Course title: Engaging Social Justice, Diversity, and Oppression in Social Work
Course #/term: 505-018 Fall 2021
Time and place: Monday, 6pm, online
Credit hours: 3
Prerequisites: None
Instructor: Laura Yakas
Pronouns: She/her

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I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours, but please feel free to send me a reminder if you are feeling any urgency or anxiety

Office hours: On Zoom by appointment

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.

Objectives
● 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 an ally (Essential 6, 11, 15, 29, 39, 44, 45; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8).

**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 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.

“Misanthropology 101: Exploring Oppression”

**Course Plan**

Welcome to Social Work 505! The official title for this course is “Engaging Social Justice, Diversity, and Oppression in Social Work.” And because I am an anthropologist with a dark sense of humor, I have an additional alternative title for this class; “Misanthropology 101: Exploring Oppression.”

Anthropology = the study of humans and humanity
Misanthropy = the fear of, hatred of, or disenchantment with humans and humanity
Misanthropology = my own comical combination of the two words, suggesting that the more you study humans and humanity (especially our propensity for violence and oppression), the easier it is to feel misanthropic!
The purpose of this class is to explore the causes and signs of oppression or social injustice. Wherever there are (and have been) humans, there are (and have been) signs of injustice based on group membership. Anthropology can help us make sense of this suffering. Anthropologists can read oppression from long ago in human fossils: we know the signs of starvation, disease, and violent injury. Anthropologists can read oppression in long-abandoned homes and tombs: we know the signs of poverty in many, and wealth in a few. Anthropologists can also understand human oppression by understanding how oppression is not entirely unique to humans: we know that chimpanzees engage in territorial warfare, that baboon social hierarchies are ruthless, and that sexual violence is a normal part of life for orangutans. And anthropologists can understand the consequences of all this history by observing and connecting with people now living in a world still scarred by it. In light of all this oppression-awareness, it is understandable that some anthropologists feel misanthropic at times!

Our SW 505 experience will begin with basic theory (in weeks 1, 2, and 3), which will help us answer the questions: what is oppression? And why do humans consistently oppress one another? And because our section of 505 will dive deep into the Social Work Grand Challenge “Close the Health Gap,” we will also explore the question: what role does our medical system / the medical industrial complex play in creating and upholding oppression?

Once we have established the basic theory of oppression, we will explore the impact of oppression on human health. In weeks 4 and 5, we will dive into how trauma shapes our behavior and our health, and how we can engage in trauma-informed practices that support people in healing from trauma (the fact that you’ve all read Resmaa Menakem’s My Grandmother’s Hands is a big advantage!). Then throughout weeks 6-11, we will explore different facets of medical oppression (medical oppression = when medical systems create and reinforce systems of oppression). We will explore how fatphobia is created and perpetuated in medical settings; we will explore medical racism; we will explore issues with LGBTQIA+ identity and healthcare; we will explore sanism and the ways neurodivergent and Mad people are disempowered by the mainstream mental health system; and we will explore how colonialism and environmental injustice impact human health. Our final two weeks together will be spent focusing on more optimistic content (like Pleasure Activism and imagining a future of health equity). After all, social work is a fundamentally optimistic profession – we must arm ourselves with hope, and with the skills it takes to heal ourselves and others, so that we don’t get lost in misanthropy!

My Experience

I completed my PhD in anthropology and social work here at the University of Michigan in 2018. My main interests/areas of knowledge and experience include; Disability culture (including the Mad Pride movement, the Neurodiversity movement, the Disability Justice movement) and how this connects to other forms of anti-oppressive resistance like intersectional feminism, antiracism, and decolonization. I have devoted a lot of time to studying and teaching theories of oppression using anthropology and the other social sciences. Anthropology is an academic discipline that aims to deeply understand humanity, and I am passionate about bridging this with social work, a profession that aims to change humanity. I have facilitated critical consciousness about oppression as well as the skills it takes to heal and enact socially just change, with many groups – undergraduates (with our office of Intergroup Relations), international high schoolers (at the UWC USA Global Leadership Forum), and MSW students like yourselves.

My Teaching Style
Inspired by the work of Brené Brown, I am committed to radical authenticity. I bring my full self into our class, and I invite this from you. This is not normative in our culture (so it may feel uncomfortable at first!), but it is an important aspect of practicing anti-oppression in classrooms. With authenticity, we can challenge the old-fashioned oppressive academic norms that ask us to pretend all the time. For example, you don’t need to pretend “I have a technology issue, so I can’t come to class” when you really feel overwhelmed and stressed – instead, you can tell the truth, and I can reassure you that your need for rest/self-care is valid. You don’t need to pretend that you already understand something when you really feel confused about it and embarrassed that you don’t already understand it – you can tell the truth, and someone will help you understand. In my classes, students can always tell the truth. Another reason I bring and invite authenticity into our classroom is that connection is fundamental to my teaching style. I thrive best as an educator when I feel a human connection with students that goes beyond our titles as professor and student!

Trauma-informed Teaching during a Pandemic

As a Mad/Disabled woman, accessibility is very important to me. As an educator, I aim to co-create accessible and trauma-informed learning spaces. I will talk more about this in our first class, but in brief, trauma-informed teaching involves three things:

1) **Choice** – you will always have options in this class. For example, if the list of materials for a certain week feels like too much, you can always choose which to read and focus on (which is why I often provide summaries of the assigned materials). As it says in the “Grading and Assignments” section, you can also choose four Zoom classes and Discussion posts to miss without needing to talk to me about it. And your mid-semester and final projects have multiple options to choose from. In these ways, you can tailor your personal journey through this class, all the while scaffolding it within our collective journey.

2) **Flexibility** – pandemic learning demands more flexibility than usual, which means that we must all be prepared to accept with grace any unexpected changes or barriers. Deadlines for discussion posts and assignments are flexible, and you can always let me know if you need more time.

3) **Transparency** – there will be a lot of open communication between us. I will be honest and real with you about my needs and barriers, and I invite you to do the same. As I wrote earlier, authenticity is key to the way I practice trauma-informed and anti-oppressive education! You cannot disappoint me as long as you are honest. And I do not believe in “laziness” or “not-working-hard-enough” (see this article titled “Laziness does not exist: unseen barriers do.”), I believe everyone grows at their own pace and that barriers to individual growth cannot be separated from the oppressive structures we collectively live within.

