



Course title:	SW505: Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work	
Course #/term:	SW 505-001, Winter 2022	
Live Class Meeting:	6pm Tuesdays, via Zoom in Canvas	
Credit hours:	3	
Prerequisites:	none	
Instructor:	Dr. Laura Yakas	
Pronouns:	[She, her]	
Contact info:	Email: lyakas@umich.edu	Phone: +64 22 0345371 (I am in New Zealand, so you'll need WhatsApp to contact me by phone)
	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 urgency or anxiety	
Office hours:	On Zoom by appointment	

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 objectives and competencies

- CLO 1. Recognize the extent to which structures, policies, and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, create or enhance privilege and power (Essentials 14, 30, 33, 44).

- CLO 2. Explain the cumulative effect of structural discrimination on people with differing and multiple social identities and locations. (Essentials 11,14,29,33,38,45)
- CLO 3. Distinguish between health differences and health disparities and provide relevant examples of each. (Essential 5,11,15,30)
- CLO 4. Discuss the policy reform sought by modern social justice movements in response to police brutality. (Essential 6,13,14,30,32,44)
- CLO 5. Recognize how policy decisions at the local, state, and national levels can exclude and endanger the environmental health of citizens when their voices are not heard or heeded. (Essential 5,13,22,29,30)
- CLO 6. 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)
- CLO 7. Define and apply your own positionalities and the importance of their intersections (Essential 38,42,45,46)
- CLO 8. Evaluate historical context and its current applications within the profession and practice as an ally. (Essential 6,11,15,29,39,44,45)

c. 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.

d. 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.

e. My Teaching Style / Healing-centered Teaching

Hi Everyone, I'm Dr. Laura Yakas, your professor for SW 505! I completed my PhD in anthropology and social work here at the University of Michigan in 2018. My main areas of passion and experience include; Disability culture (including the [Mad Pride movement](#), the [Neurodiversity movement](#), and 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 about oppression using anthropology and the other social sciences. Anthropology is a discipline that aims to

deeply *understand* humanity and human evolution, and I am passionate about bridging this with social work, a profession that aims to *change* humanity.

My Teaching Style: Inspired by the work of [Brené Brown](#), I am committed to radical authenticity, and this shapes my teaching style. I bring my full and vulnerable self into our class, and I invite this from you. This is not normative in academic culture (so it may feel odd at first!), but is an important aspect of practicing anti-oppression in classrooms. With authenticity, we can challenge the [hidden curriculum](#) of academia and the oppressive norms that ask us to be inauthentic. 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 - you can be honest, and I can reassure you that your need for rest and self-care is valid! Or, you don't need to pretend you agree with what I or other students believe - you can be honest, and an exploration of our differences might lead to deepened empathy! In sum: in my classes, students are invited to speak their truths.

Another reason I bring and invite authenticity and vulnerability into our classroom is that I thrive best as an educator when I feel **connection** and a sense of **community** with students :)

Healing-Centered (also known as Trauma-informed or Anti-oppressive) Teaching: As a [Mad/neurodivergent](#) woman, [radical accessibility](#) is very important to me. This is why I aim to co-create accessible and [healing-centered](#) learning communities. I will talk more about this in our first class, but in brief, healing-centered teaching involves three things:

- 1) **Choice** – I believe it is important for students to have options / agency, and to feel ownership over their learning journeys. Therefore, I offer options in this class in the following ways; firstly, the "pre-work" for each Module features a list of materials designed to support your learning, and though you're invited to use them all, depending on your capacity you can also choose which to prioritize (this is why I provide brief summaries of the assigned materials); secondly, for most of the weekly Discussion Posts, you are given multiple prompts to choose from; finally, in recognition of the fact that life often throws unexpected barriers our way, you may choose up to two (out of the eight) Journal Assignments to skip, and up to three (of the twelve) weekly Discussion Posts to skip, without any point deductions or need to speak with me.
- 2) **Flexibility** – radical accessibility means making room for all the unexpected barriers life throws our way, everything from the limitations of our own body-minds to the barriers we face because we live in a [white-supremacist imperial-capitalist cis-hetero-patriarchy](#). Therefore, my classes are "punishment-free zones," which means that course expectations and deadlines are flexible, and all you need to do is be open and honest with me about your needs and barriers so that I can more easily support your learning. 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 learns at their own pace, and that life in an oppressive culture can create barriers to learning. These barriers are easier to move through when there is honest communication about them.
- 3) **Transparency / Authenticity** – speaking of honest communication, I aim to co-create learning communities that feature transparent and authentic communication. Not only does this help us connect better as a learning community, but it also supports healing and anti-oppression, and generally makes our time together more enjoyable! Therefore, I will bring my full and vulnerable self into our class, and I invite you to do the same :)

