular class (or synchronously and remote, if necessary). Discussions will be posted on Canvas. The expectation is that you will “choose your own adventure” each week from an array of course-related resources, asynchronously and online, with points given according to participation.

Journal 1: Due before class on 7 Sep (4 points)

Review the March Reading Guide. Select two or three questions you would like us to discuss as a class. In your selection process, please reflect on your interest in, motivation for, and/or

experience with this particular content area. Please upload to Canvas a Word.doc - 1-2 pages, double-spaced, 11-12 point font.

Dive deeper (recommended) with Morris, *A Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement* (1999)

Plan ahead. Which additional book will you incorporate into your final presentation? If you are interested in the Civil Rights Movement, besides the titles in the March Reading Guide, you might also consider:

His Truth Is Marching On; Radical Equations; The Arc of Justice; Freedom Riders; The Gospel of Freedom; Kennedy and King; White Rage; A More Beautiful and Terrible History; Slavery by Another Name; The Dawn of Detroit; Sing, Unburied, Sing; Twelve Days in May; The Underground Railroad; Black Bottom Saints; City of Champions; Death in a Promised Land; On Juneteenth

Journal 2: Due before class on 14 Sep (4 points)

Informed by our in-person and on-line Discussions to date, please describe how you self-identify with regard to race and/or ethnicity. Discuss three personal examples and how they relate to our developing narratives about Race, Racism and Anti-racist practices. Where do your examples fit or not fit with our in-person and/or on-line Discussions? Be as specific as possible. Format your examples as three Power Point slides, with the explanation of each written in the notes. Upload to Canvas and be prepared to share with your peers in class.

Dive deeper (recommended). Journal 2 was partially inspired by “A Social Worker’s Reflections on Power, Privilege and Oppression” by Michael S. Spencer, formerly Michigan Social Work’s Associate Dean of Educational Programs.

Plan ahead – the slides are a draft of your midterm presentation. At some point, consider adding:

- A Bookface slide, walk-up music, and/or your response to “I’m a Social Worker, what’s YOUR Superpower?”
- A framework of “If My Life Was A Movie...” Who would be cast in your role? Who would direct? What type of movie would it be – comedy, drama, musical, fantasy, science fiction, comic book, documentary?

Journal 3: Due before class on 21 Sep (4 points)

Browse examples of ePortfolios at <https://ssw.umich.edu/my-ssw/eportfolios>. On ONE Power Point slide, format a suitable “selfie” and “About” text. Be prepared to share the slide with the class and save it to Canvas.

Dive deeper (recommended) into integrative pedagogy with Huber, *Fostering Integrative Learning through the Curriculum* (2006); Richards-Schuster and Galura, *Navigating Multiple ePortfolios* (2017); Galura, *Service-Learning and Integrative Pedagogy for Engaging the Whole Student* (2017).

Plan ahead – In-person presentations on 26 & 28 Oct will feature the work-in-progress on your ePortfolio. Browse the Portfolium tutorial, including “Good with Words,” in Discussions 7.

Journal 4: Due before class on 28 Sep (4 points)

Review Gamble and Weil - *Evolution of Values, Concepts, and Community Practice Approaches* (2010). On ONE Power Point slide, format an image(s) that connects you to at least one social work value, concept, practice or approach. Write out this connection in the “Notes” section of the slide. Be prepared to share the slide with the class and save it to Canvas.

Dive deeper into social work ethics and values with the NASW Code of Ethics (2017) and/or these Eye on Ethics articles (link below) from Social Work Today (recommended). Also recommended: Browsing the other link below – which aspects of the MSW Program interest you most and why?

https://www.socialworktoday.com/eye_on_ethics_index.shtml

<https://ssw.umich.edu/programs/msw/overview>

Journal 5: Due before class on 5 Oct (4 points)

Review the Just Mercy Teacher’s Guide. Select two or three questions you would like us to discuss as a class. In your selection process, please reflect on your interest in, motivation for, and/or experience with posing these particular questions. Please upload to Canvas a Word.doc - 1-2 pages, double-spaced, 11-12 point font.

Plan ahead. Which additional book will you incorporate into your final presentation? If you are interested in Mass Incarceration, you might also consider:

Halfway Home, Tangled Up in Blue, Blood in the Water, The New Jim Crow, From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime, The Maximum Security Book Club, Writing My Wrongs, Women Doing Life, Monster, Makes Me Want to Holler, All God’s Children, Fist-Stick-Knife-Gun, Separated: Family and Community in the Aftermath of an Immigration Raid

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) maintains an online book list: “Book covers are organized by genre (narrative nonfiction, fiction, social analysis/activism) and alphabetized by book title.”

<https://www.cswe.org/Centers-Initiatives/Centers/Center-for-Diversity/Center-Library>

Journal 6: Due before class on 12 Oct (4 points)

Review the link below to the UHS web page, “Personal Well-being for Students” and the discussions about significant learning experiences. On at least new THREE Power Point slides, format images and text that speak to how you are developing your purpose and passion as a change agent. Please upload to Canvas and be prepared to share with the class.

<https://www.uhs.umich.edu/well-being>

Dive deeper (recommended) with these articles on “purpose”:

<https://qz.com/1260478/this-college-is-moving-beyond-what-color-is-your-parachute-and-designing-for-students-to-find-purposeful-work/>

<https://blionline.org/2017/11/like-your-job-so-what-a-better-question-is-do-you-make-a-difference/>

Midterm: In-class Presentations 26 & 28 Oct (10 points)

“Who Am I?” - Each student will give a 5-7 minute presentation, taking the class on a virtual tour of their ePortfolio. A key element is their developing narrative as a change agent, demonstrating:

- An understanding of positionality, race, racism and anti-racist practices
- An application of this understanding to a social issue discussed in class
- A forward-looking vision for social justice, contemplating their personal role in micro, mezzo and/or macro-level efforts for change

Journal 7: Due before class on 2 Nov (4 points)

Review the \$2 a Day Discussion Guide. Select two or three questions you would like us to discuss as a class. In your selection process, please reflect on your interest in, motivation for, and/or experience with posing these particular questions. Please upload to Canvas a Word.doc - 1-2 pages, double-spaced, 11-12 point font.

Plan ahead. Which additional book will you incorporate into your final presentation? If you are interested in Poverty (and/or the Poverty Solutions Certificate), in addition to the links below, you might also consider:

From here to equality, From the edge of the ghetto, Automating inequality, Nickel and dimed, Detroit resurrected, Banker to the poor, Caste, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, Savage inequalities and Rachel and her children and Amazing grace (or pretty much anything else by Jonathan Kozol)

<https://www.bestmswprograms.com/50-best-books-on-poverty/>

<https://firstperson.oxfamamerica.org/2017/01/17-books-that-will-change-your-perspective-about-poverty-this-year/>

<https://ssw.umich.edu/offices/casc-undergraduate-minor/poverty-solutions-certificate-program>

Journal 8: Due before class on 9 Nov (4 points)

How will you present your book's content to the class? Review the various Guides, see also the examples from "Four Minute Books" and CSWE at the links below. Please upload this draft to Canvas as a Word.doc - 1-2 pages, double-spaced, 11-12 point font.

<https://fourminutebooks.com/the-geography-of-genius-summary/> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site. (Links to an external site.)

<https://www.cswe.org/CSWE/media/Diversity-Center/Fiction.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

As noted in class, this is meant as an opportunity to do a first draft that can always be updated or changed prior to your final presentation.

Final: Remote Presentations 30 Nov & 1, 7 & 9 Dec (15 points)

"I Read, Therefore I Am?" - Each student will give a 8-10 minute presentation, again taking the class on a virtual tour of their ePortfolio. The starting point will be the additional book selected for Journal 8.

- WHAT? What does your close reading of this text say about particular social issues?
- SO WHAT? Can the values, theories, and practices of Social Work broaden and deepen our understanding of these social issues, and if so, in what specific ways?
- NOW WHAT? Who am I and how does this ongoing conversation affect my purpose and passion as a change agent?

In addressing NOW WHAT? curate at least THREE elements from this class (or your broader undergraduate experience) into a cohesive, integrative, final presentation.

Dive deeper (recommended) with Schrand, et. al., "Reflecting on Reflections:" Curating ePortfolios for Integrative Learning and Identity Development in a Capstone Seminar (2018).

Journal 9: Final Reflection (8 points)

Prior to midnight on 10 Dec, please upload to Canvas your responses (a Word.doc - 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 11-12 point font) to the questions below.

- Feedback: which academic, co-curricular or professional mentor did you meet with, what feedback did you receive, and how did you use the feedback (or not use) in refining your portfolio and/or presentation?
- What did you learn about yourself through this process, class, and presentation?
- What are your top 3 takeaways from the other presentations and why?
- What did you learn about your overall experience at U-M?

Assignment	Due date	Percent of overall grade
Class Participation on Zoom & in Discussions Online	31 Aug – 9 Dec	25
Journal 1	7 Sep by 10 am submit Word.doc to Canvas	5
Journal 2	14 Sep by 10 am submit 3 slides to Canvas	5
Journal 3	21 Sep by 10 am submit 1 slide to Canvas	5
Journal 4	28 Sep by 10 am submit 1 slide to Canvas	5
Journal 5	5 Oct by 10 am submit Word.doc to Canvas	5
Journal 6	12 Oct by 10 am submit 3+ slides to Canvas	5
Midterm Presentations	26 or 28 Oct	12
Journal 7	2 Nov 10 am submit Word.doc to Canvas	5
Journal 8	9 Nov by 10 am submit Word.doc to Canvas	5
Final Presentations	30 Nov or 1, 7 or 9 Dec	17
Journal 9	10 Dec by midnight	7

	submit Word.doc to Canvas	
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d. Attendance and class participation:

This is a Social Work class that subscribes to the School’s [Policy on Class Attendance](#). Students are expected to attend all of their classes. Moreover, attendance, punctuality and class participation count for one-sixth of each student’s final grade. Any absence of more than 20 minutes during a given session equates to the loss of class participation points on that date. Excessive absences will be brought to the attention of the student by the course instructor.

e. Grading:

Because this is a Social Work class, it will attempt to follow the School’s [Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction](#) as well as [Student Grievance procedures](#).

- Assignments will be graded on a credit/no credit basis and given written feedback by the instructor. A student has the option of revising and resubmitting work for re-evaluation within one week of grading.
- My policy for incomplete and late assignments is to accept them within 24 hours of time and date due at one-half the specified credit – but not after 24 hours.
- Extra Credit? In a typical semester a number of events of particular relevance to the course content are staged on campus or virtually – one of the assigned authors, for example, might be invited to lecture. When possible, the instructor will announce these events in class or on Canvas. If you attend, to receive 2 points of extra credit, upload a 1-2 page Word.doc to Canvas. Summarize the event (who spoke, when and where, who were the sponsors, what were your 2-3 key takeaways?) and reflect (how do you connect these takeaways with any specific point(s) on the syllabus?). Up to three events can be counted for a maximum of 6 extra credit points. Please upload your Word.doc within one week of attending and prior to our final class session.
- Number grades convert to letters as follows:
A 100-94/A- 93-90 B+ 89-87/B 86-84/B- 83-80
C+ 79-77/C 76-74/C- 73-70 D+ 69-67/D 66-64/D- 63-60

f. 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 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. Additional information on class recordings can be found the [Recording and Privacy Concerns FAQ](#).

g. 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](#).

h. 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. 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*
- *Proper use of names and pronouns*
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities*
- *Religious/spiritual observances*
- *Military deployment*
- *Writing skills and expectations*
- *Academic integrity and plagiarism*