**Course Structure**

This is an online course, and the majority of the work you will do for this class will be asynchronous. We will explore a variety of teaching/learning techniques:

- Video lectures
- Zoom lectures and discussions (including small group discussions in Zoom "breakout rooms")
- Discussion posts (including collaborative quote lists / collections of meaningful quotes from the assigned materials)
- Self-reflective and creative writing assignments
You will find all assigned readings, videos, and podcasts in each weekly Module. These materials are drawn from the social sciences (e.g. anthropology, psychology, sociology, gender and sexuality studies, Mad and Disability studies) and the humanities (e.g. literature, poetry) as well as from non-academic spaces in our culture (e.g. blogs, music, news sources). These materials are created by diverse voices, for an important element of anti-oppressive education is including historically underrepresented voices in course materials. I also incorporate the arts (especially poetry and music) into our experience, because a fundamental source of healing and empowerment is the act of transforming violence and suffering into joy and beauty!

Additional notes about Course Structure:
- On every day that we meet for Zoom Class, you will receive a “Plan of the Day” Announcement on Canvas, which will tell you what to expect for our meeting that day. You will also receive a “Debrief” Announcement after the Zoom session has ended.
- A note on content warnings: in the service of our collective learning and growth, this course will dig into a variety of challenging and potentially activating topics (such as suicide, sexual violence, racial violence, environmental destruction, etc.). It would be prohibitively labor-intensive for me to provide specific content warnings for each assigned piece, but I want to urge you to take care of yourselves however and whenever it becomes necessary.

Zoom Etiquette
- Please use cameras when you can, as it makes connection easier
- 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, it is all ok! As a Mad/Disabled person, I have great compassion for people facing barriers to participating, and I'd rather keep the space honest wherever possible. Plus, logistically it could be awkward if you're put into a pair or small group breakout room and don't show up!
- If you are comfortable, please provide your pronouns. Instructions for how to do this can be found here.

Expected Time Commitment
At our school, a 3-credit class amounts to 135 hours of total work over the semester. This includes all synchronous and asynchronous work, such as Zoom meetings, reading/watching content outside of class, and assignments. For a 13-week class like ours, this averages to about 10 hours per week.

Online classes tend to ask students to do more asynchronous work than synchronous work – this means there will be more things to read or watch and reflect on (through discussion posts and assignments) on your own time, and less time in Zoom sessions. I have designed this course to spread the workload evenly throughout the semester. You may discover that in our class there are more assigned materials (readings, videos, etc.) each week than in other courses, but this is balanced by less time-consuming assignments and shorter Zoom sessions (between 1 and 2 hours, instead of the usual 3 hours!)

Grading and Assignments
“Grading” as a measure of academic success often reinforces systems of oppression. Academia is not exempt from the culture of oppression we have all inherited, and often unfairly
advantages white men. As an educator committed to anti-oppression, I am therefore building toward a practice of “ungrading” (along with several other faculty members in our school).

What this means is that I am not interested in ranking your learning journeys, and the activities and assignments for this class are not designed to test, judge, or evaluate you. They are designed to be useful, healing, energizing activities that invite you to explore your paths to deepened awareness and compassion for yourself and the world around you.

When I read your work (whether it is a Discussion post or an Assignment), this is what you can expect:

1) I will engage with your work by providing written feedback and validation.
2) Your Discussion posts will not be graded (though you do need to complete a minimum amount of Discussion posts over the semester, which is explained below), and your Assignments will receive a grade of either “complete” or “incomplete.” You will receive a grade of “complete” unless there are problems with the content of what you have written. For example, if you have misunderstood something pertinent to social justice and are therefore inadvertently promoting bias, judgment, or oppression in your work. Any problems like this will come through in my written feedback, and you will have a chance to revise and resubmit to receive your “complete” grade. (Note: spelling/grammar will not be evaluated – I may correct any errors I notice, but only for your learning benefit).

Our school still uses letter grades as its primary system, so at the end of the semester when final grades are entered, anyone who has completed their assignments and met the minimum Discussion post and Zoom requirements (explained below) will receive an “A” for their course grade.

The key takeaway: you do not need to worry about getting a good grade in this course! I invite you to focus instead on your journey of growth and learning, and in getting to know your class community.

The assignments for this course are:

1. Discussion Posts: 50% of your course grade

Each week there will be a Canvas "Discussion" with questions or prompts that ask you to reflect on the materials (the assigned readings, videos, etc.). You are expected to:

- Make a post each week, due by 9am the day of our Zoom class (Mondays). I ask for this so that I have time to account for your reflections in preparing for our Zoom session, though there is no penalty for posting later. There is no word limit, though I do offer the advice to be concise (if everyone writes 1000 words, it will be hard to read it all!).
Note: you may choose four weekly discussion posts to miss without needing to inform me. Beyond that, I ask you to please email me to let me know about the barriers to your participation. What this means is that in order to get an “A” for your discussion post participation, you need to make 9 posts throughout the semester (13 weeks minus the 4 you can choose to miss).
- Read the whole thread. For example, if you post early in the week, I ask that you return to the thread later in the week to see what was posted after you.
- Aim to respond to your classmates' responses, so that the Discussion thread feels like a conversation. Offer validation (a simple “thanks for sharing” or “YES!” - Canvas also gives you the option of "liking" people's posts). Ask someone a follow-up question, if you feel inspired to. If someone before you wrote something that overlaps with what you want to say, acknowledge them in your post, just as you would in a classroom discussion. Note: If you choose to respond to a classmates' post in a substantive
way (something I will model in my responses to your posts), this can count as your post for the week.

In the context of online learning, Canvas Discussions are our main way of exchanging ideas and developing relationships, so they are important! And although we lose the spontaneity that is possible in face-to-face discussions, from what I have experienced with online education, we gain something just as precious: the opportunity to take our time, to slow down our thoughts and feelings. This often leads to deeper and more robust conversations.

There will also be an optional weekly Discussion thread devoted to community building. Specifically, each week there will be a “Life Snapshot and Gratitude” Discussion where you are asked to share an image (a photograph, a screenshot, a meme) from your daily life and describe it to us, as well as sharing something you feel grateful for. There will be more information about this on the Discussion itself.

2. Attendance at our weekly “Zoom Class”: 10% of your course grade

We will meet each week on Monday at 6pm on Zoom for between one and two hours, to supplement the discussions we are having asynchronously, and to strengthen our sense of community. You are expected to 1) be there, and practicing good Zoom etiquette (see the “Zoom Etiquette” section in Course Structure and Expectations), and 2) respond appropriately to the discussion. Remember, “responding appropriately” does not mean you have to speak. It is an invitation to speak if you feel inspired to. You may also use the “chat” feature on Zoom, if you prefer to type rather than verbally share your thoughts. Note: you may miss four Zoom classes without informing me of your absence. Beyond that I expect an email to let me know about the barriers to your participation. What this means is that as long as you attend 9 of the 13 Zoom sessions, you will receive an “A” for Zoom participation.