f. Course Logistics

1. **Announcements:** 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, where I will share the slides from the class.
2. **Content warnings:** in the service of our collective learning and growth, this course digs into a variety of potentially activating topics. It would be prohibitively labor-intensive for me to provide specific content warnings for each assigned piece, but I urge you to take care of yourselves however and whenever necessary, and please feel free to reach out to me if you need to process anything that comes up for you.
3. **Expected Time Commitment:** at our school a 3-credit class amounts to 135 hours of expected time commitment over the semester. This includes all synchronous and asynchronous work, such as Zoom classes, exploring assigned materials, and assignments. For our class, this averages to approximately 10 hours per week.
4. **Email:** I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours, but please feel free to send me a reminder if you are feeling any urgency or anxiety.
5. **Accommodations for Disabled students / my fellow "spoonies" :** as mentioned in the previous section on Healing-centered teaching, I am committed to radical accessibility in my learning communities. Please let me know by email if you have any specific needs or accommodations. We can work together informally, or if you wish, you can include the Services for Students with Disabilities Office/SSD.
6. **Religious observations:** please let me know if you have any religious observations that I should be aware of (for example, if you need to miss a Zoom class).
7. **Paywalls:** some of the readings for this course are on websites (like New York Times) that have paywalls. If you find that you can't access a reading on the website due to a paywall, please search the title on our Library website, as our school has paid subscriptions.

2. Class Requirements

a. Text and class materials

- All required and suggested readings will be provided on Canvas in the form of links to external sites (e.g. news, video, podcast), or PDFs.

b. Class schedule

Whenever possible, necessary changes to the course calendar will be communicated via announcement in class and on Canvas at least a week in advance. Please turn on Canvas notifications. **NOTE: ASSIGNED MATERIALS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON CHANGING NEWS - SEE CANVAS MODULES FOR UPDATED LISTS!**

Week	Agenda	Read-Watch-Listen (SEE CANVAS FOR LINKS)	Activities
Week 1	Resources for Understanding Critical	Read Racial Equity Tools Glossary Read What Is Critical Race Theory? Context Behind Trump's Attack Read NASW Code of Ethics	DISCUSSION POST #1

	Race Theory and Anti-Racism	Listen to The author of 'White Fragility' doesn't think 'most white people care about racial injustice	
Week 2	Culture	Read Cultural Competence or Cultural Humility? Moving Beyond the Debate Read Cultural Relativism Watch assigned Robert Sapolsky videos Watch The "Other and Oppress" propensity Watch Cultural Appropriation vs. Appreciation Watch What is Culture?	DISCUSSION POST #2 JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT #1: ANTI-RACIST PARENTING
Week 3	Intersectionality	Read The intersectionality wars Read The Gender Unicorn Listen to On Being with Krista Tippett - Imani Perry: The Fabric of Our Identity Watch Unpacking Intersectionality Watch Intersectional Challenges Watch Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw: What is Intersectional Feminism?	DISCUSSION POST #3 JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT #2: LGBTQ+ & DISCRIMINATION
Week 4	Closing the Health Gap	Read Health Equity: Eradicating Health Inequalities for Future Read COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by Race/Ethnicity: Current Data and Changes Over Time Read Anti-ableism Read We Have Been Disabled: How The Pandemic Has Proven The Social Model Of Disability Read Broadband Internet Access Is a Social Determinant of Health Listen Ableism and Racism: Roots of the Same Tree Watch Bias in medicine Watch Social and Cultural Determinants of Health	DISCUSSION POST #4
Week 5	Future Implications for Closing the Health Gap	Read Structural Competency Meets Structural Racism: Race, Politics, and the Structure of Medical Knowledge Read Advancing Health Equity: A Guide to Language, Narrative, and Concepts (Links to an external site.) Read Why Person-First Language Doesn't Always Put the Person First Read Building a New Normal: Strategic Actions for Health Equity in a Post Pandemic World Read Strengthening Health Care Systems: Better Health Across America Watch A Conversation with Jaclynn Hawkins: Social Determinants of Health for Men of Color	DISCUSSION POST #5 JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT #3: SICK WOMAN THEORY
Week 6	End Homelessness	Read She's 10, Homeless and Eager to Learn. But She Has No Internet. Read Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among formerly incarcerated people Read She's 91 and Is Being Kicked Out of Her Apartment Watch Home Saves Your Life: Bill's Story	DISCUSSION POST #6 JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT #4: TA-NEHISI

