Social Work 502 – Syllabus

Organizational, Community, and Societal Structures and Processes

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Course web site available through Coursetools (https://coursetools.ummu.umich.edu/mycourses)

Course Description:

This course examines theory and research knowledge about political economic and societal structures and process related to communities, groups and organizations within contemporary society. Consideration is given to ways in which these social systems have significant social, political, economic, and psychological impacts on the functioning of individuals, families and social groups. The course provides a framework for understanding the influences of medium to large social systems on individuals, families and groups with whom social workers practice.

This course gives special attention to the critical evaluation of theory and research knowledge about social change and social processes within an organizational, community, societal and international context. There is a focus on oppression, discrimination, prejudice and privilege and their relationship to social and economic justice for populations served by social workers. This knowledge is considered within a context of social work values and ethics that support the general welfare of all citizens, especially the disadvantaged and oppressed.

Course Objectives:

Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to…

1) Identify, describe and discuss selected theoretical perspectives on organizational, community, and societal structures, processes, and change and social and behavioral science knowledge.

2) Describe and discuss the impact of communities, organizations and other societal groups on the social environmental interactions between individuals, families and small groups.

3) Describe and discuss the meaning of multiculturalism and diversity and their consequences in American society for community, organizational and societal functioning.

4) Identify, describe, and discuss the role of risk and protective social factors in relation to social problems, social work interventions and social/economic justice.
5) Identify, describe, and discuss major processes and contemporary manifestations of oppression, discrimination, prejudice, power and privilege as they impact on the social environment, especially in relation to women, people of color and gay, lesbian and bisexual persons.

6) Identify, describe, and discuss barriers to organizational and community competence, especially those derived from race, ethnicity, culture, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age or national origin.

7) Critically evaluate organizational, community, and societal structures and processes that seek to promote social and economic justice by applying professional values and ethics.

8) Critically evaluate and apply social and behavioral science knowledge about macro systems to generalist social work practice.

Relationship of the Course to the Four Curricular Themes:

Multiculturalism and Diversity will be addressed through presentation of theory and research on their role in community, organizational, and societal functioning and well-being.

Social Justice and Social Change will be addressed through discussion of the role of risk factors and preventive social factors in relation to social problems and social work interventions.

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation will be addressed through discussion of programs and systemic interventions to prevent stress and oppression of individuals, families and groups and enhance their quality of life and well-being.

Behavioral and Social Sciences Research will be addressed through the inclusion of knowledge gained via research in the description of the social environment and its impact on individuals, families and groups.

Relationship of the course to social work ethics and values:

This course will address ethical and value issues related to working with organizations, communities, and societal structures and processes. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to inform practice in this area. Examples of ethical and value related issues will include the social worker’s responsibility to promote the general welfare of society by preventing and eliminating discrimination, ensuring equal access to resources, expanding choices and opportunities for all persons, encouraging respect for diversity, advocating for changes in social policies, and encouraging informed participation by the public. In addition, issues related to organizations will be covered.

Readings:

All readings listed on this syllabus are required readings. You should do the readings BEFORE the class for which they are assigned. In some cases, the same reading is listed for multiple weeks. This means that we will be talking about material in the same chapter over the course of several weeks.
Required Textbooks:


The textbooks are available at Ullerich’s Bookstore across the street from the School of Social Work.

Both of the textbooks are also available on reserve at the library.

There is also a xeroxed reader of journal articles. This reader will be available at the library and at ____________ by the end of the week.

It should be noted that the instructor of the course is excited to have the opportunity to deepen his own understanding of social welfare theory over the course of the semester. It is quite possible that, at different points in the semester, as part of his ongoing quest for understanding, the instructor will encounter readings that would be relevant to the topic at hand, but that are not listed on the syllabus. The instructor reserves the right to assign such readings on an ad hoc basis and will give students at least a week’s notice of any additional reading assignments. No more than one such reading will be assigned for any given week.

More About The Course, My Philosophy Of Teaching, And Assignments And Grading:

This course is part of the HBSE (Human Behavior and Social Environment) component of the foundation, generalist component of the curriculum. As such, it focuses on the “macro” knowledge base for social work practice in all methods and fields, emphasizing mid to larger size systems. It draws from some areas of psychology, but more from sociology, political science, economics and history. We will emphasize what evidence is available to support particular perspectives and theories, and on analyzing the strengths and limitations of each. A major goal is to develop the knowledge to think, plan, problem-solve, and create change at larger systems levels, and to understand how larger systems impact individuals, families, and groups.

Your learning will be correlated with the effort you expend in taking responsibility for your own goals and agendas. We will discuss many of the readings, but I may not discuss some unless you tell me you have a question or aren’t sure you see the relevance.
Assignments:

1) **Help me to get to know you:** I would like to know a little bit about each of you and what you bring to this class. By Wednesday, September 19, please hand in to me a piece of paper with the following information:

   a) Your name  
   b) Where you are from  
   c) Your e-mail address and how often you use e-mail  
   d) Why you are interested in social work  
   e) Any previous social work courses that you have had

2) **Response Papers** – During weeks 2 through 14 of the semester, you are expected to hand in 6 short response papers. Response papers should be posted to the Course Tools web site for the course. These papers should be roughly the equivalent of a paper that is between 1½ and 2 double spaced pages in length. You may wish to compose your response papers in a word processing program before posting them to the web. The papers should contain your reaction to, and critical comment on, the readings for a particular week. You may also react to the postings that others have made. Response papers that are turned in on readings that have already been discussed may be graded down for lateness. In your paper, you should cite the specific reading that you are responding to. You may write about things in the readings that you agree with or that you disagree with; or you may talk about how something that you are reading in the assignments relates to current events or to something that is going on in your own experience. The intention of these papers is to get you thinking about the readings, so simply summarizing the readings will not receive a very high grade. 3 of your response papers must be turned in by the eighth week of the semester.

