

<b>Course title:</b>	Engaging Social Justice, Diversity, and Oppression in Social Work	
<b>Course #/term:</b>	SW 505, Section 01, Fall 2021	
<b>Time and place:</b>	Mondays, 9AM Room # 2752	
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3	
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	-	
<b>Instructor:</b>	Amber Williams	
<b>Pronouns:</b>	She, her, hers	
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	You may expect a response within 24-48 hours	
<b>Office:</b>		
<b>Office hours:</b>	By Appointment	



## Course Statement

### Course description

This required essentials course is designed to increase students' awareness, knowledge, and critical skills related to diversity, human rights, social and economic justice. The course focuses heavily on engaging diversity and differences in social work practice and advancing human rights and social and economic justice, through understanding power and oppression across micro, meso, and macro levels. We will explore the knowledge base that underlies skills needed to work towards justice. These include types and sources of power, multiple social locations, social constructions, social processes, social identities, conflicts, and how all these interact. A major emphasis is on self-reflexivity and developing skills in critical contextual thinking and analyses, as well as learning to use knowledge and theory to recognize critique, and engage underlying assumptions, and inform working for change. Multiple kinds of understanding are especially important—across groups, between organizations and system levels, and within and between people, related to intersecting social locations.

### Course content

Students will actively explore how societal power and diversity characterize and shape the human experience, and are critical to the formation of social structures, cultural understandings, group and organizational processes, and identities. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. In this course, students will learn how current experiences of privilege and oppression are shaped by historical forces, societal structures, social constructions, group

and interpersonal processes, and human understandings, including an understanding of the institutional, organizational, policy, and socio-cultural arrangements that contribute to them. Additionally, this foundation course will explore formulations of human rights, including positive rights, and negative conditions that need to be eradicated. This course also studies how social justice and injustice occur in organizations, institutions, and society, relevant theories that can inform work for justice (e.g., critical race theory, and components of many theories), and how mechanisms of oppression and privilege work (e.g., marginalization, exploitation, violence, cultural hegemony, and powerlessness).

### **Course objectives and competencies**

- Recognize the extent to which structures, policies, and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, create or enhance privilege and power (Essential 14, 30, 33, 44; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 5, 6).
- Explain the cumulative effect of structural discrimination on people with differing and multiple social identities and locations (Essentials 11, 14, 29, 33, 38, 45; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 6).
- Distinguish between health differences and health disparities, and provide relevant examples of each (Essential 5, 11, 15, 30; EPAS 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8).
- Discuss the policy reform sought by modern social justice movements in response to police brutality (Essential 6, 13, 14, 30, 32, 44; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7).
- Recognize how policy decisions at the local, state, and national level can exclude and endanger the environmental health of citizens when their voices are not heard or heeded (Essential 5, 13, 22, 29, 30; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).
- Utilize strategies and resources to advocate for social, economic, and environmental justice and change, while protecting human rights (Essential 1, 11, 14, 29, 33, 43; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 6, 7).
- Define and apply your own positionalities and the importance of their intersections (Essential 38, 42, 45; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 6)
- Evaluate historical context and its current applications within the profession and practice as a nurse (Essential 6, 11, 15, 29, 39, 44, 45; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8).

### **Course design**

This class will strive to foster a learning environment where each student can reflect critically on sources of power and mechanisms of oppression and privilege, construct a framework for justice, and examine sources and impacts of their beliefs and perspectives. This course will work to create a climate that supports critical analyses, mutual learning, engaging within and across differences, examining sources of power and knowledge, and understanding more about identities. It involves lectures, video, discussion and participation in experiential activities. Additionally, this course will provide a forum to critically examine how our multiple status locations, societal constructions, and social processes shape our beliefs, assumptions, behaviors, and life experiences. Special attention will also be given to knowledge about justice and change, and principles of change towards justice.

### **Intensive Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (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. Specifically, this course centers entirely on engaging with, exploring, and better understanding PODS as related to social work practice on all levels. PODS is infused through this course and its assignments, which require self-reflection, group work with practice of skills learned, and application of key concepts to understand social justice issues and social work responses to the myriad of needs connected to PODS, both with clients/communities, and social workers themselves.

### **Class Requirements**

**Required Texts:** All readings, media, and handouts from journals and pertinent news articles and other sources **will be posted** on a regular basis to Canvas.

**Class schedule:** The class schedule is reflected in the reading guide. Please review this document separately for an overview of course sessions, readings, and other course outcomes

**Assignments:** All course assignments are to be submitted in class by the due date as reflected in the above schedule (please review in Canvas for any updates). Points will be deducted from late assignments.

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due date</b>	<b>Percent of overall grade</b>
Positionality Statement	10.30.21 11:59PM Submit to Canvas	30%
Group Presentation	Select Date and Topic (TBD)	25%
Life Trajectory Interview	12.13.21 11:59PM Submit to Canvas	30%
Participation and Attendance	Ongoing	15%

**Attendance and Participation:** Class attendance and active participation (large and small group discussion, individual reflection, oral participation, etc) account for 15% of your overall grade. Participation through student-student and instructor-student interactions are important considerations for optimal performance. Class will begin promptly at 9AM, and will conclude at 12:50PM, in accordance with university wide Michigan time policy.

