1. Course Statement

Audre Lorde concludes her 1975 poem *A Litany for Survival* by writing, “And when we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard nor welcomed, but when we are silent we are still afraid. So it is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive.” One interpretation of Lorde’s words is that the “we” she writes of—people with marginalized social identities (particularly Black and brown LGBTQIA+ women)—must speak because survival necessitates it, despite not being guaranteed.

Indeed, as long as there has been power and oppression, traditionally excluded and marginalized groups—who carry the heaviest weight of oppressive structures and institutions—have spoken out and engaged in social and political action. There are many historic and contemporary examples. Colin Kaepernick’s peaceful protests during national anthems honor the long history of Black athletes condemning racism, including Tommie Smith’s and John Carlos’ protest at the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City. Native and Indigenous peoples from around the world gathered at Standing Rock’s Oceti Sakowin Camp in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux water protectors to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline. Native Hawaiians protested the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea. DREAMers mobilized and developed policy proposals in response to the presidential plan to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Teachers in states across the country have gone on strike in response to low wages and cuts to education, with some receiving higher pay as a result of their efforts. Disability

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1. Lorde’s poem can be found in her book, The Black Unicorn, and read here: [https://genius.com/Audre-lorde-a-litany-for-survival-annotated](https://genius.com/Audre-lorde-a-litany-for-survival-annotated)
3. [http://standwithstandingrock.net/](http://standwithstandingrock.net/)
rights advocates have convened on Capitol Hill to protest the proposed changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The lived experiences of traditionally excluded and marginalized groups—and their leadership toward changing oppressive structures and institutions—are at the center of historic and contemporary examples of organizing for social and political action.

While the news media widely publicizes these protests, less observable are the skills and strategies used by groups and communities to mobilize toward change and advocate for policy. What skills and strategies do groups and communities use to mobilize and take action? What legislative, judicial, and regulatory policy channels can be leveraged for change, and how can these channels be navigated? What are the tensions, challenges, opportunities, and successes that groups and communities experience as they confront oppressive structures and institutions? What are the roles of groups with privileged social identities in supporting these efforts? This course explores these critical questions by engaging in readings, discussions, and written assignments that situate traditionally excluded and marginalized groups as experts of their experiences within organizing for social and political action.

### a. Course Description

This course examines methods of organizing people for social and political action on their own behalf or on behalf of others. Students will analyze different approaches to bringing people together for collective action, building organizational capacity, and generating power, with emphasis on the role of labor unions, coalitions, political organizing, and community-based policy advocacy. The course includes the study of skills in analyzing power structures, developing action strategies, conflict and persuasive tactics, challenging oppressive structures, conducting community campaigns, using political advocacy as a form of mobilization, and understanding contemporary social issues as they affect oppressed and disadvantaged communities. Special emphasis will be placed on organizing around social, economic, racial, and political injustice in the US and globally. Additional emphasis will be placed on organizing with communities of color, women, LGBTQIA2S+ populations, and other under-represented groups.

### b. Course Content

In this course, students will learn that organizing for social and political action aims to create change by building powerful organizations at the community and societal level. This course takes the perspective that organizing can win improvements in people's lives, make people aware of their own power, alter the relations of power in the community, and create a more socially just society. The history of organizing for social and political action and its underlying theoretical assumptions about power, conflict, and change will be covered. This course will also examine the sociopolitical and political-economic arenas in which organizing operates; the roles and responsibilities of practitioners; several major strategies and tactics of organizing; forces that facilitate or limit organizing; ethical and value dilemmas of organizing; and lessons learned from research on social and political action and change. In addition, different schools of thought about organizing and their approaches to the formulation of goals, issues, constituencies, targets, and tactics will be compared. The course will also analyze strategies and tactics that employ conflict as a vehicle for generating power and creating change. Students will assess theories of conflict and power and ways of analyzing power structures at the community and societal level. Political advocacy will be examined as an empowering process of strengthening solidarity and challenging oppressive structures, systems, and institutions. In contrast to viewing advocacy as a narrow approach to representing group interests in legislatures and established institutions, this course will consider advocacy as an empowering

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process by which traditionally excluded groups advocate for themselves in ways which build organizations and develop communities.

