**Course title:** Introduction to Social Work Practice  
**Course #/term:** [590-3], [Fall 2022]  
**Time and place:** Tuesdays from 6-8pm *** Week 1 of this course will take place during your orientation week. The course will meet 6 times after that. Room: B798 SSWB (basement)  
**Credit hours:** 1  
**Prerequisites:** N/A  
**Instructor:** Dr. Jennifer Towns, LMSW  
**Pronouns:** She/her  
**Contact info:** Email: jktown@umich.edu  
**Office:** None  
**Office hours:** by appointment

### Course description

Introduction to Social Work Practice will prepare students to successfully approach both social work education and social work practice. The course will introduce social work students to key social work ideas, values, concepts, and skills, including the code of ethics, social work’s grand challenges and P.O.D.S. (privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice). Students will be oriented to social work education at the University of Michigan, including how professional graduate education may differ from past educational experiences, specialization options available, and the role of lifelong learning. Students will be introduced to a professional portfolio that they will use throughout their time in the program.
Course objectives and competencies

- Develop a sense of belonging to the UM MSW program by interacting with fellow students and faculty.
- Describe ethical decision-making processes as applied to social work practice settings in a manner that reflects the laws, regulations, and code of ethics of social work (Essential 36, 44; EPAS 1).
- Identify how social workers ethically engage with technology practice (Essential 26; EPAS 1).
- Recognize how social work practice connects to the “Grand Challenges” (Essential 31; EPAS 2).
- Identify ways social workers can engage in social justice and anti-racism work (Essential 30, 45; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 5).
- Develop a self-care plan that includes elements across different domains (Essential 40, 43; EPAS 1, 6).

Course design

This course will use multiple methods including but not limited to: lectures, demonstrations, case studies, readings, guest speakers, discussions, written assignments, individual and group exercises.

Course Relationship to P.O.D.S.
This course will introduce students to P.O.D.S. (privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice) as the framework through which social work education and practice can be viewed. Students will explore how these concepts manifest in social work practice, including in such places as the grand challenges or the code of ethics.

This course integrates P.O.D.S. 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 P.O.D.S. learning.
Class Requirements

Text and class materials

There is one textbook for this course, *Digital Portfolio Construction: A guide for showcasing Social Work Skills (First Edition)*, by Fitch, Ruffolo and Austin (2021). You will use portions of this book for this class, and portions in your capstone course that you take in your final semester (so you don't want to purchase the limited access e-book). You can purchase this book directly through the Cognella, Inc student store to receive discounted pricing and expanded format options. Purchase your course material here: [https://store.cognella.com/95864](https://store.cognella.com/95864)

If you need any help with ordering from Cognella, feel free to email orders@cognella.com or call 858-800-2675.

All other readings for this course will be copied or linked, and made available on Canvas – the University online course management system. Information and instruction on how to use Canvas is already provided by the university; therefore, no class time will be devoted to instruction on how to use this system.

Students are expected to have completed all assigned readings prior to class, as these will serve as the basis for class discussion, activities, assignments, quizzes and examinations.

Class schedule

Topics may be modified throughout the course, but ample notice will be provided. Refer to Canvas for the most updated class schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 [During Orientation Week]</td>
<td>Session 1: Welcome, Introductions and Course Overview</td>
<td>Readings: Noted on Canvas Assignments: None</td>
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</table>
| Week 2 [8/30 6-8pm] | Session 2: Core Values of Social Work | Readings: Noted on Canvas Assignments:  
  - DUE: Discussion prompt: Grounding in the MSW Program  
  - DUE: Master Assignment, Milestone 1 |
| Week 3 | Session 3: Centering Justice | Readings: Noted on Canvas |
Assignments

There are three categories of assignments for this class. The master assignment is a “What, So What, Now What” reflection assignment with a series of milestones. The second are regular, brief assignments, usually (but not always) taking the form of online discussions through Canvas. The third is the initiation of your portfolio. Each of these three are described below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[9/13 6-8pm]</td>
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<td><strong>Assignments:</strong></td>
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<td>• DUE: Master Assignment, Milestone 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Session 4: Anti-Racism and Social Work Practice</td>
<td>Readings: Noted on Canvas</td>
<td>Assignments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>[9/27 6-8pm]</td>
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<td>• DUE: Discussion prompt: Centering Justice</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Session 5: Preparing to Practice Social Work, Part 1</td>
<td>Readings: Noted on Canvas</td>
<td>Assignments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>[10/11 6-8pm]</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• DUE: Master Assignment, Milestone 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Session 6: Preparing to Practice Social Work, Part 2</td>
<td>Readings: Noted on Canvas</td>
<td>Assignments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>[10/25 6-8pm]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Nothing due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Session 3: Your Professional Portfolio</td>
<td>Readings: Noted on Canvas</td>
<td>Assignments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>[11/8 6-8pm]</td>
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<td>• DUE: Letter to yourself</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• DUE: Master Assignment, Milestone 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post Week 7</td>
<td>Portfolio Due</td>
<td>Readings: None</td>
<td>Assignments:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• DUE: Portfolio</td>
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<td>• DUE: Course evaluations</td>
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<td>• Extra credit (optional)</td>
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Master Assignment: Social Work Ethical and Professional Behavior

Master Assignment Summary: The master assignment for the Introduction to Social Work course is a set of cumulative, reflective responses that will result in a final paper related to social work ethical and professional behavior. It will use a reflective practice widely used in education and in clinical settings, known as "what, so what, now what." The assignment will span the semester, with milestones throughout the semester.

a. **Milestone 1**
   **Due August 30th at 11:59pm**

   Upload the supplementary statement you submitted when you applied to the social work program. As a reminder, this statement asked you to accomplish a couple of things. Including:

   - Discuss a social justice issue you would like to address in your career. What skills and knowledge would you like to obtain in the MSW program to support your career objectives?
   - Describe how your personal and intellectual qualifications, past human service experience, and/or future goals are relevant to furthering social justice. Please use specific examples.

b. **Milestone 2: What**
   **Due September 13th at 11:59pm**

   The purpose of this milestone is to think about the values and ethics that drew you to social work or the type of social work you want to practice (hint: this is why we had you dig out & post your application essay). Write a reflective essay about your values and ethics. Specifically, consider:

   - What social work values and ethics apply to your decision to become a social worker?
   - Which apply to the decision about the area of social work in which you would like to practice?
   - If you have a BSW, which apply to your decision to practice at a graduate level?

