1. Course Description

This course will analyze those policies and services that promote or inhibit the development of civil society, enhance or deny human rights, and contribute to the attainment of social justice or sustain the existence of social injustice. Emphasis will be placed on those policies and services which serve to enhance social participation, economic security, respect for diversity, voluntary action, and community and corporate responsibility. The course will also integrate an intensive focus on how policies and services, particularly at the local level, maintain or diminish the existence of oppression and privilege in U.S. society. Programs provided by various units of government, nonprofit and social service organizations, and corporations will be reviewed, and various partnerships and collaborations among funders, service providers, and community groups will be examined. The course will also explore ways in which the involvement of community members can lead to the construction of socially just policies and services that can overcome the effects of privilege and oppression.

2. Course Content

Students will learn that community well-being is enhanced when social problems are managed, human needs are met, and social opportunities and human rights are optimized. Both problems and needs are the outcome of interactions between individuals, collectivities, and the larger society. The implications of these interactions will be examined in the context of a diverse society, with special attention given to the relationship between policy development and implementation, the attainment of social justice goals, and the eradication of oppression and privilege. Attributes of such policies and programs include, but are not limited to, enhanced opportunities for social participation, economic security, heightened respect for diversity, increased voluntary action, and greater corporate responsibility.

Selected laws, programs, and structures that enhance citizen participation within diverse populations will be described and compared. Emphasis will be placed on those that enable the sustained and meaningful participation of diverse and oppressed populations and on the social worker’s responsibility for facilitating such participation. Examples will include the use of mediating structures, such as citizen boards, advisory groups, commissions, and consumer involvement in promoting and guiding positive social change. In many of these, participation is intended to enhance citizen capacity to initiate and oversee action. However, participatory
structures are also intended to assure the responsiveness of programs of a promotional, service, or preventive nature. These programs are designed to promote social justice by reducing poverty and economic insecurity; address personal crises and community emergencies (such as those brought about by violence against persons and property, nature and environmental disasters, war and terrorism, or economic dislocation); resettle and integrate refugees and other immigrant populations; overcome the consequences of privilege; and respond to the needs of oppressed groups seeking social justice (e.g., women, racial, religious, ethnic and sexual minorities, the disabled, and other oppressed groups). In addition, the participatory opportunities provided via self-help, grassroots associations and informal networks, and congregational-based service providers will be explored.

3. Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Within the context of a diverse society, analyze relevant policies and services that promote social justice, encourage social participation, community well-being, human rights, and economic security, and enable individuals and groups to overcome the consequences of privilege and oppression.
2. Demonstrate familiarity with selected aspects of the structures, legal standing, and roles of the nonprofit sector in providing human services, advocating for human rights, and promoting community participation and well-being.
3. Locate and apply commonly used indicators of social, economic, and other measures of community well-being to diverse populations that are experiencing the effects of social injustice and oppression.
4. Analyze how privilege, oppression, and injustice affect the levels and types of participation possible and desirable for members or representatives of diverse communities in mediating structures that are intended to promote well-being.
5. Identify the political, social, economic, and cultural factors that lead to or detract from such participation among oppressed populations.
6. Understand the roles social workers can play at the community level in promoting the well-being and sustained participation of its members.

4. Course Design

In-class activities, readings, and course assignments will be coordinated so as to enhance course objectives. For example, simulations of real-work processes, films, videos, and speakers presented in the classroom will provide the contextual background for student assignments in the community. Lectures by the instructor will be complemented by student presentations and by speakers representing consumers, providers, professionals, and volunteers involved in advocacy, community education, and service delivery.

5. Relationship of the Course to Curricular Themes

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed in this course through the emphasis on enhancing the well-being and community participation of populations and groups that have
been historically subject to discrimination, injustice, and oppression. The issues to be examined will include the motivations for, content, and impact of laws and regulations affecting human rights and nondiscrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, age, religion, and sexual orientation.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** underlie the creation of mediating structures, programs, and policies expressly designed to enhance community well-being. Students will examine these issues as well as social work’s historical engagement in planned change and the meaning of its underlying commitment to social justice in the contemporary environment.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be examined in terms of whether programs and policies are effective or ineffective in their promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation efforts. Sometimes, programs designed to express these themes complement each other – for example, when participation enhances promotion and prevention, and both are part of a comprehensive strategy of change. The course will also focus on how policies and services can promote the goal of social justice and, by addressing the structural causes of privilege and oppression, prevent the emergence or reemergence of their consequences. For these reasons, the extent to which programs and policies are infused with these themes and how they interact with each other will receive critical analysis.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research.** This course will be based on the twin assumptions that the programs and policies to be studied can be understood through social scientific methods and that scientific concepts can also be used in the design of effective programs and policies. However, even this assumption needs analysis. Scientific perspectives can lead to very different interpretations of social issues and, consequently, different policy and programmatic responses. For example, much of sociology can be divided into (1) structural/functionalist perspectives which advocate the eliminating of cultural and behavioral skill differences between groups and the legal, economic, and other barriers to full participation; and (2) conflict perspectives, which assume that societies tend towards conflict because power and resources are inequitably distributed and that, in the long run, conflict is positive because it increases the likelihood of expanding access to social goods. These perspectives infuse many of the readings and analyses presented in this course. Applying one or the other can lead to different interpretations of events and social processes and to very different social agendas and programs for social change. For this reason, even the social science knowledge base of this course will itself be subject to examination.

