



Course title:	Engaging Social Justice, Diversity, and Oppression in Social Work	
Course #/term:	SW505, Section 18 Fall 2022 (Hybrid: in-person/remote instruction)	
Time / place:	Mondays, 6-8pm* in-person, Room B770, SSWB	
Credit hours:	3	
Prerequisites:	None	
Instructor:	Grace Helms-Kotre, MSW	
Pronouns:	She/Her	
Contact info:	Email: grpaige@umich.edu	Phone: 734-255-0090
	You may expect a response within 24 hours	
Office:	2764 SSWB	
Student hours:	Mondays 1-2pm on Zoom (or by appointment)	

**As a hybrid course, class meetings are 2 hours (rather than 3 as indicated in registration)*

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 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.

2. Class Requirements

- Text and class materials

We will not be using one primary text for this course. Instead, each week's assigned media will be posted in Canvas modules. Media will include scholarly and popular articles, book chapters, podcasts, videos, interviews, etc.

Additionally, we will be incorporating a supplemental self-care text:

[The A-to-Z Self-Care Handbook for Social Workers and Other Helping Professionals](#)

You will receive a free copy of this text (a gift from the SSW!) in the first class session. No need to do any pre-reading. More information will be shared in class.

All weekly media will be published early-on in our course. This means you can access all of the media for our course at any time during the semester. In order to stay organized and protect against overwhelm, I encourage you *not* to work too far ahead. One week should be enough time to engage with all assigned media. Pace yourself! That said, if your QCCCQ project is coming up and you'd like to prepare early, you'll have access to your week's materials whenever you need them. NOTE: Weekly

activities and *assignments* will be published in each week's module by 9am on Tuesdays (and you'll have until the following Sunday at 11:59pm to complete them). Also, I may occasionally add a piece of media to a weekly module. It is your responsibility to check the Canvas module to be sure you engage with all required media before class.

Commitment to Equity: For this course, we will be co-creating a classroom environment in which “all students are treated equitably, have equal access to learning, and feel valued and supported in their learning. Furthermore, this course is one in which equity is centered in that it attends to social identities and seeks to change the ways systemic inequities shape dynamics in teaching-learning spaces, affect individuals' experiences of those spaces, and influence course and curriculum design.” (Adapted from [UM-CRLT's Equity-Focused Teaching](#))

Additionally, the School of Social Work has outlined their “**UM SSW Anti-Racism Statement and Path to Accountability**.” Please review it here: <https://ssw.umich.edu/assets/anti-racism-statement/>.

As your instructor, I am committed to equity-focused teaching. As such, the following tools and practices will be incorporated throughout the semester:

- Anonymous student feedback surveys
- Activities to explore our own social identities and positionality
- Various learning modalities and resource types to meet a variety of needs
- Personal reflection, small and large group discussions, and student leadership
- Community-building activities
- Self-care focus
- Contemplative practices to foster self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and compassion including mindfulness, meditation, journaling, active listening, etc.
- Various opportunities for students to connect with the instructor including weekly student hours and option for one-on-one meetings
- Flexibility and choice with assignments and deadlines
- Highlighting of traditionally marginalized voices in resources and activities
- Learning objectives for all assignments to enhance transparency
- Rubrics (“expectations”) for all assignments to enhance transparency
- “Community Agreements” to guide our classroom interactions
- Make-up opportunities and late assignment policy
- Synchronous and asynchronous components
- Ungrading model to enhance self-accountability and critical engagement

- Class schedule

Please keep this weekly schedule for our course in mind:

MON (Day 7)	TUES (Day 1)	WED (Day 2)	THURS (Day 3)	FRI (Day 4)	SAT/SUN (Days 5-6)
6-8pm In-Person Class	<i>9am- New week's activities & assignments posted in Canvas</i>				DUE: SUNDAY 11:59pm Weekly Journal in Canvas

Below is the course schedule by topic, subject to change. It is your responsibility to keep up with changes posted or announced.

Week #	Date of Class	Weekly Topic (Course focus: "Reversing Extreme Inequality")	Content to Complete Prior to Class & Assignments Due
WEEK 1 (pre-course)	Aug. 29	Course Overview & Community-Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • Read syllabus in full
WEEK 2 (8/30-9/5)	Sep. 5	Self-Care is Social Work <i>NO CLASS: Labor Day</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • QCCCQ Sign-up (Due 9/9)
WEEK 3 (9/6-9/12)	Sep. 12	Race, Gender, Class... Intersectionality & Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #1 (Due 9/11)
WEEK 4 (9/13-9/19)	Sep. 19	Education & Socioeconomic Status QCCCQ Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #2 (Due 9/18)
WEEK 5 (9/20-9/26)	Sep. 26	Environmental Health Impacts and Socioeconomic Status QCCCQ Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #3 (Due 9/25)