3. Mid-Semester Assignment – “Humanizing a Fictional Villain,” “Realm of the Dead,” or “Lightening talk:” 20% of your course grade

For your mid-semester assignment, you have three options to choose from:

Option 1) Humanizing a Fictional Villain

This assignment is an opportunity to practice the skills learned in weeks 4 and 5. Your task is to choose a fictional villainous character from a book, TV show, movie, comic series, or anywhere else in the world of fictional media. You can choose any character you want, though it might be easier to humanize your character if you choose a character who is human or close-to-human (for example, I would advise against choosing an alien like Star War’s Jabba the Hutt, or an evil-incarnate creature like Lord of the Ring’s Sauron, but a mutant-human like X-Men’s Magneto, or a mutilated-human like Harry Potter’s Voldemort/Tom Riddle, would work very well).

Once you have your villain, your task is to write them a trauma-informed narrative using the three questions that support social workers in gathering a deep and nuanced trauma-informed assessment of a person’s life story (which we cover in weeks 4 / 5):

  What happened to them? (what difficult, traumatic, and violent things were present?)
  What did not happen for them? (what necessary things were absent/what needs were unmet?)
  What were their survival mechanisms? (to use the language we learned in Trauma Stewardship, what "trauma exposure responses" are now part of their routine behavior? What trauma-centered worldview do they have?)
For some of villains, parts of their backstory is already available. In the examples of Voldemort and Magneto, the books/comics/movies that feature these characters already share some of the answers to these questions. For example, we know that Magneto was a Holocaust concentration camp survivor and that his mother was murdered in front of him, and we know that he does not trust non-mutant-humans at all (he has a HUGE tendency toward the "trauma exposure responses" of anger and cynicism, grandiosity, sense of persecution, and hypervigilance).

But for other villains, you may need or choose to invent your own trauma-informed backstory. Maybe George Wickham (the villain from Pride and Prejudice) experienced bullying when he was younger? His mother is never mentioned in the book, so maybe she abandoned him when he was a child?

The point of this assignment is to stretch our “trauma-informed” muscles by challenging ourselves to see the humanity in characters we have grown up hating, fearing, or judging negatively. The point of this assignment is to remind ourselves that there is no such thing as a “good” person or a “bad/evil” person, there are only people, each of us trying to survive with worldviews and behaviors that have been shaped by varying degrees of trauma.

I am hoping that by asking you to humanize a fictional villain, this assignment will also be more fun and creative and allow you more emotional distance than if I asked you to apply this analysis to a real person in the world.

So, choose your villain. Write their story in a way that humanizes them and reveals their struggles and successes and how their environments shaped their worldviews and behaviors. Be creative and make things up, or stick to what you know from the texts/films themselves.

I do not have any preferences on the length or formatting of this assignment, but if you would like some formatting guidelines to which you can refer, perhaps something in the range of 2-5 pages, double-spaced. This assignment will be due on Monday October 25 at 9pm.

Bonus additional activity:
It would be interesting to me to hear what your process was for doing this assignment, and how it felt for you doing it. If you want to, you might choose to include a “P.S” where you reflect upon the process of writing this assignment. Why did you choose this specific villain? What was it like to apply the trauma-informed questions to their life? What connections did you notice between this villain and your own self, or other people you may know?

OR

Option 2) Realm of the Dead

For those of you who are on campus, this year our school has the privilege of hosting a performance and exhibition from one our esteemed faculty members named Rogério Pinto! Here is an excerpt from the website: "Realm of the Dead is an installation/performance, freely adapted from Rogério Pinto's award-winning play, Marília, about his sister who died in an accident in the street outside the family home when she was three years old and he just tenth months. Comprising a solo performance and an installation that serves as a set for that performance, Realm of the Dead is grounded in the work of the Brazilian theater artist Augusto Boal and in autoethnographic social work research and practice. These methodologies are recommended as vehicles for critical reflection, self-healing, personal growth, and advocacy."

Because I am in New Zealand, I cannot be there myself, but if any of you choose to visit this exhibition or see one of the performances (note: space is limited due to covid-19 restrictions), you can choose to write a reflection (approximately 2-5 pages double-spaced) about this experience as your mid-semester assignment. Questions to ponder could include; What did you learn during the performance? What did you feel? What role do you think the arts
have in healing and social justice? How can you imagine yourself using art as a means of healing and social justice? How did this show support your education about social justice issues such as immigration, race/ethnicity, gender and sexual identity?

This assignment would also be due on **Monday October 25 at 9pm.**

OR

**Option 3) Social Work Grand Challenges "Lightening Talk"**

For this assignment, you are invited to make a short (maximum 10 minutes) presentation to the class, or make a video for just myself. In this "lightening talk" you are asked to do the following three things:

- Identify a social justice issue or topic from one of the Social Work Grand Challenges themes.
- Articulate at least one clear central message from the issue/topic identified
- Share a meaningful story or personal narrative related to this issue (Why is it important to you? What experience do you personally have with this social justice issue?)

If you decide you want to present this live to our class, please email me and let me know as soon as possible, so I can plan Zoom class time for you to do this! If you are submitting a video, it will be due on **Monday October 25 at 9pm.**

**4. Final Project: "Social Justice Anthology," “Power Glasses Film Night,” or “Autoethnography”: 20% of your course grade**

For your final project, you have three options to choose from. The second option asks you to work with a partner/classmate from our section of 505, and the other two are options you can do independently.

**Option 1) Social Justice Anthology**

This is a creative writing assignment that you will work on a little bit each week - it is an ideal choice for those of you who worry about managing your time with final assignments for multiple courses at the end of the semester! Each week, you are invited to write a reflective poem about the topic we explored that week (note: I will remind you about this each week in the "Debrief" Announcement that follows each Zoom class). For example, you would write a poem about the theme “what is normal?”, a poem about the theme of “the nature and nurture of oppression,” a poem about the theme of “medical racism,” “trauma,” etc. At the end of the semester, you will review/edit your poems, perhaps do a bit of graphic design to make them pretty (if you want to), and share with me this collection of poems that will become your own “Social Justice Anthology.”

This assignment is designed to be nourishing, not something to feel perfectionism or stress about (i.e. there is no need to overthink or worry about whether it is “good” or “bad” poetry according to any literary guilds!). Creative writing is known for its capacity to support healing through enabling new ways of processing and making sense of our stories. Creative writing also allows us to learn through playing with ideas, words, images, and stories. I often use the act of writing poetry and songs in order to help me see new connections between ideas, and to release complex emotions by putting them into words.

