



Course title:	Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work
Course #/term:	SW 505 section 07, Fall 2021
Time and place:	Mondays 9-12am EST
Credit hours:	3
Prerequisites:	n/a
Instructor:	Danny Alvarez
Pronouns:	they/them/their
Contact info:	Email: alvardi@umich.edu You may expect a response within 24 hours
Office hours:	By appointment—let me know when you want to meet!

“I think we have to own the fears that we have of each other, and then, in some practical way, some daily way, figure out how to see people differently than the way we were brought up to”
Alice Walker

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

1. Course Statement

a. Course description

This required foundation course is designed to increase students’ awareness, knowledge, and critical skills related to diversity, human rights, social and economic justice. The topics of this course include developing a framework for 1) engaging diversity and differences in social work practice and 2) advancing human rights and social and economic justice. 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 developing skills in critical contextual thinking and analyses, and in praxis, learning to use knowledge and theory to recognize and critique underlying assumptions and paradigms, and inform working for change.

Multiple kinds of boundaries are especially important—across groups, between organizations and system levels, and within and between people, related to intersecting social locations.

b. 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).

c. Course objectives and competencies

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be better able to:

1. Describe community and organizational work for social change.
2. Demonstrate knowledge and skills for working for justice, enacting critical consciousness, and engaging and addressing issues of power and diversity. (4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7)
3. Describe the dynamics of difference and dominance/oppression and how they impact human functioning and social relations within and across diverse groups. (4.1, 4.5)
4. Describe how structural differences in society are shaped by historical, psychological, social, and political factors. (4.1, 4.5)
5. Demonstrate knowledge of social locations, constructions, processes, and identities and the diversity within these. This includes increased knowledge about the forces that shape complex selves, relationships, and world views. (4.2, 4.3)
6. Demonstrate skills in critical contextual thinking, applying multiple theories and frameworks to illuminate underlying assumptions, biases and possible opportunities, and engaging in praxis.
7. Demonstrate awareness of the sources of power, how to mobilize power towards positive change, and ways to challenge oppressive assumptions, biases, and prejudices (4.2, 4.3)

8. Describe methods for continuing a lifelong process of recognizing our biases, learning how to change oppressive behaviors and structures, and building a more socially just multicultural society. (4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7)

d. 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 of their beliefs and perspectives. 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, video, 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 knowledge about justice and change, and principles of change towards justice.

e. Curricular themes

Theme Relation to Multiculturalism & Diversity

is addressed from the perspective of critically considering how diverse dimensions (such as ability; age; class; color; culture; ethnicity; family structure; gender - including gender identity and gender expression; marital status; national origin; race; religion, spirituality or worldview; sex; and sexual orientation) are socially constructed, embedded in societal structures across system levels, and maintained through social processes and intra and interpersonal relationships and schemas.

Theme Relation to Social Justice

is addressed from the perspective of critically analyzing theories and conceptualizations of justice, current trends and ethical issues and their implications for promoting social justice and social change, by considering the influence of normative rules and conditions. Additional focus will be directed towards how structural and institutional conditions affect the opportunities and well-being of different populations (advantaged and disadvantaged groups) in society.

Theme Relation to Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation

is addressed from the perspective of critically considering how varied ideological, theoretical and empirical perspectives influence the definition of social problems and, subsequently, the ways in which institutional policies and practices address access, promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

Theme Relation to Behavioral and Social Science Research

will be reflected in the theory, social science literature and research covered characterizing and analyzing macro-level structures, processes and their bearing and implications for the well-

being of different vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and populations in society, as well as how marginalized groups exert agency and influence society.

f. Relationship to social work ethics and values

The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to give students direction about ethical issues as they relate to the experience of marginalized groups. The course will focus on social workers' responsibility as professionals to promote general welfare by working toward the elimination of discrimination, expanding choices for all persons, encouraging respect for diversity, advocating for progressive changes in social policies, and encouraging informed participation by the public.

g. Intensive focus on PODS

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of practice, theories 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.

h. 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 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.

This work is personal for me! I am so excited to engage in conversations with you all, share readings with you that have sparked my imagination, passion, anger, and activism. I have spent over a decade collecting tools, processes, skills, and ways to engage in this work that lead to important conversations in ways that are responsible, that center the folks most marginalized in this work, and that move us all towards liberation. I take this opportunity to be in the role of teacher/instructor/facilitator seriously and feel grateful to embark on this with each of you.

Let's get to work!

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, although I may put a list of recommended readings up on canvas for folks who would like to engage further and you can access those or purchase those on your own if you are interested. 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 will probably 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.

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. If at any point in the semester you feel like you need more information do not hesitate to reach out.

Date	Topic	Media—to do <i>before</i> this week
Week 1 Aug 30	Intro to the course What is dialogue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: National Association of Social Workers (2007). Institutional racism and the social work profession: A call to action
Week 2 Sep 6	Fall Break— No class To Do: Flip Grid intro video	
Week 3 Sept 13	Social Identity, positionality, socialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: Takacs, David. <i>Positionality, Epistemology, and Social Justice in the Classroom</i> Self-care list: how to take care of yourself while learning about oppression (with unaware people) Skylar Lee. Power in Partnerships Tatum, Beverly. The complexity of identity: “who am I” ● Videos: Danger of a single story—Chimimanda Adichie
Week 4 Sept 20	Understanding oppression, power, and dominant narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: “Untamed” by Glennon Doyle Ch. Racist Madness and Oppression: Paths to Personal Transformation & Collective Liberation. A Mad Maps Guide by The Icarus Project.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Videos: <p>Are humans hardwired to be cruel to each other?</p> <p>Understanding and Engaging Microaggressions (32 min)</p>
<p>Week 5</p> <p>September 27</p>	<p>Framing the issue- Health Equity</p> <p>***** Who Am I paper due today</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: <p>TBD</p>
<p>Week 6</p> <p>October 4</p>	<p>Cis-hetero-patriarchy and the Healthcare system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: <p>Shanna Kattari, 2018, "Transgender and non-binary people face health care discrimination every day in the US"</p> <p>Terminologies of Oppression</p> <p>Patriarchy and gender</p> <p>Prisons neglect pregnant women in their healthcare policies</p> <p>What we do and don't know about pregnancy and incarceration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Videos: <p>North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) asked LGBTIQ+ people to talk about their experiences accessing health care (6 min)</p> <p>Voices of transgender adolescents in healthcare</p> <p>OPTIONAL: A short history of trans peoples long fight for equality</p>

<p>Week 7</p> <p>October 11</p>	<p>Racial Inequalities in Health</p> <p>*Book club facilitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: To Prevent Women from Dying in Childbirth, First Stop Blaming Them In California’s wine country, undocumented grape pickers forced to work in fire evacuation zones The Black plague Native Americans: A crisis in health equity Native Americans feel invisible in US health care system ● Videos: How racism makes us sick The problem with race-based medicine For Indigenous Peoples Day: Finally mainstream media tells the truth about Native Americans
<p>Week 8</p> <p>October 18</p>	<p>No Class—Study Break</p>	
<p>Week 9</p> <p>October 25</p>	<p>Ableism, sizeism and saneism</p> <p>*Book club facilitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: Doctors facing grim choice over ventilators told to put patients with disabilities at the back of the line We have been disabled I’m disabled and need a ventilator to live Stigma in Practice: Barriers to Health for Fat Women We have to stop thinking about being “healthy” as morally better.

		<p>To be queer, Black, and “Sick”</p> <p>The madwoman in the academy</p> <p>Saneism and the language of mental illness</p>
<p>Week 10</p> <p>November 1</p>	<p>Humans, health, and the environment – imperialism, environmental racism and forest ecology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: <p>2019, Vandana Shiva, “Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest”</p> <p>Voskoboynik, Daniel. To fix the climate crisis we must acknowledge our imperial past.</p> <p>‘Fire is medicine’: the tribes burning California forests to save them</p> <p>Jasmine Bell, 2016, 5 Things to Know About Communities of Color and Environmental Justice</p> <p>Yvette Cabrera, 2020, “Coronavirus is not just a health crisis — it’s an environmental justice crisis”</p>
<p>Week 11</p> <p>November 8</p>	<p>Healing, community, love, interdependence</p> <p>*Book club facilitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: <p>Mia Mingus. Wherever you are is where I want to be: Crip Solidarity.</p> <p>What happens when we can’t live interdependency all the time?</p> <p>10 tips on receiving critical feedback: a guide for activists</p> <p>A not so brief personal history of the healing justice movement, 2010-2016</p> <p>adrienne maree brown. Love as Political Resistance</p>

<p>Week 12</p> <p>November 15</p>	<p>Liberation and visioning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: <p>Dreaming beyond Capitalism: A culture without fear</p> <p>Centering blackness: the path to economic liberation for all</p> <p>To build a future without prisons we have to imagine it first</p> <p>Hollow (pdf in canvas)</p> <p>Evidence (pdf in canvas)</p> <p>OPTIONAL: This first: Mapping our social change roles in times of crisis And then this</p>
<p>Week 13</p> <p>November 22</p>	<p>Anti-oppressive social work practice</p> <p>*Book club facilitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: <p>Skinner-Roy, J. (2019). Dismantling white supremacy in nonprofits: A starting point. <i>YNPN Twin Cities</i>.</p> <p>An Open Letter to NASW and Allied Organizations on Social Work’s Relationship with Law Enforcement</p> <p>Building a New Normal: Strategic Actions for Health Equity in a Post Pandemic World</p> <p>Intro to collective liberation</p> <p>Thanksgiving week:</p> <p>Thanksgiving ‘National Day of Mourning’ for some</p>
<p>Week 14</p> <p>November 29</p>	<p>Alternate models</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: <p>TBD</p>

<p>Week 15</p> <p>December 6</p>	<p>Reflections and Praxis cycle</p> <p>*Book club facilitation</p> <p>***** Visioning assignment due today</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings: Mia Mingus. On Collaboration: Starting with Each Other ● Videos: American Revolutionary
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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. Please remember to silence your cell phones and other distracting electronic devices while we are together.

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.

Flip Grid Video Introduction**Submit by Sept 6, watch by Sept 13**

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. 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.

Who am I? (3-5 pages)**Due Sept 27 by 9am****50 points**

When entering a new field of work it is important to know who you are and what you are bringing with you. You need to understand how you impact the spaces you are in, and how people perceive you, in addition to knowing what you think and believe and why.

What informs who are you right now?

- What values and beliefs inform the way that you see the world?
- What do you think is true about people? Society?
- What is your positionality?
- How do your social identities impact you in the context of this class? Your future job as a social worker? How do your identities benefit you or create barriers for you in these different contexts?
- What have you been taught or told about injustice, oppression, human nature, how systems work?
- Can you think of a time when you had a radical shift in your thinking about how the world works or why it works the way it does?
- Why do you want to be a social worker? What is it that you value or believe that brought you to this work?

Book Club**Reflection Paper, due Dec 13th by 5pm****50 points**

You will be in a group with 4-5 other students who you meet with throughout the semester.

Expectations:

1. Meet with your group 5 times throughout the semester for 1 hour to discuss readings and get into conversation with each other
2. Each group will facilitate a discussion in class for the rest of class 1 time in the semester for 1 hour
3. At the end of the semester you will submit a reflection paper responding to prompts about what you got out of the book club experience
4. Your group will meet with me during the semester for 1 hour to evaluate yourselves and each other and your participation and engagement.

Visioning a justice centered future**Due Dec 6 by 9am****50 points**

Creative assignment. Write a short story, poem, draw a comic, write a song, etc. of a future where things look different in relation to a theme of your choice. This could be dreamy positive liberation focused future or a worst-case scenario future. Both are necessary to visualize and understand in the change process. In addition, write up a brief explanation of why you did what you did, what it means, and how it relates to our course themes.

GRADING	points
Who Am I Paper	50 pts
Book Club	50 pts
Visioning	50 pts
Total	150 pts

e. Grading

The content of this course can be awkward to “grade” in traditional ways. I will not be grading you based on what you say or how you say it, what you believe or don’t believe, or your grammar and punctuation. 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.

For each assignment, there will be a rubric (for ease of grading) that will be attached to the assignment description. This is not meant to put focus on the nitty gritty or cause stress, but is to make the process clear and transparent. If you have any questions about grading let me know.

Scores on the preceding assignments are cumulative and will be converted to a final letter grade at the end of the semester according to the following scale:

94-100 =A 91-93 = A- 87-90 = B+ 84-86 = B
 81-83 = B- 77-80 = C+ 74-76 = C 71-73 = C-

f. Expected Time Commitment

A 3-credit class amounts to 112 hours of total expected engagement – including all synchronous and asynchronous work, such as Zoom meetings, in person meetings, reading/watching content outside of class, and assignments. For a 15-week class like ours, this averages to about 7-8 hours per week. Build in time throughout the week to tend to the readings, engage in the materials, and be ready to participate in class.

Some of our classes will take place on zoom. I will give you notice about which ones ahead of time so you are clear about the schedule.

g. 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/1NEH7zibwZwCoAmngc4VZfswmUrPTWS6IBhn7zS94xZQ/edit?usp=sharing>

h. Class Recording Policy

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 in advance that a recording will occur and be provided with an option to opt-out. 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.

i. 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 inform the

instructor before the second class period so that they 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.

When you are on campus, there are two all gender 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.](#)

j. 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. Your participation in this course is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University, including properly wearing a face covering in class and compliance with the University COVID-19 Vaccination Policy. Other applicable and additional safety measures may be described in the Campus Maize & Blueprint. Your ability to participate in this course 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 and those seeking an exemption related to the vaccination requirement should submit an exemption request through WolverineAccess. 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.

k. 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*