c. Course Objectives and Competencies

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to: 1. Understand and analyze the changing role of context of social and political action in US and global contexts (Practice Behaviors 5.CO, 9.CO); 2. Understand contemporary social and political issues and their relationship to social and political action strategies and tactics (Practice Behavior 9.CO); 3. Understand and apply social and political dynamics as they relate to issues of power, privilege, social justice, and resource distribution (Practice Behavior 5.CO); 4. Analyze alternative models, strategies, tactics, and modes of social and political action directed towards these goals (Practice Behaviors 3.CO, 6.CO); 5. Demonstrate skills in community assessment, leadership and organizational development, planning and conducting campaigns, and evaluating their results (Practice Behaviors 10.b.CO, 10.c.CO, 10.d.CO); 6. Formulate strategies to engage constituencies in social and political action (Practice Behavior 10.a.CO); 7. Identify and incorporate attention to issues related to diversity dimensions such as ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation, as well community of residence and other dimensions which are associated with privilege, discrimination, domination, and oppression (Practice Behavior 4.CO); 8. Identify and analyze value and ethical dilemmas that arise in the course of organizing for social and political action (Practice Behaviors 1.CO, 2.CO).

d. Course Design

The format of the course will include instructor lecture/class discussion, analysis of assigned readings, class exercises and simulations, and external individual and group activities. Speakers and videos will be used to augment other course materials. Students will contribute to developing a climate in the classroom in which everyone can (a) experiment with new skills; (b) explore their own multicultural competence and the implications of one's own background for developing and implementing social and political action strategies; (c) consult with each other on action projects and assignments; and (d) generate plans and strategies for future learning and development.

e. Curricular Themes

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.

Theme Relation to Multiculturalism & Diversity: The course will focus on the issues involved in working for social change in a multicultural society and in engaging in social and political action in and with multicultural communities. It will also address the problems and potential of engaging in successful social and political action with diverse populations inclusive of diversity dimensions previously listed. Case examples of social and political action within multicultural communities will be used to illustrate strategic and tactical issues.
Theme Relation to Social Justice: An underlying assumption of the course is that the goals of social and political action are to promote social justice and produce positive social change. The course will explore the different meanings of social justice and social change, and their implications for the development of strategies and tactics of social and political action. Historical and contemporary illustrations will be used to analyze these concepts.

Theme Relation to Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation: Although the course will focus on change at the macro level of intervention, it assumes that the creation of socially just and responsive policies and organizations through social and political action is a pre-condition for the development of effective programs that emphasize prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. In fact, the underlying principles of social and political action complement rather than contradict the objectives of promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation in social service programs.

Theme Relation to Behavioral and Social Science Research: The course includes the analysis of contemporary and historical research on the application of theoretical models of social action and social change. Case examples of social and political action efforts will be evaluated in terms of the validity of their theoretical premises and their effectiveness in achieving stated ends. Issues for further research will also be identified.

f. Relationship to Social Work Ethics and Values

The NASW Code of Ethics (revised 2018) establishes an ethical imperative for social workers to engage in social and political action on behalf of social justice and in support of the needs of diverse and disadvantaged populations. Since the emergence of the social work profession in the U.S., the pursuit of social justice through a variety of social and political strategies has been one of its fundamental tenets. This course reflects that heritage and applies those values in the analysis of contemporary social and political action efforts. It also discusses some of the ethical issues involved in pursuing social justice through social and political action.

2. Class Requirements

a. Text and Class Materials

This course has two required books, both of which are available electronically for free through the University of Michigan library system:

  o In lieu of purchasing, this book is available online from the UM library system:
  o NOTE: This book was originally published by South End Press in 2007, and then republished by Duke University Press in 2017. However, the book is the same regardless of publication year.