Suggestions to make this easier and more enjoyable:

- Seriously, don't worry about how “good” you think you are at writing. There is no such thing as a “bad” piece of self-expression.
• You may find it easier to start by “free-writing,” these poems. Free-writing is the act of writing whatever comes to your mind without editing anything. You can then edit it down afterwards.

• One thing that can make creative writing easier is using a structure that enables you to be creative but within certain parameters. One idea you could use is the “Haiku.” A “haiku” is a simple three-line poem. To write a haiku, you write a poem that is 3 lines long and make sure each line has the right number of syllables. The first line needs 5 syllables, the second line 7 syllables, and the third line 5 syllables. It is that simple.
  - If you choose to use the haiku as your poetry form, you may find that there isn’t enough space for you to say everything you want to say. In this case, you can feel free to write more than one poem per week/topic.
  - If you prefer, your poems can be styled more like literary “interior monologues” – where you talk through your inner thoughts or ideas in a stream of consciousness.

Your Social Justice Anthology will be due by **Monday December 13 at 9pm.** You will submit it through the Canvas Assignment page, but there is also a Discussion Forum for those of you who wish to share your poetry (or a selection of your poetry) with your classmates as well.

OR

**Option 2) “Power Glasses” Film Night**

In this class, you are learning how to wear “Power Glasses” – a pair of metaphorical glasses that enable you to notice and name oppression, even when it is so subtle that most people don’t notice it. While wearing “Power Glasses,” you notice all sorts of things you miss when you are not wearing them. For example, without “Power Glasses,” you might see the **Pledge of Allegiance** as nothing more than a simple poetic phrase that reflects national pride. But if you are wearing your “Power Glasses,” you might instead be filled with critical questions – How are they defining “liberty” and “justice”? Who wrote this “Pledge,” and what is its history? Whose voice does it represent and whose voices are missing? What is the political motivation behind teaching people to say this Pledge?

For this assignment, **you will be wearing your “Power Glasses” while watching a movie with one of your classmates.** This assignment was inspired by a silly Buzzfeed article I read recently, written by a woman who was rewatching the 1998 teen flick “All I wanna do” as an adult. I often rewatch films and TV shows I enjoyed in my youth. And like the author of the BuzzFeed article, I am often struck by moments that are deeply problematic, but which I failed to notice when I was younger and didn’t have “Power Glasses”. For example: when I was a teenager, I loved the movie “Clueless.” And as an adult, I have rewatched it, and noticed many problematic things; the protagonist repeatedly makes fatphobic comments about her body, such as calling herself a “heifer” though she has thin privilege; she also quite racistly mistakes the national identity of the woman who cleans her house in an awkward “I don’t speak Mexican!” situation; the students who use cannabis are stigmatized as “burnouts”; a gay student is referred to as a “Cake Boy”; etc.

For this assignment, you will **partner with someone else in the class, and the two of you will brainstorm and choose a mainstream movie to analyze.** You will then arrange a time where you are both free, and you will exchange phone numbers or some other form of instant messaging service (such as Facebook). You will then **watch the movie at the same time, and while watching it, write to one another with your reflections about the movie.**

You might find it useful to have a list of critical questions to ask yourself while you are watching, such as adapting the questions Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie offered in her TED talk about critically analyzing the stories we hear (which you watched in week 2). For example; **In this movie, what stories are being told? How and when are these stories being**
told? Whose voices are included in the stories being told, and whose voices are missing? How is oppression being perpetuated by these stories?

It will be a bit like a two-person "live-tweet response" to the movie. Once the movie is finished you will review what you wrote each other, and **use what you wrote to create a shared list of "what you noticed while you watched the film wearing Power Glasses."**

- You may choose to write an **introduction and conclusion** that describes your overall process and the conclusions you came to. You may also choose to include a brief plot synopsis in the introduction, in case I haven't seen the film.
- You can choose to present your observations **chronologically** (in the order they occur during the film), or you can organize your observations about the film into **themes**, such as white supremacy (which might include anti-Blackness, anti-immigrant rhetoric, etc.), ableism (which might include saneism, ageism, fatphobia, etc.) or cis-hetero-patriarchy (which might include misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, rape culture, etc.).

This assignment is not an invitation to tear something down and discredit or cancel it for being oppressive. I am looking for more nuance than that. In this course, we are learning that **EVERYTHING** that comes out of an oppressive society like ours – its laws, its institutions, its people, and most certainly its movies and books – is tainted by systems of oppression. And especially in the case of media from the past, there is the “absurdity of anachronism” to be mindful of (i.e. that it is absurd to hold a movie from 1998 to the same standards of political correctness that we expect today). The point is to show me that you can wear "Power Glasses" while still seeing the world in a nuanced way - that you can deconstruct something that appears harmless (like a coming of age movie about fashionable girls, such as Clueless) and see the evidence of oppression within it, while also remaining aware of the positive and progressive elements within it. I'm hoping to see you approaching social justice work from a place of love, not a place of superiority (i.e. **social justice elitism**). This assignment will hopefully support you in developing these skills!

This assignment will be due on **Monday December 13 at 9pm** - however, I am more than willing to extend this deadline, as I know that group assignments can take extra time (for example, trying to find a suitable time to watch the film)! Note: Only one person per group needs to submit the assignment to Canvas.

**OR**

**Option 3) Autoethnography**

*Autoethnography* is a form of *ethnography*, the main research method used by anthropologists (like myself!). **An autoethnography is a piece of work in which the writer reflects upon themselves and their experiences, and puts this into a broader social context.** It is similar to memoir or autobiography, however, what makes it “ethnographic” is the inclusion of broader social context, social theory, and social commentary.

Your autoethnography will **reflect upon one or more ways that oppression has impacted your life, and connect your experience to something broader in the world.** For example, you may decide to write about your experiences with family abuse, and how trauma theory and the “Adverse Childhood Experience Study” helped shape your self-understanding. You may decide to write about experiences with sexual violence and dating, and how feminist theories such as “toxic masculinity” or “rape culture” helped shape your self-understanding. The possibilities are endless, and fully up to you, but I will be available to discuss and support your ideas! Feel free to reach out to me by email and we can set up a Zoom meeting.

Remember, I do not expect a perfect execution of this complex research method! I am simply inviting you to **experiment**. Autoethnography is an opportunity to be **creative**, to **speak**...
truth to power, and to practice important social work skills like critical thinking and self-reflection.

Please try to keep your assignments **under 10 pages**, as I will have many assignments to read at the end of the semester and want to be able to give them all the attention they deserve. This would also be due **Monday December 13 at 9pm**.