   Rely heavily on course content (especially our Code of Ethics), including a thoughtful integration of lectures and readings, to identify these values and ethics and how they might be relevant to this area of practice. Move beyond simply listing them, but rather, dig in, describe, and provide a context for the anticipated application of these values in practice. Suggested length, 1 page single-spaced.
c. **Milestone 3: So what**  
**Due** October 11th at 11:59pm

The purpose of this milestone is to think about why values and ethics matter and how they are put into practice around us. Use the following questions as a guide:

- Now that you have spent some weeks in the social work program, how have the values and ethics you identified in Milestone 2 further emerged as important/relevant?
- How have you seen them play out in class? In field (if you are in field)? In relationships with others in the School? At work? In social situations? In the news?
- Reflect on ethical decision making. Why and when does this matter?

Suggested length, 1-2 pages single-spaced.

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d. **Milestone 4: Now what**  
**Due** November 8th at 11:59pm

The purpose of this milestone is to take your reflections on your values to the next level and start thinking about future growth. The Code of Ethics discusses our ethical obligations to our clients, our colleagues, our profession, and our employers. As you reflect, consider:

- What are some next steps for you in your learning to further understand and implement your social work values and ethics in each of these areas?
- Where are your growth areas and how might you stretch yourself to further understand and practice ethically?
- How might this shape your future path, including entering a field placement?

Suggested length, 1/2 - 1 page single-spaced.

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2. **Regular, Brief Assignments**  

After each class session, you will be asked to do a brief assignment related to the content from the class. For weeks 1-3, these take the form of a discussion prompt through Canvas. In week 4, you will write a letter to your future self. Details for each of these assignments/discussions can be found on Canvas.
3. Portfolio

In this assignment, you will initiate the development of a web-based portfolio using Portfolium. Portfolios are a collection of your accomplishments, skills, and experiences that can be shared digitally to promote your abilities. Even when students do not share their portfolios with others, the act of collecting products and reflecting on them helps students build a narrative that aids students in conversations with future employers. This assignment has three steps:

- **Step #1:** Complete the training module, which teaches you about building an ePortfolio in Portfolium.
- **Step #2:** Begin setting up your profile on the Profile tab by completing the introduction as described in the training module. You are welcome to add your resume, education and other information to your portfolio, but this is not required in this assignment.
- **Step #3:** Upload your master assignment as a “project” in your Portfolium portfolio in the Portfolio tab.

**Attendance and Class Participation**

As a foundation practice course, it is important that you attend each live class session. The class sessions involve skill development experiences that go beyond course readings/learning tasks. Your participation as a co-learner is essential to meet the learning goals for this requirement. If you are not able to attend a particular class session, please notify the instructor prior to the class session so that arrangements can be made for you to address the material that you missed.

**Weekly Participation:** You are expected to read assigned materials, submit assignments, and participate in live class meetings and any asynchronous discussions. You should follow the modules sequentially from first to last. Expect to spend 4-5 hours per module—this consists of a 2-hour live meeting and 2-3-hour asynchronous learning activities/assignments on a weekly basis.

**Live Class Meeting Participation:** You must attend **ALL** of the 6 scheduled live class sessions for the semester. These classes are in person on campus. Prepare for each live session by engaging the preassigned content and activities. In case of an emergency, you should contact me as soon as possible providing documentation supporting the need for any absence. You might be asked to complete an assignment in lieu of attendance in the case of absence.
Your attendance and participation also reflect the basic elements of any social work relationship—you show up and remain present. If, for any reason, we have concerns about your participation or attendance, we will discuss the concerns with you in a timely fashion. Additional information on class attendance can be found in the Policy on Class Attendance.

Instructor Communication
Email is the best way to reach me. I try to respond to students within 24 hours or 48 hours at the latest. If you would like to speak to me on the phone or on Zoom, email me and we can set up an appointment. In case of an emergency, you can text me at 231-758-2439.

Technology Requirements
You must have access to the Internet, preferably high-speed Internet, for the duration of this course. You must have consistent access to a professional word processor and a presentation program such as Google Suite and Microsoft Office. For technological support, please contact the U-M ITS Service Center.

Grading
Please review the MSW Student Guide policies on Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction as well as Student Grievance procedures.

Final grades will be determined on the basis of performance. Letter grades will be allocated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>100+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<td>&lt;60</td>
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Assignments will receive a 10% deduction for each day that they are late through the third day (i.e. day 1 = 10% penalty, day 2 = 20% penalty, day 3 = 30%). Unless there are extenuating circumstances, assignments will not be accepted after the third day. Please ensure that you communicate such circumstances with the instructor at least 24 hours prior to the due date via email, along with necessary documentation (if applicable). Note that these will be handled on a case by case basis, and are at the instructor’s professional discretion.
Students can expect to receive grades and feedback on your assignments within two weeks of their due date.

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. Additional information on class recordings can be found in the Recording and Privacy Concerns FAQ.

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 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.

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