  o In lieu of purchasing, this book is available online from the UM library system. This book is also available in audio book format.
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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>SKILL / KNOWLEDGE TOPIC</th>
<th>SOCIAL &amp; POLITICAL CONTEXTS</th>
<th>READINGS DUE</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS DUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>01/06</td>
<td>Welcome and Introductions</td>
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| 2    | 01/13  | Meet on Zoom The Boundaries & Boundlessness of Action | Introductory examples to organizing for social & political action | Pick 2 of the following:  
1. Left Anchor (2021)  
2. On Being (2019)  
3. One Million Experiments (2021) | Discussion post |
| 3    | 01/20  | Meet on Zoom OR Asynchronous Coursework Theories for Organizing Change I | Economic and human rights, poverty and homelessness, Kensington Welfare Rights Union |  
1. brown (2017)  
2. brown (2017)  
3. Hahn (2020) |                 |
| 4    | 01/27  | Meet in Person Theories for Organizing Change II | Prison abolition, mass incarceration, Black Panther Party |  
1. Dilawar (2018)  
2. Ganeva (2019)  
3. It's Going Down (2016)  
| 5    | 02/03  | Leaders and Movements, Past and Present | #BlackLivesMatter, Latinx and Filipinx migrant workers' boycotts |  
2. Garza, Cullors, Tometi, & Birdsong (2016)  
3. Taylor (2017) |                 |
| 6    | 02/10  | Building Coalitions | #DreamActNow, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) |  
1. brown (2017)  
3. Reséndiz (2014) | Discussion post |
| 7    | 02/17  | Crafting the Issues | Climate change, environmental justice, Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) |  
1. LaDuke (2012)  
| 8    | 02/24  | Leveraging (Social) Media | Hong Kong umbrella movement & protests |  
1. brown (2017)  
2. Thomas (2020)  
3. Tufekci (2017)  
| 9    | 03/03  | SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS |                            |              |                 |
| 10   | 03/10  | Growing Political Power | Women Donors Network, “The Squad,” Voting Rights |  
3. KARE NBC (2021) | Discussion post |
| 11   | 03/17  | Funding the Movement | Fundraising, grassroots organizations, capitalism | 1. INCITE! (2007) Preface, forward, introduction and selected chapters (details on Canvas) |                 |
| 12   | 03/24  | The Roles of Intermediaries and Allies | Think tanks, research centers, federal agencies, LGBTQ+ activism |  
1. brown (2017)  
c. Assignments

This course has four assignments. Combined, these assignments are intended to facilitate your critical understandings and analyses of organizing for social and political action. Discussion posts via Canvas are due on Thursdays before class. All other assignments should be submitted electronically through Canvas by 11:59pm on Saturdays.

Assignment #1: Discussion Questions (submit 3 posts @ 5 points each = 15 points total) due on Thursdays, 01/13/2022, 02/10/2022, and 03/17/2022

Purpose: To develop awareness and comprehension about course materials

During the semester, there are sections on Canvas to submit discussion questions or comments based on the readings and other assigned materials. These discussion questions provide opportunities for you to develop awareness about and improve comprehension regarding the readings and other assigned materials. Submit your questions prior to class each week to help you prepare for in-class discussion.

NOTE: Discussion questions are due by ~3:00pm on Thursdays before class.

Assignment #2: Submitting Public Comments (25 points) due on Saturday, 01/29/2022

Purpose: To discover and practice the public commenting process

Background: When a federal agency wants to create a new regulation, the agency publishes the proposed regulation in the Federal Register (https://www.federalregister.gov/) and solicits comments from the public (https://www.federalregister.gov/reader-aids/using-federalregister-gov/the-public-commenting-process). Federal agencies are required by law to hold a public comment period on all new regulations. These comment periods are opportunities to organizing for social and political action. Advocacy groups often organize communities around public comment periods, amplifying and inserting important voices into the policy process.

Public comments can take many forms. Individuals can submit public comments through written letters and emails. Advocacy groups sometimes provide the template for a letter that their constituents can use to submit comments. Other times, advocacy groups ask their constituents to sign on to a letter they have already written.
There are many examples, instructions, information guides, etc. about writing and submitting public comments. And there are important topics currently open for public comment, such as USDA's imposing harsh time limits on receiving SNAP benefits for un/der employed people, HUD's modification of disparate impact in the Fair Housing Act that combats racial discrimination in housing, the CFPB's proposal to relax regulations on mortgage lenders, and the EPA's proposed settlement following a toxic spill in Benton Harbor.

**Instructions for Public Comments:** Find a topic of political importance or significance and that is of interest to you. You might know of a local political issue that you want to focus on, or you can find the schedule of state or federal congressional hearings and review their upcoming topics. You can search the Federal Register and Regulations.gov for pending regulation about a topic that is of interest to you. On Regulations.gov, you can search regulations open for public comment or browse regulations grouped by agencies. Find a new regulation for which public comments are being received.

Write a 1-2 page typed, double-spaced letter that describes your stance on the proposed policy or legislation. Turn in your typed letter with a copy, screenshot, etc. that confirms your submission.

(OPTIONAL: Submit your comments to a local representative/official, policymaker, or through the Federal Register’s online system). In your letter:

- Identify the legislation on which you are commenting
- State your position on the legislation (e.g., support, support with revisions, oppose, etc.)
- Provide justification, with evidence, for your position on the legislation
- Include the references or citations for your evidence in footnotes or endnotes

Examples of public comments and the assignment rubric can be viewed on Canvas.