- **Social Work Ethics and Values.** This course will address ethical and value issues related to policies and services directed at social participation and community well-being. The NASW Code of Ethics and other sources of the profession’s ideology and values will be used to inform practice in this area. Special emphasis will be placed on the social worker’s responsibility to promote social justice in a diverse society by preventing and eliminating discrimination, oppression, and privilege, 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, ethical issues related to working with various client systems will be reviewed, such as the meaning of self-determination in a multicultural society, the impact of information
technology on client confidentiality and privacy rights, and the concept of the client’s interest., proper and improper relationships with clients, interruption of services, and termination.

6. Required reading:
A coursepack of required readings is available at Excel Text Preparation, 1117 South University Avenue. Students are also encouraged to read the New York Times and Detroit Free Press daily. Additional documents and web-based readings will be assigned during the semester.

7. Assignments:

Assignment 1: Journal.
Students will submit a common journal online (via Coursetools) for both SW 647 and SW 697 (i.e., one journal entry which covers both courses). Each week, half the class will submit a journal entry of 2-3 pages three days before class (by Friday of the previous week). The other half of the class will post comments on these entries via Coursetools no later than the Sunday morning before class. These roles will alternate throughout the semester. Journal entries should reflect upon and integrate the readings, field experiences, and classroom activities for the previous week. Late postings will not earn credit. **The first entry will be due on Friday, January 11. The journal entries and comments will count towards 20% of your grade.**

Assignment 2: Analytic Paper.
This assignment requires each student to analyze the policies and processes in one component of the community’s subsystems covered in the course syllabus in terms of how they enhance community well being within the specific area of concern. The final product will be a written paper of ~15-18 pages, documenting the effects of the policies, programs, and services in the area selected. **This paper will be worth 30% of your grade and is due on March 11.**

Assignment 3: Group Project.
This is a small group effort requiring community–based research and participation. It will be integrated with a parallel assignment in SW 697. Each group of ~3-4 students will take responsibility for identifying, analyzing, writing a report about, and presenting its findings to the class regarding the policies and processes that support, facilitate, enable, or prevent community participation in one component of the community’s subsystems covered in the course syllabus (e.g., economic development, children & youth, housing, etc.). Groups will be created and a schedule of presentations developed during the first two weeks of class. **Each group will be required to submit a 6-8 page summary of its findings on March 4. Presentations will begin on March 11. The presentation & accompanying paper will count 30% of your grade.**

Class Participation.
Students are expected to attend every class session, come prepared by doing the required reading, and participate in group discussions and exercises. **Class participation will be worth 20% of your grade and will be evaluated based on a self-assessment form distributed in class.**
8. Grading

Grades are earned by successfully completing the work on the assignments and by attending and participating in class. A 100 point system is used. At the end of the term, the numerical grades earned for each written assignment will be translated into letter grades according to the following formula:

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<td>C+</td>
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9. Class Schedule and Readings

Note: Readings for this course have been selected very carefully to reflect policies at the community and social systems level. Students should come to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss and integrate them with classroom and field content. Some in-class exercises have been developed to synthesize and apply readings to practice situations. Readings marked “handout” will be distributed at least one week in advance. Other reading assignments – e.g., from websites – may be announced during the semester.

Week 1: January 7  
Introductions, Course Overview, and Coursetools Review

Week 2: January 14  
Concepts of Community Well-Being

Readings:


** TOPIC FOR ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE & TASK GROUPS FORMED**

Week 3: January 21         NO CLASS: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

Week 4: January 28         Concepts of Community Participation

Readings [Note: There are additional readings for this section because students will have two weeks to complete them.]


**Weeks 5 & 6: February 4 & 11  Promoting Economic Well-Being at the Community Level**

**Readings:**


• E. Maag and D. L. Rogers (September 2000), *The New Federalism and State Tax Policies Toward the Working Poor*, Washington, DC: The Urban Institute *(Class Handout).*


• D. Rusk (May/June 1993), “Reuniting City and Suburb: The Key to Inner City Progress,” *Poverty & Race* 2(3): 1-2, 4, 11 *(Class Handout).*


• M. Sherraden, et al, (January 2000), *Saving Patterns in IDA Programs*, St. Louis: Center for Social Development, Washington University *(Excerpts – Class Handout).*


**Weeks 7 & 9: February 18/March 4  Promoting Social Well-Being at the Community Level**

**Readings:**


• Northern California Community Services Council (1994), Building Healthy and Safe Communities: Principles for Designing and Delivering Successful Community Programs, San Francisco: NCCSC, 5-15. (Class Handout)


**Week 8: February 25 Mid-Semester Break: No Class**

**SUMMARY OF GROUP PROJECTS DUE – March 4**

**Weeks 10 & 11: March 11 & 18 Improving the Well-Being of Children and Youth**

**Readings:**


** ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE – MARCH 11 **

** GROUP PRESENTATIONS BEGIN – MARCH 11 **

Weeks 12 & 13: March 25 & April 1 Creating Affordable and Safe Housing

**Readings:**


**Weeks 14 & 15: April 8 & 15 Cultural Activities, Community Participation & Well-Being**

**Readings:**


• M. McDonald, G. Antunez, and M. Gottemoeller, “Using the Arts and Literature in Health Education,” *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*.


• Southeastern Michigan Community Partnership for Cultural Participation (December 1999), *Southeastern Michigan Geodemographic and Database Analysis* (Executive Summary), Southfield, MI: Art Serve.