		<p>Watch Gray Tsunami: More seniors filling homeless shelters</p> <p>Watch Housing Insecurity</p>	<p>COATS ON THE CASE FOR REPARATIONS</p>
Week 7	Future Implications for Ending Homelessness	<p>Read End Homelessness Grand Challenge</p> <p>Read How Health and Homelessness are Connected—Medically</p> <p>Watch What Happens If You Can't Pay Rent?</p>	<p>DISCUSSION POST #7</p>
Week 8	Environmental Justice	<p>Read What is Environmental Justice?</p> <p>Read Key terms in Environmental Philosophy</p> <p>Read 10 egregious examples of environmental racism in the US</p> <p>Read Environmental Justice: The Intersection of Social Equality and Environmentalism</p> <p>Read Patriarchy and speciesism</p> <p>Read Trump's EPA Concludes Environmental Racism Is Real</p> <p>Read Intersections of Police, Racism and the Environment</p> <p>Watch Environmental Justice</p>	<p>DISCUSSION POST #8</p> <p>JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT #5: ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE AND COLONIALISM</p>
Week 9	Economic Inequality	<p>Read Axios: 10 myths about the racial wealth gap</p> <p>Read College Made Them Feel Equal. The Virus Exposed How Unequal Their Lives Are.</p> <p>Read Why I Paid \$50,000 for a Year of Child Care - The New York Times</p> <p>Listen to What it would take to end child poverty in America</p> <p>Watch Explained Racial Wealth Gap FULL EPISODE Netflix</p> <p>Watch Economic Inequality</p>	<p>DISCUSSION POST #9</p> <p>JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT #6: ADDRESSING INEQUITIES WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM</p>
Week 10	Future Implications for Reversing Economic Inequality	<p>Read Reversing Extreme Inequality Grand Challenge</p> <p>Read Teaching About King's Radical Approach to Social Justice</p> <p>Read Is Economic Inequality Really a Problem?</p>	<p>DISCUSSION POST #10</p> <p>JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT #7: BARRIERS & HARDSHIPS OF IMMIGRATION</p>
Week 11	Policing & Community Relations	<p>Read How Did We Get Here?</p> <p>Read A Teenager Didn't Do Her Online Schoolwork. So a Judge Sent Her to Juvenile Detention.</p> <p>Read What Is Owed</p> <p>Listen to Podcast -The Ezra Klein Show: Why Ta-Nehisi Coates is hopeful</p> <p>Listen to Podcast - The evidence on crime and policing</p> <p>Listen to Podcast - A Conversation With a Police Union Leader</p>	<p>DISCUSSION POST #11</p> <p>JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT #8: POLICING IN AMERICA-GEORGE FLOYD</p>

		Listen to Podcast -Race, policing, and the universal yearning for safety Watch Intersection Disability Racism Police Violence Watch Police and Community Relations	
Week 12	Resources & Activities for Allyship	Read Mapping Our Social Change Roles in Times of Crisis Read 4 tips for talking to people you disagree with Read Calling In: A Quick Guide on When and How Read Opinion: I'm a Black Feminist. I Think Call-Out Culture Is Toxic Read A Not-So-Brief Personal History of the Healing Justice Movement, 2010–2016 Watch What is Transformative Justice? Watch Allyship	DISCUSSION POST #12
Week 13	Course Wrap-Up	No assigned materials	

c. Assignments

Assignment	Points	%	Details
Live Meeting Participation	13 x 10 points=130 points	43%	See below (section d)
Discussion	12 x 5 points= 60 points	20%	See Canvas for Topics and due dates
Journal Assignment	8 X 10 points =80 points	27%	See rubric and templates (below)
Life Trajectory Final Project	30 points	10%	See rubric (below)
Total	300 points	100%	

Journal Assignments Rubric

Criteria	Meeting the criteria looks like...	Points
Authenticity	You have practiced the important social work skills of vulnerability/authenticity and self-reflection by sharing personal experiences and perspectives on the topic.	5
Argument	You have made a clear argument/point with the paper, and/or mused about the topic in a meaningful way.	5

Total (per journal)		10
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Discussion Post Rubric

