SW 502
Organizational, Community, and Societal Structures and Processes
Wednesday, 9 - 12
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Instructor Contact Information

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Course Description

This course will examine theory and research knowledge about political, economic, and societal structures and processes related to communities, groups and organizations within contemporary American society. Consideration will be given to ways in which these social systems have significant social, political, economic, and psychological impact on the functioning of individuals, families and social groups. This course will provide a framework for understanding the influences of these significant social systems on individuals, families, and groups with whom social workers practice. Communities, organizations and other large social units will be examined in terms of risk and protective factors that promote or detract from optimal individual and group well being.

Course Content

This course will give 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. Emphasis will be placed on oppression, discrimination, prejudice, and privilege and their relationship to social and economic justice for populations served by social workers. This knowledge will be 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 completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify, describe, and discuss selected theoretical perspectives on organizational, community, and societal structures, processes, and change as well as social and behavioral science knowledge.
2. Describe and discuss the impact of communities, organizations and other societal groups on the social environment 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, bisexual, and transgendered 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, and 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 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 its inclusion 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, such as preventing discrimination in the work place, improving agency policies and procedures, and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations.
Assignments

1. **Weekly Papers (75% of the total class grade)**

   Each week, you are to submit one written commentary that addresses some central theoretical or methodological concern in the week’s readings. These papers will typically discuss an issue or two, pose questions about the week’s readings, and suggest answers. The papers will usually be three or four long paragraphs, about 300 to 400 words, and should never be longer than one and a half double spaced pages in length.

   Weekly discussions will be built around these commentaries. To stimulate class discussion, I may quote from your paper, ask you to clarify or debate a point for me, or even ask you to read from your paper in class. Please be aware of these possibilities as you compose your thoughts.

   Papers are due at noon each Tuesday in hard copy at my office.

2. **Final Exam (25% of the total class grade)**

   A take-home final examination will be handed out on the final day of class (December 11). It is due at noon on December 18 in hard copy at my office.

3. **Class Participation (not graded but required)**

   This course works optimally under the following conditions: you come to class without fail, you participate in discussions (by providing questions and answers), and your extend full courtesy to others (by being polite, helpful, appreciative, and respectful). I find that students who participate in this manner are also those who do extremely well in weekly papers and on the final.

   I will not grade your class participation. I simply require all of the above.

Grading

Weekly papers and the final exam will receive letter grades. I will drop the two lowest grades you receive on your weekly papers.

However, if it appears that a paper was written without the benefit of having read the material thoroughly, I will ask you to rewrite your paper. Also, if you do not write a paper for any week, I will give you a zero for the week’s essay grade, and count that grade towards your class grade.

The criteria for letter grades are as follows:
A+, A, or A-
Mastery of subject content, demonstration of critical analysis, creativity and/or simplicity in completion of assignment. The difference between an A+, an A, and an A- is based on the degree to which these skills is demonstrated.

B+
Mastery of subject content beyond expected competency, but has not demonstrated additional critical analysis, creativity or complexity in the completion of the assignment.

B
Mastery of subject content at level of expected competency – meets course expectations.

B-
Less than adequate competency, but demonstrates student learning and potential for mastery of subject content.

C or C-
Demonstrates a minimal understanding of subject content. Significant areas needing improvement to meet course requirements.

E
Student has failed to demonstrate minimal understanding of subject content.

Both content and format will be considered in assigning grades. In terms of content, I will assign grades based on the degree to which you are able to . . .

- Understand and use class readings;
- Present arguments clearly and logically;
- Support your arguments with evidence from class or from your personal history;
- Exhibit originality and creativity;
- Be sensitive to multicultural and social justice issues across different populations and social systems.

In terms of format, please type your submissions, using 12-point font and a one-inch margin all around. All written material should be double spaced. Feel free to use APA, Chicago School, or some other standard style manual, but be sure that you use the style uniformly.
**Policies Regarding Written Work**

_Tardiness_

I will not accept late papers.

_Extensions_

Individual extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances.

_Grading Complaints_

I am happy to meet with you regarding a grading question or complaint. I do request that (a) you schedule a meeting with me to discuss these matters and (b) you make a reasoned question or complaint regarding your grade in writing prior to our meeting, and provide me with all class materials I may need in order to fairly review your case.

_Academic Dishonesty_

Plagiarism, regardless of whether it is willful or unintentional, will force me to report you to my superiors. We will spend time in class discussing when and how to cite various source materials.

**Required Materials**

The following books are required reading for the course. They are available for purchase at Ulrich’s Bookstore at the corner of South and East University Avenues and are also on reserve in the School library.