Optional resources to help you understand more about autoethnography:

- You can check out this [Wikipedia page about autoethnography](#).
- I made this 19-minute video lecture about "Autoethnography and Social Justice" (link attached to Canvas Assignment) for another course who were assigned this project (you can skim and skip parts that are not relevant, for example the first 2 minutes was specific to that course). I speak about what autoethnography is, why it exists (spoiler: because of social justice!), and my own experience writing autoethnography. In the presentation I include several links to articles that can help teach you about the method, so I am also attaching the PowerPoint (in Canvas “Files”) where you can access those links (note: the second slide is specific to the course I originally made this video for, your assignments are a little different).
- You may choose to read this autoethnographic essay I wrote in my dissertation titled “it’s not you, it’s the world” (PDF in Canvas “Files”). You will notice that it is very personal but also theoretical and political. I have only one citation (a reference to an article by Lorna Rhodes), though I mention other researchers (Paolo Freire), academics disciplines (Mad Studies, anthropology) and social theories (like “internalized inferiority,” “self-fulfilling prophecies,” and the idea of “intention versus impact”), sometimes through the use of hashtags.

*********

One final note on assignments: As I wrote at the beginning of this section, all of the assignments for this course are designed to be useful, healing, energizing projects that invite you to explore your paths to deepened awareness and compassion. **If you discover that these assignments are not meeting that goal for you, please don’t hesitate to talk to me about it.** We can redesign any assignment to suit your needs!

**Additional Course Logistics**

1. **Email**
   
   I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours, but please feel free to send me a reminder if you are feeling any urgency or anxiety.

2. **Deadlines**
   
   All deadlines for this course are flexible. Please just let me know by email if you are experiencing a barrier to completing your Discussion posts or Assignments. You do not need to hesitate, or worry about how to word your email perfectly – trust that I am here to support you no matter where you’re at!

3. **Accommodations for students with disabilities**
   
   If you require an accommodation for a disability/different ability, please let me know as soon as possible. Many assignments and teaching approaches can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work
together. You may also decide to include the Services for Students with Disabilities Office/SSD. Typically, they recommend using a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide there is confidential. If you are unsure whether SSD might be a good resource, feel free to email me to discuss!

4. Student mental health and wellbeing

Graduate school is a tumultuous experience. But this class in particular, because of the subject matter, can incite existential malaise, weltschmerz, and related painful feelings. I have had this quote by James Baldwin on my wall for years: “The world is scarcely habitable for the conscious young.” This course is designed to raise your consciousness, and therefore make the world we inhabit feel more uninhabitable. But in order to change the world, we need to see the world for how it really is – the terrible and beautiful – and I am available for counseling and mentorship as we work through it all together.

5. Covid-19 Statement

Note: this language comes directly from the School and I am required to share it, though not all of it is relevant to our fully online class.

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.

Health-Related Class Absences (This language comes directly from the School)

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.

Recording Class (This language comes directly from the School)

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.

WEEK BY WEEK SCHEDULE

**Week 1: What is Oppression?**

**Read:**
Please read the syllabus (this means all the Pages under the Module titled “Course Overview”) thoroughly, as there is a lot of information in there about what I expect from you, what you can expect from me and from the course, and what the flow of our 505 journey will be like. It is more comprehensive than most course syllabi, because clear and thorough communication is an important element of my Trauma-Informed Teaching practice!

Please read this handout on the “4 Is of oppression,” created by the Wisconsin Hawthorn Project.

**Watch:**
This is a 20 minute video lecture I prepared on the "Other and Oppress Propensity." The "other and oppress propensity" is a 4-step theory of oppression that helps us wrap our heads about what oppression is and why humans behave oppressively. It is a very important foundation for us to begin with!

**Enjoy:**
This song titled “Oppression” by Ben Harper

**Do:**
Please complete the Pre-Semester Community Building Activities before we meet!

If you have any questions or comments about the "Other and Oppress Propensity" lecture, please feel invited to share in the optional Discussion post.

**Optional additional resources:**
If you haven’t already seen it, I highly recommend this well-known TED talk by Brené Brown (a social worker and psychologist) that reframes vulnerability as a strength and a source of healing rather than as a weakness

Depending on your background, you might find these resources about social justice concepts/vocabulary useful!

Racial Equity Tools Glossary
Diversity & Social Justice Glossary

**Week 2: What is “Normal”?**
Read:
This article defines normalization and connects this to society and politics, revealing how normalization can lead to oppression (i.e. how sexually aggressive behavior became normalized), as well as justice (i.e. how queer relationships became normalized)

Jonathan Sholl, 2017, “Nobody is normal.”
This essay discusses the fascinating history of the construction of “normal” and “pathological” in medical science.

Please read these Wikipedia definitions:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internalized_oppresion
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_norm (this one is long, so feel invited to skim)

Watch:
TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi titled “The Dangers of a Single Story” (18 min)
This talk addresses the issue of multiple truths and the importance of stories in perpetuating oppressive “single truths” (her idea of the “single truth” is similar to the idea we are exploring this week: how “normal” has become a stand-in for “good/right/ideal” in our society).

Enjoy:
This song titled “What's Normal Anyway?” by Miguel

Optional additional resources:
Jim Kozubek, 2018, What Is “Normal,” Anyway?
This essay explores the idea of “normal” in medicine (particularly psychiatry), and includes a personal mental health narrative (this essay cites the above essay by Jonathan Sholl).

Week 3: The Nature and Nurture of Oppression

Read:
Schepers-Hughes and Bourgois, 2003, “Making Sense of Violence” (PDF in “Files”) This is a moving book chapter describing and digesting violence through an anthropological and humanistic lens. Parts of this piece will be difficult for non-anthropologists to follow (e.g. the authors drop a lot of names and trends in the discipline that an audience of anthropologists would understand), so don’t worry about that. Just skim it, and focus on the powerful stories and the theories of violence that are shared.

Maria Popova, 2016, “Hannah Arendt on Loneliness as the Common Ground for Terror and How Tyrannical Regimes Use Isolation as a Weapon of Oppression”
This is a brief well-framed blog entry about Hannah Arendt’s political theory of totalitarianism
Thomas White, 2018. “What did Hannah Arendt really mean by the banality of evil?”
This essay reviews Hannah Arendt’s theory of the “banality of evil” and pairs well with the piece above (this article has a “listen” option).

Each of these “concepts” helps us make sense of violence (if you find these helpful, I invite you to check out the rest of the concepts in this series)
https://conceptually.org/concepts/overton-window
https://conceptually.org/moral-foundations-theory
https://conceptually.org/concepts/cognitive-biases

Watch:
“The biology of our best and worst selves” – TED talk by anthropologist and neuroscientist Robert Sapolsky (16 min)

Robert Sapolsky explains the fascinating biology behind “us versus them” thinking (6 min)

Robert Sapolsky reviews his discovery that hierarchical violence amongst baboons is a learned behavior (rather than an innate/biologically determined behavior) (3.30 min)

Robert Sapolsky explains that oppressive violence (genocide, warfare, border patrolling) is not unique to humans (9 min)

Enjoy:
This short poem on "Good and Evil" by Kahlil Gibran (it’s from a longer epic poem called The Prophet, one of my favorite books).

Week 4: Trauma

Read:
Laura van Dernoot and Connie Burk, 2009, Trauma Stewardship; Introduction, Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 (PDFs in “Files”)
This book helps us to understand what it means to be “trauma stewards” (people who witness and tend to trauma), including important concepts like “vicarious trauma” and “compassion fatigue.” The assigned chapters focus a lot on recognizing trauma exposure responses in ourselves and others. Chapter 4 is long because there are a lot of pictures and “profiles” (interviews/stories pertaining to one of the trauma responses), so feel free to skim, or skip the profiles, if you need to. Note: this whole book is also available online through our library website, if you want to bookmark it for the future!

Watch:
This TED talk by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris titled “How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime” (15 min)

Two video lectures on Trauma (links are in the Canvas site “Module” for week 4)
Enjoy:
“i don't pay attention to the world ending. it has ended for me many times and began again in the morning.”


Optional additional resources:
Amitha Kalaichandran, 2020, We’re Not Ready for This Kind of Grief
This article pairs well with “Trauma Stewardship” by presenting the pandemic through the framing of collective trauma and collective grief.

Week 5: Trauma Informed Care

Read:
This “Community Resiliency Model” Workbook by Elaine Miller-Karas (PDF in “Files”) (feel free to skim, whatever is useful to you).

Elitsa Dermendzhiyska, 2020, “How you attach to people may explain a lot about your inner life” This article examines the concept of “common factors” – the idea that what makes therapy (whether it is CBT or ACT or DBT or some other acronym) effective is less about the specifics of the approach, and more about factors that can be common across techniques. In this case, the healing relationship or therapeutic alliance between client and clinician.

Check out this website that explains what the Internal Family Systems Model (IFS) is, as well as this brief Psychology Today article about IFS. The Wikipedia page on IFS is also pretty good: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_Family_Systems_Model

Watch:
“How Shame Can Block Accountability,” by the Barnard Center for Research on Women (4 min). This video is part of series about Transformative Justice, which you are invited to check out!

Two video lectures on Trauma Informed Care (links are in the Canvas site “Module” for week 5)

Enjoy:
“The Journey,” a poem by Mary Oliver.
This amazing playlist filled with crowd-sourced songs to support trauma recovery (curated by The Mighty, an online community dedicated to social justice and health).

Optional additional resources:
This is a free introduction to self-compassion (in 3 short videos) by Kristen Neff and Chris Germer (they’re both very big deals in the world of self-compassion research and training).
These are some guided self-compassion meditations narrated by Kristen Neff (I use these often!)

I invite you to skim the following websites to familiarize yourself with these trauma-informed body-based therapeutic approaches:
- This website about Somatic Experiencing, a form of body-based trauma therapy designed by trauma expert Peter Levine.
- This website about Tension & Trauma Release Exercises (TRE), another form of body-based trauma therapy
- This website about Trauma Sensitive Yoga - they have a short (2 minute) video that explains what Trauma Sensitive Yoga is and why it is valuable in trauma recovery.

Note: I recommend thinking about this content in relation My Grandmother’s Hands, which you all read this summer, as there is a lot about body-based trauma healing tools in there!

**Week 6: Sick Woman Theory – How Oppression is Disabling**

Question to consider: what are systems of oppression other than systems designed to disable people?

**Read:**
Johanna Hedva, 2016, “Sick Woman Theory”
This is scholarship and art, a critical disability studies piece in which the author, a chronically ill woman, muses about how the ill/disabled are often depoliticized (“How do you throw a brick through the window of a bank if you can’t get out of bed?”), and envisions the “sick woman” as a universal oppressed subject that anyone can connect to, and “caring” for the self and others as a political/anti-capitalist act.

Mia Mingus, 2017, “Access intimacy, interdependence, and disability justice”
Mia Mingus articulates the importance of an intersectional liberation movement in this brief blog post.

Nancy Doyle, 2020, “We Have Been Disabled: How The Pandemic Has Proven The Social Model Of Disability”
This is a recent essay connecting the coronavirus pandemic to the Social Model of Disability.

Wong, Alice, 2020 I’m disabled and need a ventilator to live. Am I expendable during this pandemic?
This piece gets into the issue of eugenics (the belief that certain lives are “not worth living”/expendable).

**Listen:**
“Ableism and Racism: Roots of the Same Tree” – a podcast episode from the series Be Antiracist with Ibram X. Kendi

Enjoy:
This poem “Translating the Crip,” by Crip artist Laura Hershey

Optional additional resources:
This amazing workbook about the Disability Justice movement (PDF in “Files”), created by The Education Amplifier program!

We need to talk about ableism – this piece defines and explains ableism for audiences less familiar with the term

Here is a resource for assessing the disabling factors in people’s lives. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is a useful tool for screening for disability, which allows you to also account for the structural conditions (such as racism or ableism) – which not many assessment tools do. See also this WHO page about the ICF.

And this is a page about how to provide Disability Competent Care:

**Week 7: Medical Oppression – Fatphobia/Sizeism**

Read:
Samuelle Voltaire, 2019, *What every social worker needs to know about the “health at every size” framework*
This addresses the importance of resisting fatphobia (which is a form of ableism) within social work

Evette Dionne, 2019, *Here’s What Fat Acceptance Is and Isn’t*
This is a review of the Fat Acceptance Movement in relation to fatphobia
You may also want to skim the Wikipedia page, for another lens on that history:

Linda Bacon and Amee Severson, 2019, *Fat Is Not the Problem - Fat Stigma Is; “Health experts” are sending incorrect and destructive messages about the relationship between weight and wellness*

Kitty Stryker, 2020, *Fatphobia in a Time of Pandemic*

Enjoy:
BODIES AS RESISTANCE: Claiming the political act of being oneself (8 min) – this is a TED talk/spoken word poetry performance by Sonya Renee Taylor, creator of The Body is Not an Apology (a global organization dedicated to radical self love, and also the title of an AMAZING book that changed my life, which is available through our library website). I love the quote “will we use our bodies to uphold systems of oppression or to defy them?”