WEEK 6 (9/27-10/3)	Oct. 3	Access to Public Transportation and Socioeconomic Status QCCCQ Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #4 (Due 10/2)
WEEK 7 (10/4-10/10)	Oct. 10	Barriers for Immigrant and Undocumented Populations QCCCQ Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #5 (Due 10/9) • Mid-Term Feedback (Due 10/9)
WEEK 8 (10/11-10/17)	Oct. 17	NO CLASS: Fall Study Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>NO new content in Canvas</i> • <i>NO SC Handbook</i> • <i>NO Journal</i> • Mid-Term Course Progress Self-Assessment (Due 10/21)
WEEK 9 (10/18-10/24)	Oct. 24	Policing, Mass Incarceration, & Economic Inequality QCCCQ Group 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #6 (Due 10/23)
WEEK 10 (10/25-10/31)	Oct. 31	Housing Disparities, Displacement, & Homelessness QCCCQ Group 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #7 (Due 10/30)
WEEK 11 (11/1-11/7)	Nov. 7	Implications of Socioeconomic Status for Voting QCCCQ Group 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #8 (Due 11/6)
WEEK 12 (11/8-11/14)	Nov. 14	COVID-19 Impact on Indigenous Populations <i>Guest Speaker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #9 (Due 11/13)
WEEK 13 (11/15-11/21)	Nov. 21	Disability & Financial Security PART I (Asynch) NO CLASS: November Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • SC Handbook (assigned pgs.) • Journal #10 (Due 11/20) • Final Project (Due 11/15-11/21)

WEEK 14 (11/22-11/28)	Nov. 28	Disability & Financial Security PART II (Synch) <i>Guest Speaker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>NO new content in Canvas</i>
WEEK 15 (11/29-12/5)	Dec. 5	Wrap Up & Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All posted Canvas content • Final Course Progress Self-Assessment (Due 12/2)

- Assignments & Descriptions

Assignments should be submitted in Canvas by the date/time (or within the date range) specified. Please be in touch with the instructor directly if you are having any problems completing or submitting the assignment *before* it is due.

Assignments for this course include the following:

1. Weekly Journal: Critical reflection is the process of examining and challenging what we think we know. This is an essential part of *praxis* (a learning process involving reflection, dialogue, action which you'll hear a lot about at the SSW!) and is central to the objectives of this course. Regular journaling can enhance self-awareness and lead to a deeper understanding of content. You will be asked to explore your inner experience in a brief (2-paragraph) weekly journal:

- Paragraph 1: Critical reflection on weekly resources
- Paragraph 2: Self-reflection on your weekly self-care practice (≥ one hour of intentional self-care is required each week)

There are 10 journal assignments listed in Canvas, but only 8 total are required this semester. You choose which two weeks to skip! See Canvas for journal prompts and more information.

(Why the focus on self-care in this course? Developing and/or maintaining your regular self-care routine is a crucial component of professional social work practice. You will absolutely be a better social worker if you are taking care of yourself, and your wellness will both directly and indirectly affect everyone you work with now and in the future. Self-care also prepares you to be more effective in your work for social justice, a required aspect of social work.)

2. QCCCQ Presentation & Discussion: This assignment is an opportunity to practice inquiry-based learning, deep listening, and critical reflection skills. You will work with a small group (with 1-2 other students) to prepare a brief (15-minutes max) in-class presentation and then lead the class into a discussion utilizing the QCCCQ (Quotation, Concept, Comparison, Change efforts, Questions) method. You will have the opportunity to sign up for a QCCCQ presentation date and topic early in the semester. Each topic corresponds with one of our weekly course themes. See Canvas for more information.

3. Final Project: Life Trajectory Profile: For this required final project, you'll conduct an in-depth interview with a family member, friend, or colleague to document their lived experience related to socioeconomic privilege and oppression. Write a creative profile article (think e-magazine feature) to thoughtfully share their story. See Canvas for more information.

4. Course Progress Self-Assessments: In this course, we will be applying the practice of “ungrading” (see description below). As such, rather than assigning you point totals for each assignment, I will provide only *qualitative* feedback (comments) on all submitted assignments. Additionally, I will keep notes on your participation in our live class sessions, and I'll encourage you to do the same. Twice during the semester (once at mid-term, and once at the end of the term), I'll invite you to complete a Course Progress Self-Assessment (in Canvas in the format of a survey). These self-assessments consist of a series of questions to help you determine your effort, engagement, contributions, key take-aways, and other experiences in this course. Once you submit your self-assessments, I will provide feedback and may contact you to discuss them further. Self-assessments will serve as the foundation for your self-determined final course grade (see below). More information is in Canvas.

- Attendance and class participation

Participation: Students are expected to attend class (see [Policy on Class Attendance](#)). This is a dialogue-based course/seminar. As such, please plan to participate actively in class discussions and engage fully with activities. Engaging with all assigned weekly content (including articles, podcasts, videos, activities, assignments, etc.) is required for successful participation in class discussions. For our live class time together, please plan to arrive on time and attend the entire period (2 hours). If you need to leave class early or arrive late, alert the instructor ahead of time.