3) **Short individual presentation to class** – Each week, several individuals from the class will provide us with a short summary of one of the readings. This summary should last no more than 5 minutes. The intent is not to summarize the entire content of the reading but to lift up one or two major points for analysis and critique.

4) **Group Presentation** – In this assignment, you will work in a group to understand and apply a particular macro level theory and will be responsible for teaching the rest of the class what you have learned. This will be an opportunity for you to direct our attention to areas and concerns that you find particularly important. More explicit details on this group presentation are forthcoming.

5) **Final Exam** – There will be one final exam in this class. This exam will give you the opportunity to apply the theoretical material that we have learned during the semester to a case study. Before the exam, I will ask you to contribute possible questions to the exam.

**Final grades will be based on the following scale:**

- “Get to Know You” Assignment 5%
- Response Papers 20%
Short Individual Presentation 10%
Group Presentation 20%
Final Exam 25%
Class Participation and Attendance 20%

**General Evaluation Criteria:**

- Active Participation in class
- Degree to which you demonstrate understanding and ability to use macro knowledge and theory
- Systematic and logical presentation of arguments
- Appropriate use of evidence with citations
- Use of relevant literature and concepts
- Clarity of presentation
- Originality and creativity
- Attention to multicultural and social justice issues across different population and situations

**A Note On The Use Of E-Mail And University Of Michigan Course Tools**

In the teaching of this class, I expect to make frequent use of e-mail as well as “course tools” provided by the University of Michigan. It is an expectation of this course that you will log on to your e-mail account and the Course Tools web site at least a few times each week. I will use e-mail to inform you of any changes to the course tools web site for the course.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theory and the Question It Addresses</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>September 5, 2001</td>
<td>Introduction to the class and getting to know one another</td>
<td>Mullaly Chapter 1</td>
<td>Introduction to class, syllabus and each other</td>
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<td>Kirst-Ashman Chapter 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>Article on Paulo Freire</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>September 12, 2001</td>
<td>What does theory look like? What does it mean to speak theoretically? What does critical theory look like?</td>
<td>Mullaly Chapter 1</td>
<td>Reisch exercise on family background</td>
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<td>Kirst-Ashman Chapter 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Library instruction on course tools</td>
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<td>Article on Paulo Freire</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>September 19, 2001</td>
<td>If our theories are supposed to be tied to ethical ideals, what does it mean to talk about social ethics?</td>
<td>Mullaly Chapter 2</td>
<td>Values clarification exercises (Reisch and Grogan-Kaylor)</td>
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<td>Handout from Michael Reisch on political systems and views</td>
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<td>NASW Code of Ethics (available on line at <a href="http://www.naswdc.org/code.htm">http://www.naswdc.org/code.htm</a>)</td>
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<td>The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas, by Ursula K. LeGuin (handed out in class)</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>September 26, 2001</td>
<td>Theories of poverty: Why is there poverty?</td>
<td>Mullaly Chapter 3-6</td>
<td>Budgeting at the poverty line exercise.</td>
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<td>Lewis, O. The Culture of Poverty</td>
<td>Compare the results of this exercise with EPlnet's &quot;Basic Budget Calculator&quot; available at <a href="http://www.epinet.org">www.epinet.org</a></td>
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| Week 5 | October 3, 2001 | Theories of the social welfare state: Why is there a social welfare system? | Mullaly Chapter 3-6  
| Week 6 | October 10, 2001 | Social Stratification: How does the social structure constrain people's life chances? | Kirst-Ashman Chapter 12  
Review American Profile Poster hanging on instructor's door  
Review information on inequality in America from www.inequality.org | Eastville, Part II          |
| Week 7 | October 17, 2001 | How does the workplace structure our lives? | Readings TBA                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Guest lecture by Larry Root   |

(readings other than the Kirst-Ashman text and Mullaly text are from the coursepack)  
(please note: some coursepack readings are available through the course web site, so you may be able to save some money by accessing articles through the web site. I have tried to indicate those readings available through the web site with [ws])
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| Week 8| October 24, 2001 | Oppression: How are certain groups discriminated against by the social structure?                     | Kirst-Ashman Chapter 12  
Mullaly Chapter 7-8  
Bafa Bafa Simulation                                                                                                     |
|       |            |                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                       |
| Week 9| October 31, 2001 | How are neighborhoods organized? Do neighborhoods affect the quality of life over and above individual characteristics?                                     | Kirst-Ashman Chapter 4  
Presentation on Neighborhoods and Child Neglect  
Community Organizing Exercise                                                                                           |
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>November 7, 2001</td>
<td>GIS exercise</td>
<td>Getting Started With ArcView at: <a href="http://www.uky.edu/Subject/GIS/startarcview.html">http://www.uky.edu/Subject/GIS/startarcview.html</a>  Pay particular attention to the latter half of the document which focuses on how to color code your maps.</td>
<td>GIS lab exercise</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>November 28, 2001</td>
<td>Library research day and office hours</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>December 12, 2001</td>
<td>No class</td>
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