



<b>Course title:</b>	Engaging Social Justice, Diversity, and Oppression in Social Work
<b>Course #/term:</b>	SW 505-016, Fall 2022
<b>Time and place:</b>	Wednesdays, 9:00 AM -11:50 AM, 1804 SSWB
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	None
<b>Instructor:</b>	Nitesh Singh, MSW
<b>Pronouns:</b>	he/him/his
<b>Contact info:</b>	<a href="mailto:niteshs@umich.edu">niteshs@umich.edu</a>
<b>Zoom Office hours:</b>	Mondays 12 PM - 2 PM; Please <a href="#">make an appointment</a> . If the available times do not work for you, or you would like to meet in person, please email me to arrange a time.

## 1. Course Statement

---

### a. 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.

#### **b. Course objectives and competencies**

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

#### **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 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.

#### **d. Intensive focus on 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.

## **2. Class Requirements**

---

#### **a. Text and class materials**

All course readings, worksheets, and activities will be made available on the course Canvas site. There are no texts or special materials to purchase for this course.

#### **b. Tentative Class Schedule**

Subject to change. Please refer to the Canvas site modules, assignments, and announcements for details and the most up to date information.

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC
<b>BUILDING PURPOSE, COMMUNITY, AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY</b>		
1	08.31	Purpose, Expectations & Relationship Development
2	09.07	Surfacing Personal & Professional Values
<b>THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION &amp; SYSTEMIC INEQUITY</b>		
3	09.14	The Psychological Roots of Intergroup Prejudice & Discrimination -

		Part 1 [Includes content on implicit bias]
4	09.21	The Psychological Roots of Intergroup Prejudice & Discrimination - Part 2
5	9.28	The Systemic (Re)production of Inequity - Part 1
6	10.05	The Systemic (Re)production of Inequity - Part 2
<b>ENGAGING INDIVIDUALS &amp; COMMUNITIES TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>		
7	10.12	Systemic Intervention Approaches
8	10.19	Applying the Generalist Intervention Model - Engagement
9	10.26	Applying the Generalist Intervention Model - Assessment
10	11.02	Applying the Generalist Intervention Model - Implementation <b>[Key Informant Interview Assignment Due]</b>
11	11.09	Applying the Generalist Intervention Model - Evaluation
12	11.16	THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO CLASS
13	11.23	Applying the Generalist Intervention Model - Closure & Follow-Up
14	11.30	Group Presentations <b>[Final Report &amp; Final In-Class Presentation Due]</b>
15	12.07	Community Closure & Next Steps

### c. Assignments

Final letter grades will be based on the four components listed here, totalling 100 points. Details on each assignment, including grading rubrics when applicable, will be provided on the course Canvas site.

#### **Attendance & Active Participation [Cumulative] - 25 PTS**

One of the core values of social work is the importance of human relationships, or more specifically the belief that it is through our relationships with others that we are able to create positive change in ourselves, other individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. This course is designed to give you the foundational skills to do this work across differences of values, experiences, perspectives, and identity. While there will be some short lectures, the majority of

our in class time will be spent on activities, discussions, and dialogues. That means the richness of our class sessions will be dependent on you and your peers - the questions you ask, the experiences you share, and the insights you make. As a result, your regular attendance and active participation is paramount in this class.

*Attendance:* While regular attendance in this course is crucial, I recognize that there are times when you may have to miss class. I will automatically excuse your first two absences - no questions asked, as long as you send me an email as soon as possible letting me know that you are unable to attend. I expect, however, that you will still make the effort to catch up on what you missed either by coming to office hours or speaking to another student in the class. Each additional absence will result in a 2% deduction from your final grade unless the absence is for an excused reason - illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or travel for intercollegiate athletics. Students with 5 or more absences will have missed over a third of the class and will be asked to withdraw.

*Active Participation:* This means coming to class prepared to engage thoughtfully with the course content. Everyone is expected to verbally contribute their perspective, experience, and/or reflections at least once each course session to receive credit for participation. If you anticipate any challenges with this expectation, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together on a solution.

### **Pre & Post Work Assignments [Cumulative] - 25 PTS**

Most class sessions will have a pre- and post-work assignment that are graded credit, partial-credit, or no-credit. These assignments are designed to be completed in 2 hours or less and will be made available and submitted through the course Canvas site. Pre-work assignments are activities, readings, and/or reflection prompts that are meant to prepare you for engagement in class. Post-work assignments are short prompts to help you reflect on, process, and take in what we covered in class that day.

### **Principle to Practice Contributions [Cumulative] - 10 PTS**

Two core skills that all social workers practice are fostering community and relationships, as well as modeling how to take care of ourselves and others. These skills are especially important in the context of this class. Accordingly, each student will be responsible for preparing an in-class community building activity and an in-class teach-out on a self/group/community care practice. Each

contribution should last between 5-10 minutes and is worth 5 points. Additional details will be provided in-class and on Canvas.

### **Summative Assignment [Cumulative] - 40 PTS**

In this course students will learn practical skills for identifying and analyzing how prejudice, discrimination, and social injustice shapes the lives of individuals, groups, and communities, as well as strategies social workers can employ to address these issues. The summative assignment asks students to put these theories to practice by developing an intervention in a contemporary issue of social injustice, preferably one of the social work grand challenges. We will work through this assignment in small chunks throughout the semester and there will be three final products:

- Key Informant Interview [Comprehensive Life Trajectory] - 10 PTS
- Final Report [One report per group] - 15 PTS
- Final In-Class Presentation [One presentation per group] - 15 PTS

#### **d. Grading**

Final letter grades will be determined according to this point scale:

A	94-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A-	90-93	B	84-86	C	74-76	D	64-66
		B-	80-83	C-	70-73	D-	60-63
						E	65 or below

Note: Students who have numerically earned an “A” grade may be assigned a final grade of “A+” at the instructor's discretion if both the quality of their work and their participation in class routinely exceeds expectations.

#### **e. 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 express written consent of the instructor.

#### **f. COVID-19 Statement**

Your participation in this course is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University, including 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. The school also encourages students to review and become familiar with the [Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) and the [COVID-related Addendum to the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), both of which students are accountable to.

#### **g. Health-Related Class Absences**

While regular attendance in this highly interactive class is important, we also recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing and we share a collective responsibility to keep the virus from spreading. Everyone is expected to complete the University of Michigan's ResponsiBLUE screening prior to coming to campus. If you feel anything other than perfectly healthy, please DO NOT attend an in-person class and let the instructor know by email. Please note that documentation (a doctor's note) for medical excuses is not required. Depending on the number of classes you have already missed, we will either provide you an excused absence or provide you a make-up assignment/alternative pathway to completing the course.

---

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*