Responsibilities:

It is the instructor's responsibility to:

- Clearly explain all required course components
- Abide by "Community Agreements"
- Center "Community Agreements" in every class period
- *Call in* any student who is not abiding by our "Community Agreements"
- Reply to questions, comments, and concerns in a timely manner (within 24-48 hours by email)
- Offer "Student Hours" once/week (times listed above)
- Be available to students for one-on-one meetings by scheduled appointment
- Accommodate students' needs (as outlined below in Make-Ups and Late Assignments)

It is the student's responsibility to:

- Engage fully with the learning process (all required media, activities, and assignments)
- Attend live class with full presence (ready to engage with materials, instructor, and other students)
- Abide by our "Community Agreements"
- *Call in* the instructor or any student who is not abiding by our "Community Agreements"
- Engage in critical self-reflection
- Communicate directly with the instructor about absences, late assignments, or other issues that affect your participation in this course

Make-Ups: If you are not able to participate in our live class sessions for any reason, please be in touch with the instructor ahead of the class period you will miss (unless it is an emergency in which case you should contact the instructor ASAP). If the absence is excused, you'll be invited to submit a supplementary make-up assignment. Unexcused absences will need to be thoughtfully considered by the student (and instructor) in assigning a final course grade. (Communication is key! I am committed to supporting each student's success in this class. Let's work together to make sure everything goes smoothly.)

Late Assignments: While I encourage you to submit assignments by their deadlines (for your sake AND mine!), flexibility is an important part of equity-focused teaching and

learning. I understand that life happens and there are many reasons an assignment might be submitted “late.” Communication is the key! Please let me know if you’ll be submitting something late so that I can best support you and manage my own schedule for giving feedback. Let’s work together!

Feedback: Since your active participation is required for a successful learning experience in this course, it is critical that you share any barriers to your engagement. You are a co-creator of this course – your ideas and feedback will help to shape the course as it is unfolding. Please share feedback with the instructor directly (via email, in Canvas messages, during live class or in student hours) at any point in the semester. Additionally, you will be invited to submit a mid-term survey to share your feedback more formally and anonymously.

Student Hours: Instead of traditional “office hours,” I hold weekly “student hours” (via Zoom). The idea is the same, but I want to emphasize that this time is *for you!* Students are invited to connect with me during the scheduled time (see hours at top of syllabus) to ask questions, share comments, or simply to chat! You can drop in for 5 minutes, stay the whole hour, or anything in between. If you would rather set up a one-on-one meeting for another time, simply contact me directly.

- UNgrading

What is UNgrading? For this course, we will be engaging in the social justice practice of “ungrading.” We will discuss the rationale behind this practice in class. This means that I will not assign point values or grades to any of your work. Instead, I will keep qualitative records of your participation, effort, engagement, and progress throughout the semester, and I’ll expect you to do the same. Mid-semester and again at the end of the semester, you will complete a Course Progress Self-Assessment to help you thoughtfully consider your efforts in this course. If your assessment differs from mine significantly, we will have a one-on-one check-in to discuss.

Final Course Grade Determination: At the end of the semester, I’ll invite you to assign yourself a final course grade. This grade should accurately reflect the amount of effort you put into this class. This requires a thoughtful self-assessment of how you engaged with course media, activities, in-class discussions, weekly journals, self-care practices, and other assignments as well as what you contributed and gained overall.

I trust that you will engage thoughtfully in this process alongside me! As the instructor for this course, I intend to honor your decision for your final course grade. If we disagree in a significant way about your final course grade, we will have a discussion and hopefully come to an agreement. I reserve the right to change final course grades as appropriate (although I expect this to be highly unlikely).

Standard SSW grading distribution chart for your reference:

97-100%	A+	84-86%	B	70-73%	C-
94-96%	A	80-83%	B-	67-69%	D+
90-93%	A-	77-79%	C+	64-66%	D
87-89%	B+	74-76%	C	60-63%	D-

Additional background on standard MSW Student Guide policies regarding grading:

- [Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction](#)
- [Policy for Grading in Special Circumstances](#)
- [Student Grievance Procedures](#)
- 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.

- COVID-19 Statement

For the safety of all students, faculty, and staff on campus, it is important for each of us to be mindful of safety measures that have been put in place for our protection. Your participation in this course is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University, including [properly wearing a face covering in class](#) and compliance with the [University COVID-19 Vaccination Policy](#). Other applicable and additional safety measures may be described in the [Campus Maize & Blueprint](#). Your ability to participate in this course may be impacted by failure to comply with campus safety measures. Individuals seeking to request an accommodation related to the face covering requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the [Office for Institutional Equity](#) and those seeking an exemption related to the vaccination requirement should submit an exemption request through [WolverineAccess](#). I also encourage you to review the [Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) and the [COVID-related Addendum to the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

- 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.

- Student Well-Being

Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, social identities, finances, etc. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. If the source of your stressors is academic, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. For personal concerns, U-M offers many resources, some of which are listed at Resources for Student Well-being on the [Well-being for U-M Students website](#). You can also search for additional resources on that website.

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*