Excessive absences, as determined by the instructor, may result in a reduction in grade and will be brought to the attention of the student and the academic advisor by the course instructor. While attendance is not always a part of a course grade, due to the nature of many course assignments, in-class skill building activities and group projects, if a student fails to attend most class sessions, the student may be asked by the course instructor to withdraw from the course.

Please bear in mind the following considerations regarding course policies for attendance and participation

- Be present at the beginning of class when attendance is recorded and remain for the duration of class
- Instructor reserves the right to deduct points from the students' final grade per unexcused absence; excessive unexcused absences will result in grade deduction.

- Inform instructor of absence within 24 hours of unexpected absence resulting from an emergency.
- Students are expected to engage in active course participation (comments and questions directed at instructor and students).

### Grading

a. 97-100 = A+	73-76.9= C
b. 93-96.9= A	70-72.9= C-
c. 90-92.9= A-	67-69.9= D+
d. 87-89.9= B+	63-66.9= D
e. 83-86.9= B	60-62.9= D-
f. 80-82.9= B-	
g. 77-79.9= C+	

"A" grades are given for exceptional individual performance and mastery of the material. The use of "A+", "A", and "A-" distinguishes the degree of superiority.

"B" grades are given to students who demonstrate mastery of the material.

"B+" is used for students who perform just above the mastery level but not in an exceptional manner.

"B-" is used for students just below the mastery level.

"C" grades are given when mastery of the material is minimal. A "C-" is the lowest grade that carries credit.

"D" grades indicate deficiency and carry no credit.

### 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](#):

### 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](#).

### **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.

### **Other Policies**

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#### **Inclusivity Policy**

Social and economic justice is one of the key themes of social work practice, research, and education. We must encourage each other to critically examine issues related to power, privilege, and oppression. As a result, there will be class discussions, activities, or assignments that may be difficult or challenging. In order to have the most supportive environment possible, we must all commit ourselves to fostering an inclusive, anti-oppressive space in which each person takes responsibility for their own language, actions and interactions. This class will engage us in a community of learning, through systematic exploration of knowledge about different levels and segments of society, theorizing about justice issues, and reflecting on ourselves in interaction with others. This requires developing a climate in the classroom in which we can learn from each other's different perspectives and experiences.

These are not just intellectual tasks, but often generate emotions, and require us to surface and engage with our values and what may be tacit (not articulated) assumptions. Learning new ways of thinking can be very exciting and empowering, but we may also feel confused, anxious, overwhelmed, and even angry at different points in this process. These emotions usually are markers that you are being challenged and are learning, as long as they do not overwhelm you and we can navigate through them. It is important that we actively listen to each other about how our words and actions are affecting one another and the learning environment, knowing the impact is more important than intent. I recognize that microaggressions happen (by all of us, to all of us); however, overt slurs in relation to race, sex, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion/world view, immigration status, size, nationality, dis/ability status, marital status, political affiliation, or any other identities, will be addressed directly. Throughout the course, we will negotiate other guidelines about class discussions. Please bring your best selves to our classroom space.

#### **Electronics Policy**

Laptops and phones may be used for legitimate classroom purposes only such as the use of such as taking notes or looking up readings on Canvas. Email, Facebook, instant messaging, online shopping, surfing the Internet, and playing games are not considered legitimate classroom purposes. Such use is distracting to those seated around you, and if I see you using your computer for these purposes, I may ask you to turn off your computer and take notes by hand.

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

If you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know as soon as possible. Many aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and teaching methods can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress throughout the semester. If you chose to disclose your disability, I will (to the extent permitted by law) treat that information as private and confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 7633000 or go to <https://ssd.umich.edu/>.

### **Health and Wellness Services**

Health and wellness encompasses situations or circumstances that may impede your success within the program. The Office of Student Services offers health and wellness services that are directed to the MSW student body. Feel free to visit the [SSW Health and Wellness website](#) regarding any health, mental health or wellness issue. This could include need for advocacy and referral to University or community resources, financial resources or counseling.

### **Dependent Care Resources**

For students with child or parenting/elder care responsibilities, feel free to consult the Students with Children website (<http://www.studentswithchildren.umich.edu>). This site is dedicated to the needs of students at UM who juggle parenting/elder care, study, and work. Resources include childcare, financial assistance, social support, housing, and health care information. The website was created by the former Committee on Student Parent Issues (COSPI). For additional information on work/life support please also visit the Work/Life Resource Center site (<http://www.hr.umich.edu/worklife/>) and the UM Child Care gateway (<http://www.hr.umich.edu/childcare/>).

### **Religious Observances**

**Please notify me** if religious observances conflict with class attendance, community participation or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

### **Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct**

All students should be familiar with the Student Code for Academic and Professional Conduct (<https://sww.umich.edu/msw-student-guide>) which holds our students to the highest standards of academic and professional conduct. Unacceptable academic behavior refers to actions or behaviors that are contrary to maintaining the highest standards in course work and includes such actions as cheating, plagiarism, falsification of data, aiding and abetting dishonesty and impairment. Any suspected situations of academic misconduct will be discussed with the student and then reported to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs. .

### **Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here:**

<https://sww.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*