A coursepack is also required. It is available for purchase at Excel Copies on South University Avenue, and is also on reserve in the School library.
1. **Introduction to the Course (September 4)**
   - Introductions
   - Review the syllabus
   - Expectations regarding the weekly papers and an e.g.
   - Introduction to course themes via a thought experiment

2. **Terminology; What Is Social Work? (September 11)**
   - Review of terminology from Kirst-Ashman
   - What is social work? What are the boundaries of our profession? Can one be a social worker without having formal membership in the profession? What is our justification for being?
   - Small group discussions: an analysis of LBJ in light of social work principles

3. **The Ethical Foundation of Social Work (September 18)**
   - How should we behave towards one another? Why? What are some justifications for society and community? Upon what philosophical traditions does the NASW Code of Ethics draw? Should we accept the NASW Code of Ethics to be sacrosanct? Why?
   - Small group discussions: a critique and revision of the NASW Code of Ethics from the perspective of various philosophical perspectives

4. **Theories of Society and the State (September 25)**
   - What is society? What are some competing views of Western society? How and why is social work altered by societal expectations and institutions?
   - Small group discussions: an examination of various societal responses to the September 11 tragedy

5. **Poverty, Race, and Public Policy (October 2)**
   - What is poverty? What are some competing views of poverty transmission? What are the major components of antipoverty policies and programs?
   - Small group discussions: a comparison between Blank’s and Wilson’s antipoverty strategies

6. **Power, Civic Participation, and Oppression (October 9)**
   - What are power and oppression, and how can we see them? Why is civic participation valuable? Who participates, where, how, and why? How do social workers (ab)use power?
Class debate: is Margolin’s argument in Under the Cover of Kindness: The Invention of Social Work sound? Why?

7.    Defining and Mapping Communities (October 16)

- What is community? How is community created? What are the central differences between ecological and structural approaches to defining community?
- Small group discussions: an examination of how community is constructed in Black Corona
- Mid-term evaluations

8.    No Class (All School Intensive Focus Event, October 23)

9.    Approaching and Assessing Communities (October 30)

- What are various methods for assessing communities? Why is community based social work preferable to non-community based intervention? Should community based social work be mono-cultural/racial?
- Small group discussions: contrasting approaches to assessing the condition of circumpolar indigenous communities

10.   Interpersonal Interactions and Institutions within Communities (November 6)

- What is social capital? Where does it come from and what effects does it have? Does a focus on individuals result in a neglect of community institutions? Do social capital and community institutions have a dark side?
- Small group discussions: the uses and abuses of social capital

11.   Improving Communities (November 13)

- Intra- versus extra-community means of effecting community change; targeted versus diffuse community change processes
- What does an ecological model imply for community practice? Does community organizing work? How do we know it works? Why should social workers work within communities if community behaviors are themselves a product of extra-community forces like policies and laws, institutions and NGOs, bordering communities, and entrepreneurs?
- Video: Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street

12.   Defining and Mapping Organizations (November 20)

- Review of terminology from Kirst-Ashman and theoretical approaches to organizations from Hasenfeld
- Small group discussions: Person in situ from an organizational perspective, i.e., adapting to the UMSSW as a 1st year MSW student

13.   Conflict and Collaboration between Private and Public Agencies (November 27)
What is the political economy of human service provision? What are various views of the public sector-private sector relationship?

Small group discussions: brainstorming a solution to the trilemma

14. Clientele, Fiscal, Political, and Other Considerations Involved in Creating Human Service Systems (December 4)

What are interorganizational service systems? Why do they exist (instead of single-agency monopolies or non-collaborative markets)? Why are human service systems often unsuccessful? How do we define and evaluate “success” and “failure”? What are “wicked problems”?

Preparation for the final exam

15. The Individual within the Agency and the Community (December 11)

What is the “self”? Where does one’s sense of self come from? How does the external environment impact the “self”? How should social workers practice within organizations and communities?

Review of the class

Pass out exam
READING SCHEDULE (ALL READINGS ARE REQUIRED)

NOTE: READINGS ARE PRESENTED IN THE ORDER THEY SHOULD BE READ

1. **Introduction to the Course (September 4)**

2. **Terminology; What Is Social Work? (September 11)**

3. **The Ethical Foundation of Social Work (September 18)**

4. **Theories of Society and the State (September 25)**
   - Fellin, chs. 1 – 2
   - Mullaly, chs. 1 – 6

5. **Poverty, Race, and Public Policy (October 2)**

6. **Power, Civic Participation, and Oppression (October 9)**
7. **Defining and Mapping Communities (October 16)**

- Mullaly, ch. 8

- Fellin, chs. 3 – 5


8. **No Class (All School Intensive Focus Event, October 23)**

9. **Approaching and Assessing Communities (October 30)**


- Fellin, chs. 7 – 8.


10. **Interpersonal Interactions and Institutions within Communities (November 6)**


11. **Improving Communities (November 13)**


- Fellin, chs. 13 and 15

12. Defining and Mapping Organizations (November 20)

- Fellin, ch. 9

13. Conflict and Collaboration between Private and Public Agencies (November 27)


14. Clientele, Fiscal, Political, and Other Considerations Involved in Creating Human Service Systems (December 4)


15. The Individual within the Agency and the Community (December 11)

- Mullaly, ch. 9