Optional additional resources:
This image was put together by one of my dear friends Shira Collings (a passionate digital activist and expert on weight stigma and the Health At Every Size/HAES framework). It is a list of weight inclusive activists and professionals that you can follow on social media to keep up with what is happening in the fight against fatphobia.

Week 8: Medical Oppression - Sanism

Read:
This page that defines and explains what sanism is

Kazimir DeWolfe and colleagues, 2019, “28 Ways to Make the World Less Hostile to Mad, Neurodivergent, and Psychiatrically Disabled People.”
This piece describes ways that we can adopt practices that make the world less sanist

Clare Shaw, 2016, “Deciding to be alive: self-injury and survival.” In Searching for a Rose Garden: Challenging Psychiatry, Fostering Mad Studies (PDF in “files”)
This is a Mad Studies piece that explores person-centered narratives of self-injury and challenges the mainstream narrative about self-injury

Describes how psychiatric violence is similar to colonial violence in terms of being “epistemic”.

Nicholas Carter, 2020, How to Know You’re Not Insane (And how a Cards Against Humanity Staff Writer was fired)
This is a recent piece revealing "sanism" (and its connection to racism) in action!

Kyle F, 2015, “Please Stop Saying 'Committed' Suicide”

Enjoy:
The song "Being Sad is Not a Crime," by Soko. The lyrics are so relatable to me, for I am a "Sad Girl" (referencing Audrey Wollen’s "Sad Girl Theory", which is similar to the "Sick Woman Theory" we saw in week 6, and proposes that “the sadness of girls should be witnessed and re-historicized as an act of resistance, of political protest... protest doesn’t have to be external to
the body; it doesn’t have to be a huge march in the streets... There’s a long history of girls who have used their own anguish, their own suffering, as tools for resistance and political agency”). Being sad is absolutely not a crime, and yet our culture has oppressed sadness for a long time, viewing it as a “bad” or “negative” emotion, and sometimes even medicalizing it into labels like “depression” that can make people feel like something is “wrong” with them simply because they are sensitive to the world’s pain.

Optional additional resources:
The rise of Mad Studies: A new academic discipline challenges our ideas of what it means to be "sane."

Remembering Mad Pride, The Movement That Celebrated Mental Illness

One amazing thing to come out of Mad Pride activism is a variety of skills that help us intervene in crises in trauma-informed ways. One really important skill is called E-CPR. E-CPR, or “Emotional CPR” is a form of emotional crisis intervention (usually marketed specifically as suicide prevention). This video is a training in E-CPR from a Mad Pride perspective. The facilitator is a friend of mine (Shira Collings, whose anti-fatphobia work I mentioned last week). I highly recommend watching the Q and A, because there are some very common questions asked, and she handles them amazingly.

Here is another more recent (and expansive/longer) online training about emotional CPR/emotional first aid. This one is facilitated by the Fireweed Collective (formerly known as the Icarus Project), a Mad Pride organization who are "committed to working at the intersections of mental health, healing justice, and social justice, in service of a future where we all get free."

Emotional First Aid training part 1
Emotional First Aid training part 2
Emotional First Aid training part 3

Week 9: Medical Oppression - Racial Disparities and Biases

Read:
Jesmyn Ward, 2020, On Witness and Respair: a Personal Tragedy followed by Pandemic
This gorgeous essay is written by Black author Jesmyn Ward, who lost her husband to COVID-19. In the essay, she processes her grief whilst also discussing the structural issues (like racism, poverty, etc.) that surround the pandemic. It is a beautiful example of autoethnography, for those of you wanting to choose that for your final project.

Jonathan Metzl and Dorothy Roberts, 2014, Structural Competency Meets Structural Racism (PDF in “files”)
This is a chapter from a well-known book about how race (and other systems of oppression) impact medical knowledge and practice. It provides powerful examples - such as the historical over-diagnosis of Black men as "schizophrenic" due to racial biases, and the nonconsensual testing and incarceration of pregnant Black women experiencing addiction - as well as concrete steps healthcare professionals can take to resist and counter oppression.

David Love, 2016, Study: White Medical Students Hold Outrageous Theories About Black Biology, Explaining Why Black Patients Are Under-Treated for Pain
This is a brief piece reviewing a disturbing study about racial biases in medicine (a study which was cited in My Grandmother’s Hands as well as the John Oliver video assigned for this week)

Jacque Smith and Cassie Spodak, 2021, Black or ‘Other’? Doctors may be relying on race to make decisions about your health
A piece reviewing the history (and current presence) of medical racism in the USA

Ezekiel J. Emanuel and Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, 2020, "5 Ways the Health-Care System Can Stop Amplifying Racism"

Watch:
This 2019 episode of John Oliver's show Last Week Tonight on "Bias in Medicine" (22 min)
Note: for those who don’t know him, John Oliver is a comedian, and I want to warn you that this video has explicit language.

This TED talk by Dr. David Williams titled “How Racism Makes us Sick” (17 min)

Enjoy:
You’re invited to peruse this page featuring a collection of pieces by Black poets celebrating Black History Month; and this page about Black liberation songs!

Optional additional resources:
Kate Conger and colleagues, 2020, “Native Americans Feel Devastated by the Virus Yet Overlooked in the Data”
This piece talks about how pre-existing structural racism contributes to the staggering impact of COVID-19 on indigenous Americans. It pairs well with this recent CNN piece reviewing the latest CDC data: “Covid-19 incidence more than triple among Native Americans, new CDC report says”

Dr. David Williams and Dr. Lisa Cooper, 2020, “COVID-19 and Health Equity—A New Kind of “Herd Immunity””
This short editorial piece in the Journal of the American Medical Association discusses racial health inequities and how this connects to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Usha Lee McFarling, 2021, Troubling podcast puts JAMA, the ‘voice of medicine,’ under fire for its mishandling of race

Adam Serwer, 2020, “The Coronavirus Was an Emergency Until Trump Found Out Who Was Dying”

Ella Torres, 2020, Racism declared a public health crisis in Ohio's most populated county


**Week 10: Medical oppression - Cis-hetero-patriarchy and Medicine**
Read:

Nina Levin and colleagues, 2020 “We Just Take Care of Each Other”: Navigating ‘Chosen Family’ in the Context of Health, Illness and the Mutual Provision of Care amongst Queer and Transgender Young Adults” (PDF in “Files”)

This is a recent publication by a doctoral student in our school, with Shanna Kattari (one of our faculty members) as co-author and faculty advisor!