**Assignment #3: Writing and Pitching an Op-Ed (25 points) due on Saturday, 02/26/2022**

**Purpose:** To practice the concise communication of ideas that are politically or socially significant

**Background:** Rinku Sen, an organizer and President of Race Forward, describes the importance of leveraging the media to advance change in strong terms, writing “We have a *responsibility* to try to influence the coverage of our issues” (2003, p. 149, emphasis added). Along these lines, groups and communities develop outreach and advocacy through the media—broadly defined—to influence the coverage of their issues. Write an opinion editorial, or op-ed, of 800 to 1,000 words and an accompanying 200 word pitch to a news editor as a way to influence coverage of your chosen policy issue.

Opinion editorials are brief, written communications that share authors’ opinions and are published online and/or in newsprint. The NY Times provides a useful summary and description of op-eds here: https://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/01/opinion/01SHIP.html and here https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/03/insider/opinion-op-ed-explainer.html). Op-eds that are published in mainstream news media often address timely issues and are written with compelling, relatable prose. These op-eds are also exclusive, meaning that they can’t be published elsewhere. Op-eds take on different styles and present information in different ways. Some op-eds have a factual style, whereas others are more personal (e.g., differences in the author’s “voice” and its relationship to the information that is being shared).
**Instructions for Op-Ed:** Regardless of students’ style and chosen use of “voice,” generally, your op-ed should contain the following information in 1,000 words (maximum) or less and include references embedded into the text as hyperlinks:

- What is the policy topic, issue, concern, or “problem”?
- Why should people care about it?
- What is being done to address the issue, or what can be done?

**Instructions for “The Pitch”:** The “pitch” for an op-ed is developed to share your idea with editors to help them make decisions about publishing. The pitch should be very concise and briefly explain the most compelling points of your op-ed. Your pitch should be written in paragraph form and address the following questions in 200 words (maximum) or less:

- What is the policy issue, concern, or “problem”?
- Why should people care about it?

OPTIONAL: Please talk with the instructor if you would like to work on publishing your op-ed. After writing your op-ed, you will send the pitch to editors via email and await their response if you choose to pursue publishing. Editors can be located within mainstream news media such as the NY Times, popular blog sites such as Talk Poverty, or blogs from nonprofits, centers, or think tanks that work on your chosen policy issue. You can also consider self-publishing, such as on a personal blog like Medium. Bring names or ideas of potential publishing venues with you to the conversation with your instructor.

Examples of op-eds and the assignment rubric can be viewed on Canvas.

**Assignment #4: Observing a Policy Issue OR Movement (25 points) due on Saturday, 04/02/2022**

**Purpose:** To observe and apply concepts of organizing for social and political action

**Background:** Observe a policy issue OR movement on a topic of your choosing. You can observe a committee hearing, council meeting, grassroots campaign or strategic planning meeting, teach-in, direct action, etc. on a range of topics, such as immigration, police abolition, healthcare, student loan debt cancellation, etc.

**Instructions:** Write a reflection essay about your observation. Describe what you observed (policy issue, movement, chosen topic) in 5 or 6 typed, double-spaced pages. Reference pages are separate and a title page is optional. Drawing upon a combination of literature (textbooks, journal articles, books, memoirs, news media, blogs, etc.) and your own reflections, include the following information in your description:

- What did you observe and why is the issue or movement important?
- Who is engaged in advancing change and in what ways (e.g., policymakers proposing specific pieces of legislation, affected community members engaging in direct action, etc.)?
- What principle(s) or strategy(ies) for organizing are evident in their activities and actions? (See class handout from Week 3).
- What are the proposed demands, solutions, goals, or desired outcomes, etc.?
- How do your social identities relate to and/or intersect with your chosen policy issue OR movement (e.g., are you positioned as an insider/outsider to the issue OR movement and in what ways? based on your social identities, what powers and privileges do you need to critically interrogate)?
d. Attendance and Class Participation

Attendance. Class is scheduled each week between 6pm and 9pm EST. Students are expected to attend weekly classes where we will discuss course content, review materials, and push ourselves beyond our growing edges. Moreover, class sessions are an opportunity to develop a sense of community. During the semester, the instructor and students may have unexpected life events arise that prevent in-person class attendance. This class will strive to be understanding of these unexpected events and provide flexibility when possible. For more information, please see the Policy on Class Attendance found in the MSW Student Guide (https://ssw.umich.edu/msw-student-guide/section/1.09.00/17/policy-on-class-attendance).