Criteria	Full Credit	Partial Credit	No Credit
Quality of comments	Thoughtful, reflective, and respectful of others	Posts, but with minimal effort (“I agree with what Bill said...”)	Did not post
Contribution to the learning community	Attempted to motivate group discussion by asking questions or adding multiple replies to peers	Responds to peers, but with minimal effort.	Provided no feedback to fellow students

Life Trajectory Rubric

Criteria	Meeting the criteria looks like...	Points
Introduction	Introduce your interviewee with a compelling quote, statement, story, or other feature from your conversation.	5
Contextual setup	Clearly establish where/when the story begins (e.g. in their early, middle, or late-life) and set your interviewee’s experiences in a socio-historical context (e.g. if they were born in the 1960s, you might identify that they are part of the post-WW2 Baby Boom)	5
Integration of concepts from “SW Grand Challenges” or other social justice concepts	Their life trajectory should include their experiences with generational advantages or disadvantages / experiences with privilege and oppression (e.g. be sure to include their identities - what is their racial identity? Their class/SES background? Are they Disabled or non-disabled? What is their gender and sexual identity? etc.)	10
Life Lessons	What lessons, experiences, or new ways of thinking around your interviewee’s life story can readers learn from? What specific aspects of your interviewee’s experiences might have relevant implications for social workers?	5
Grammar and Tone	Language should be genuine/authentic, and written so that a general audience can understand it (i.e. there's no need for formality here!). Please ensure that complex topics are communicated sensitively, protecting the identity of interviewees or people in their lives.	5

d. Attendance Policy and Zoom Class Participation

You will get the most out of this course if you attend each Zoom session, however, my commitment to Healing-centered Teaching means that the **choice** is yours, and all I ask is that you are open and **transparent** with me about any barriers to your attendance. Attendance at each Zoom session is worth 10 points, but points *will not be deducted* for absences as long as you communicate the following:

- When possible, please email me in advance to let me know if you have to miss a Zoom class.
- If you are unable to let me know beforehand, please reach out to me afterwards to let me know what happened.

If you miss class without reaching out to me to explain what the barriers are, here is what will happen:

- Firstly, I will wait a couple of days to give you a chance to reach out to me, then I will reach out to you.
- Secondly, if I do not hear back from you and you continue to miss classes, I may decide to reach out to someone in the Office of Student Services to have them check in on you.

e. Grading

Final grades are based on 100 percentage points. Letter grades are assigned to point totals according to the following schedule:

Assignments and class participation total 100 points for the semester.

100 -94 = A

93 - 90 = A-

89 - 87 = B+

86 - 84 = B

83 - 80 = B-

79 - 77 = C+

76 - 74 = C

73 - 70 = C-

69 - 67 = D+

66 - 64 = D

63 - 60 = D-

59 and below = E

f. class Recording and Course Materials

Audio and video recording of in-class lectures and discussions is prohibited without the advance written permission of the instructor. Students with an approved accommodation from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities permitting the recording of class meetings must present documentation to the instructor in advance of any recording being done. The instructor reserves the right to disallow recording for a portion of any class time where privacy is a special concern. If the instructor chooses to record a class, they will decide which classes, if any, are

recorded, what portion of each class is recorded, and whether a recording is made available on the course management website. On days when classes are recorded, students will be notified a recording is occurring. Class recordings and course materials may not be reproduced, sold, published or distributed to others, in whole or in part, without the written consent of the instructor.

g. COVID-19 Statement

For the safety of all students, faculty, and staff on campus, it is important for each of us to be mindful of safety measures that have been put in place for our protection. By returning to campus, you have acknowledged your responsibility for protecting the collective health of our community. Your participation in this course on an in-person/hybrid basis is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University, including maintaining physical distancing of six feet from others, and properly wearing a face covering in class. Other applicable safety measures may be described in the Wolverine Culture of Care and the University's Face Covering Policy for COVID-19. Your ability to participate in this course in-person/hybrid may be impacted by failure to comply with campus safety measures. Individuals seeking to request an accommodation related to the face covering requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the Office for Institutional Equity. If you are unable or unwilling to adhere to these safety measures while in a face-to-face class setting, you will be required to participate on a remote basis. I also encourage you to review the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the COVID-related Addendum to the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

h. Health-Related Class Absences

Please evaluate your own health status regularly and refrain from attending class and coming to campus if you are ill. You are encouraged to seek appropriate medical attention for treatment. 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*
- *Proper use of names and pronouns*
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities*

- *Religious/spiritual observances*
- *Military deployment*
- *Writing skills and expectations*
- *Academic integrity and plagiarism*