Shanna Kattari, 2018, “Transgender and non-binary people face health care discrimination every day in the US”

A succinct summary of the ways cis-hetero-patriarchy impacts gender non-binary and transgender folks in healthcare settings

Nicole Lee, 2019, “As a disabled woman, my abortion wasn’t questioned—but my pregnancy was”

This piece focuses on the intersectional oppression of a disabled cis-woman in reproductive healthcare settings

The Trevor Project’s National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021

Filled with survey data about queer youth and their mental health (including data about suicidal feelings, difficulty accessing adequate and affirming mental healthcare services, how the pandemic has impacted them, etc.).

Watch:

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) asked LGBTIQ+ people to talk about their experiences accessing health care (6 min)

Note: this video features people sharing traumatic stories about healthcare experiences

This TED talk by transgender activist Samy Nour Younes about the centuries-old history of the trans community (6 min)

Enjoy:

You’re invited to peruse this page that features several pieces from LGBTQIA+ poets; and this page that features some of the best queer love songs of all time!

Optional additional resources:

Caroline Praderio, 2019, LGBTQ patients reveal their exhausting, infuriating, and surprisingly common struggles at the doctor’s office (a good companion piece to the NWMPHN video and the Shanna Kattari piece)

Sunny Frothingham, 2015, “Twenty Years After Tyra Hunter’s Death, LGBT People Are Still Waiting For Basic Protections”

Week 11: Environmental (In)justice and Health

Read:

This page from the University of Wisconsin department of Environmental Studies defines key terms in Environmental Philosophy, including “anthropocentrism” and “ecocentrism.”
Daniel Voskoboynik, 2018, “To fix the climate crisis we must acknowledge our imperial past.” This is a powerful piece that connects colonialism/imperialism, capitalism, and environmental destruction. It pairs well with this short (one page) piece in the CNN by Lauren Kent in 2019: “European colonizers killed so many Native Americans that it changed the global climate, researchers say.”

Jasmine Bell, 2016, 5 Things to Know About Communities of Color and Environmental Justice
This is a short and succinct piece that describes data on racial health disparities and how they connect to environmental racism

National Governance Center, 2021, Beyond Land Acknowledgment: a guide
This piece describes steps to move beyond land acknowledgments in our efforts to make reparations to indigenous peoples. It describes some ways that land acknowledgments can be problematic (i.e. when they demand unpaid emotional/intellectual labor from indigenous folks, or when they reflect "optical allyship"/"performative allyship" terms that loosely mean "saying woke things for the sake of sounding woke, but not really doing anything meaningful besides that").

2019, Vandana Shiva, “Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest”
Dr. Shiva is a powerhouse champion of ecofeminism and the anti-globalization movement (you may also want to check out the Wikipedia Page about Vandana Shiva)

Yvette Cabrera, 2020, “Coronavirus is not just a health crisis — it's an environmental justice crisis”
This piece contextualizes the pandemic as an environmental justice issue.

Watch:
“A Brief History of Environmental Justice”, by ProPublica (3.30 min)

Enjoy:
decolonization requires acknowledging that your needs and desires should never come at the expense of another’s life energy. it is being honest that
you have been spoiled
by a machine
that
is not feeding you freedom
but
feeding
you
the milk of pain.

- the release, from Nayyirah Waheed’s book of poetry, “Salt.”

**Optional additional resources:**

Kelly House, 2021, [Meet the Michigander who’s advising Biden on environmental justice](https://www.npr.org/2021/03/14/943572577/meet-the-michigander-who-s-advising-biden-on-environmental-justice)

“Solutions to the food and ecological crisis facing us today,” a 2010 TED talk by Dr. Vandana Shiva (11.40 min)


This is an in-depth journal article about environmental injustice on minority communities.


This is a brief and brilliant interview with the “father” of environmental justice in the US


**Week 12: From Pain to Purpose and Pleasure**

**Read:**


This article reviews the life, work, art, and philosophy of Hector Aristizábal, a “theater of the oppressed” practitioner and psychotherapist.


This piece overviews the role of love (and pleasure) in healing and social justice. adrienne maree brown’s book “[Pleasure Activism](https://www.adriennesq.com/2017/02/28/love-as-political-resistance/)” is truly fantastic (and available free on our library website), and also her [blog](https://adriennesq.com/) has an immense amount of beautiful and empowering essays!
Brené Brown, Finding our way to True Belonging
This is a very brief piece that defines what Brené Brown means by “true belonging,” a human need that is often thwarted by life in an oppressive culture.

Maria Popova, 2013, Victor Frankl on the Human Search for Meaning
This brief blog post reviews the work of Victor Frankl, a psychiatrist and survivor of Auschwitz who pioneered the idea that meaning/purpose was a human psychological need. Frankl created “logotherapy,” the first meaning-focused therapeutic technique. It is not used much anymore (at least in the US), but Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is a commonly known evidence-based meaning-focused therapeutic practice here

Watch:
“What is transformative justice?” by the Barnard Center for Research on Women (10 min)

Enjoy:
Maya Angelou’s poem “A Brave and Startling Truth” (scroll down to the page to find it)

Optional additional resources:
Mia Mingus, Transformative Justice: a Brief Description
adrienne maree brown, What is/isn’t transformative justice?
This is a brief interview with Dr. Caty Borum Chattoo, author of “A Comedian and An Activist Into a Bar: The (Serious) Role of Comedy in Social Justice.”
This page links to an interesting NPR interview and a stand-up comedy TED talk by Negin Farsad, titled “Can humor fight prejudice”?

Week 13 – Toward Health Equity and Social Justice

Read:
This short piece guides us in figuring out what our roles are (playing to our strengths and accounting for our limitations) in the fight for social justice. Since it is so easy to get overwhelmed by the bigness of oppression, it can be really helpful to figure out “what can I do?” What is the small bite I can take out of this giant problem?

Amy Schulz and colleagues, 2020, Building a New Normal: Strategic Actions for Health Equity in a Post Pandemic World
This brief piece is by public health experts at our university. It overviews steps we can take to address health inequities in our culture.

This optimistic concept paper about the Social Work Grand Challenge that we focused on, titled “Health Equity: Eradicating Health Inequalities for Future Generations” (PDF in “Files”)

This is a passionately-written description of the “Healing Justice” movement, a close relative (or perhaps even a variant) of Transformative Justice. Healing Justice promotes the ideology that justice is first and foremost about healing, and creating a culture where health and care are foregrounded.

Enjoy:
adienne maree brown’s poem “this is the only moment (species love poetry)”
Sam Cooke’s 1963 song “A Change is Gonna Come”

Optional additional resources:
Ten Actions For Better Post-Pandemic Health Care In The United States

The COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons on building more equal and sustainable societies

Racism as a Public Health Crisis: Increasing Awareness through Access to Research