Missing Content. Nearly all content is available via Canvas. Please let the instructor know if any content appears to be missing. If you miss content for a given week (such as due to an absence), you are able to return to those materials and catch up on anything that you missed.

Staying in Touch. Please keep in touch with the instructor via email or by scheduling a Zoom meeting. For example, if you have questions about a reading or an assignment, please contact the instructor to discuss your questions.

Late Assignments. The weeks that they are due, assignments should be submitted via Canvas by Saturday nights. Please contact the instructor if you need to negotiate an alternate plan or deadline for submitting your assignments. The Canvas submission site will typically remain open for 1 week after the posted due date.

Extra Credit or Bonus Points. Not offered on an individual basis. Students are encouraged to submit assignments that represent their best work on their chosen projects.

e. Grading

The total number of points earned based on your completion of the below assignments and the number of total available points will be used to determine your letter grade at the end of the semester. There are no extra credit or bonus points offered in this class.

Please review the MSW Student Guide for policies on Grades in Academic Courses (http://ssw.umich.edu/msw-student-guide/chapter/1.08/grades-in-academic-courses-and-in-field-instruction) and in Field Instruction (http://ssw.umich.edu/msw-student-guide/chapter/1.18/student-grievances) as well as Student Grievance procedures (http://ssw.umich.edu/msw-student-guide/chapter/1.18/student-grievances) and the policy for grading in special circumstances (https://ssw.umich.edu/msw-student-guide/section/1.08.01/15/grades-for-special-circumstances).

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<th>ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Discussion Questions (3 posts @ 5 points each)</td>
<td>Varies</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Submitting Public Comments (1-2 page typed, single-spaced letter)</td>
<td>01/29/2022</td>
<td>25</td>
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</table>
3. Writing and Pitching an Op-Ed (1,000-word op-ed, 200-word pitch, both typed)  
02/26/2022 25 17.5

5. Observing a Policy Issue OR Movement (5-6 page typed, double-spaced paper)  
04/02/2022 25 17.5

TOTAL POINTS FOR SEMESTER 
90 63

GRADING SCALE

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3. Resources for Students

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: This course is intended for all U-M students, including those with mental, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illness, injuries, impairments, or any other such condition that tends to negatively affect one’s equal access to education. If, at any point in the term, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (and not required) to contact me by email, phone, or during office hours to discuss your specific needs. I also encourage you to contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office at http://ssd.umich.edu. If you have a diagnosis, SSD can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. By making a plan through SSD, you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to course instructors. For more information and resources, the University's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD), located at G664 Haven Hall and available via phone (734) 763-3000 or website http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing: The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and https://caps.umich.edu/ during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselor physically located in the School of Social Work, (Megan Shaughnessy-Mogill) at (734) 763-7894 or by email mshaughm@umich.edu. You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at (734) 764-8320 and https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources. The MSW student Guide to Health and Wellness can be found at http://www.ssw.umich.edu/current/Health_Wellness_Guide.pdf

Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness. The University of Michigan’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) promotes healthy relationships, teaches non-violence and equality.
supports survivor healing, and fosters a respectful and safe environment for all members of the university community. All services are free and confidential. Visit SAPAC’s website https://sapac.umich.edu/ and contact them via their 24-hour crisis line at (734) 936-3333 or office phone at (734) 764-7771.

Safety & Emergency Preparedness: All University of Michigan students, faculty and staff are required to familiarize themselves with emergency procedures and protocols for both inside and outside of the classroom. In the event of possible building closure (i.e. severe weather conditions, public health notices, etc.) you may contact (734) 764-SSWB (7793) for up-to-date School closure information. For more information view the annual Campus Safety Statement at http://www.dpss.umich.edu/. Register for UM Emergency Alerts at http://www.dpss.umich.edu/emergencymanagement/alert/. In the event of an emergency, dial 9-1-1 from any cell phone or campus phone.

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

Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct: All students should be familiar with the Student Code for Academic and Professional Conduct (http://archive.ssw.umich.edu/studentguide/2014/page.html?section=12&volume=1) which holds students to the highest standards of academic and professional conduct. Unacceptable academic behavior refers to actions or behaviors that are contrary to maintaining the highest standards in course work and includes such actions as cheating, plagiarism, falsification of data, aiding and abetting dishonesty and impairment. Any suspected situations of academic misconduct will be discussed with the student and then reported to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs.