SW 502: Organizational, Community, and Societal Structures and Processes

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Course Description

This course examines theory and research knowledge about political, economic and societal structures and processes 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. Communities, organizations and other social groups are examined in terms of risk and protective factors that promote or detract from optimal individual and group well-being.

The 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. [We will also examine what various macro knowledge, theories and perspectives illuminate or obscure in relation to diversity and social justice].

*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. [also examine how various theories and perspectives suggest social change occurs, and can contribute to social justice and the understanding of privilege and how it is re-created]

*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. [consider how various approaches can promote health and capacity, prevent the development of problems, intervene with problems, and maintain as much positive functioning as possible]

*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. [also to interrogate the social context for and the types of methods used to produce that research]

**Relationship in 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.

**Texts:**


**Other resources:** [all on reserve in library]


Coursepack—at Excel Copy and the Library

More about the Course, my Philosophy of Teaching, and Assignments and Grading (Reed, 502)

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, and anthropology, with some 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.

I use principles of adult learning whenever I can, with an understanding that new knowledge has to build upon and “fit” with knowledge you already have, or you have to be able to “unlearn” or revise previous knowledge to accommodate new perspectives. I lecture very little, and will rely on you to let me know if some discussion or clarification of readings in class would be useful. 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.

I use class time to engage you in activities that allow you to apply and examine course readings, and we will go way beyond course readings through group presentations and class exercises. I pay attention to who is there and how engaged you are. If you find class time or other course components unuseful, I expect you to tell me that and work with me to make it better. On days that assignments are due, I would rather you come to class and participate even if the assignment isn’t done; you can get it to me later in the day. I am also more concerned about what you know at the end of the course than how you do initially, and am happy to have you redo/add to an assignment if you are unhappy with your first try or wish to try and raise your grade.
Assignments and Requirements. You will have three major assignments (25% of grade for first and third, and 25% for the theory presentation), and a number of in-class activities that you need to complete to satisfy course requirements (25% of grade). I try and use class time to apply and augment material in the readings, so expect that you have read them before class, and will attend and participate in class. The first assignments allow you to demonstrate your use of core concepts, by applying them to yourselves. In the second, you will work in a group to understand and apply a particular macro-level “theory”/framework, and be responsible for teaching the rest of the class what you have learned. The last assignment is designed to review, integrate, and apply the major course content. I will ask you to assess your own performance in the class, the effort you have expended, and how much you have learned. You will also evaluate each other in your small groups and class presentations. Your evaluations will be incorporated with mine.

General evaluation criteria (special elements will also be delineated for particular assignments):
Degree to which you demonstrate understanding and ability to use macro knowledge and theory; Systematic & logical presentation of arguments; Appropriate use of evidence with citations; use of relevant literature and concepts; Scope of concepts used; Clarity of presentation; Originality & creativity; Attention to multicultural and social justice issues across different populations and situations.

Some Suggestions

1. You may want to keep an informal journal throughout the semester to track and record your reactions and thoughts--partly for yourself so you can see recurring themes and growth through the semester, and partly to collect information that will be useful for the initial self-analysis paper and subsequent inclusions in other assignments. Pay particular attention to what excites, disturbs, puzzles, or angers you--or leaves you feeling defensive. Sometimes we have to discover our values, biases, preferences through fairly indirect ways.

2. You will benefit also by forming a discussion group with some of your classmates, to divide up readings, teach each other the main points from them, and consider how to apply them. If enough of you do this, I will give you class time for short meetings.
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U. Michigan, School of Social Work          Reed,  Fall, 2002,  Tuesday, 2-5, section 005

Syllabus

September 3, 2001: Introduction to the course and each other. Initial topics.

September 10, 2001:

Introduction to macro knowledge areas, and larger context of social work
Begin to identify and discuss concepts, theories, issues
(First half of simulation)

- Kirst-Ashman text, Chapter 1: Intro to Human behavior in the social environment, 1-25.
  Chapter 2. Communities. (26-43)


- McIntosh, P. Unpacking the knapsack of privilege. reprinted in M Anderson and P. H. Collins, (multiple editions) Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology. This was in your registration packet, during orientation


Some work in small groups

Sept. 17: Continue with concepts of community, intro to organizations, and inter-organizational theories. Some discussion of culture. Second half of simulation

- K-A text, Chapters 3 (Human Behavior, Power, & ‘Empowerment, 44—68); & 4 (Neighborhood Empowerment, 69-83). Chapter 5: Knowledge and theory about organizations, 84-100.


Sept. 24 (Martineau, guest instructor) **Social Justice, stratification, privilege, power, oppression, and diversity**: Linkages with macro theories and constructs

[Coursepack is at Excel, 1117 South University (upstairs), 996-1500. Coursepack # 1]


I’d really like you to read this whole book—it’s quick and easy. If you can’t, be sure and read Chapters 3-6 (15-82) Privilege, power and difference, Capitalism, class, and the matrix of domination, Making privilege happen, & the trouble with the trouble; & Chapters 8 & 9; How systems of privilege work and Getting off the hook 96-136. This is not in the coursepack—should be in the library and the bookstores.


**Oct. 1: More about organizations; frameworks for conceptualizing**

- K-A text, Chapters 6 (Internal and external environments, 101-126); 7 (Traditional Organizational Environments, 127-152); 8 (Human Behavior and Empowerment in Organizations, 153-177).

- selections from Lauffer, Understanding your Social Agency, Sage


**Oct 8: More about community and society (first assignment due)**

- Fellin, P. (2001) *The Community and the Social Worker* (2nd Ed), Peacock. The societal context of communities (1-29), American society as a welfare state (30-48); Defining communities (49-69); and community competence and systems perspectives (70-88).


**Tues. Oct 15—Fall study break**

**Coursepack # II**

**Oct 22—Theory and frameworks for public policy; uses of social work theory, introduction to paradigms**

• Fisher & Karger, Chapter 5—Social policy: The ideology and politics of the public good, 91-115.


We will begin working to select different theoretical frameworks to explore in more depth through class presentations and application

**Oct 23—social justice day—Please work hard to attend and report back to class.**

Oct 29--Comparison of some frameworks and paradigms; What is a theory and appropriate “evidence” for a theory? What are the uses and limitations of theory?

• Mullaly. Chapters 2-6, pp 23-96. Social Work vision: A progressive view; the neo-conservative paradigm; the liberal paradigm; the social-democratic paradigm; the Marxist paradigm. Small groups will take one of these in more depth.

• Mullaly, Chapter 7, Structural social work theory and oppression. 99-137.

• de Anda, Diane (1997) Are there theories that are sufficiently “Culture-free” to be appropriate and useful for practice with multicultural clients? *Controversial Issues in Multiculturalism*. Allyn & Bacon, 143-152.

We will continue working to select different theoretical frameworks to explore in more depth through class presentations and application

Nov 5: **More about diversity, and oppression; conceptual knowledge about groups (in macro environment and within your workgroups)**

• K-A text, Chapters 9 (Empowerment of people with developmental disabilities, 178-201) and 12 (Diversity, populations at risk, 242-264)

• Mullaly, Chapter 8. Oppression, the focus of structural social work. 138-159.


• K-A text, Chapter 10 (types of groups in macro environment, 202-218), 11 (Human Behavior in groups: Theories and dynamics, 219-241)

  Presentations and application of theoretical frameworks

Nov 12: **More about organizations, and society; Research methods and the nature of knowledge**

[Review also earlier articles from Payne, and d’Anda]


• Hyde in Hasenfeld, ideational system of social movement agencies: An examination of feminist health centers, 121-144. **Human Service Organizations as Complex Organizations**, Sage Publications


• Fisher & Karger, Chapter 4, Research: Contextualizing and politicizing social work, 67-89.

  Presentations and application of theoretical frameworks

Nov 19-- **Social work in the community and society: the application of macro theory and knowledge**


• Fisher & Karger, Chapter 6, Macro practice: Putting Social Change back into SW practice. 117-147.
• Mullaly, Chapter 10. Working outside the system187-203.

Presentations and application of theoretical frameworks

Nov 26-- Working in organizations: the application of macro theory and knowledge

• Fisher & Karger, Chapter 7, Empowering the social service workplace…149-173.

• Mullaly, chapter 9. Working within the system, 163-186.


Presentations and application of theoretical frameworks

Dec 3-- Working for social justice: the application of macro theory and knowledge


Consider also other groups, made outsiders because of gender, sexual orientation, age, economic circumstances, disabilities. We have also read other relevant articles for this—chapter in Kirst-Ashman, sections of Mullaly, Baines article.

Presentations and application of theoretical frameworks

Dec 10: review and applications; comparing and contrasting theories and models; social justice, social change and multicultural issues

Within communities
Within organizations
Within policy making structures
Implications for IP practice

***Fisher & Karger, Chapter 8, 175-183.