Course Description
This course will review theories and research from the social sciences on social change, focusing especially at the societal level. Theories of social conflict and social continuity, the roles of interest groups, social movements, ideologies and such processes as consciousness-raising will be covered. The dynamics surrounding the diffusion of innovations in society will also be addressed. Examples will be drawn from some areas of practice in which social workers have been and are currently involved.

Course Content
The main goal of this course is to address the questions of why and how social change occurs in different types of macro systems. Students will compare and contrast different theoretical approaches to the understanding of societal, community and organizational change. Students will learn about how theories have explained both stability and change, and about different approaches to planned change. Comparative dimensions will include the theory’s scope, historical origins, and cultural contexts, the societal arenas and problem areas from which the theory was developed and in which it has been applied; and the assumptions of a theory about humankind, society and how change occurs.

Although the primary emphasis will be on societal level change, this course will also consider theories of change at the individual, group, community, and organizational levels and, in particular, how changes at different system levels affect each other. Students will consider the extent to which different theories are, or are not, compatible with each other and the implications of these relationships for the usefulness of particular theories for different purposes. Change theories will be selected from multiple disciplines and traditions, and students will consider how scholars and activists from different disciplinary perspectives have used and critiqued each other’s work. Emphasis will be given to the types of evidence and knowledge available about each theoretical approach and the types of inquiry used to develop and critique different theories.
Different bodies of thought about change will be critiqued for their relevance to the issues facing privileged, marginalized and oppressed groups within U.S. society and for their usefulness cross-culturally and cross-identity group boundaries. Students will consider how different theories have been applied or could be applied for different purposes, and critique existing types of practice from particular theoretical perspectives. In particular, students will explore the theories that have been important within human service goals and problem areas of interest to them.

**Course Objectives**

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

1. Describe, compare, and contrast several types of theories about organizational, community and societal change, and the roles that individual and group change play within these changes.
2. Identify theories relevant to particular issue areas and critique their strengths and limitations.
3. Critique theories as to their assumptions, origins, relevance for different social problems, and relevance for understanding concepts such as social justice, diversity, oppression, and privilege.
4. Apply particular theories to different areas of practice.
5. Discuss ethical concerns related to theories of organizational, community and societal change.

**Intensive Focus Note**

This course is one of those designed by the Governing Faculty to Intensively Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity, and Social Justice (PODS). The emphasis in SW 611 will be on knowledge and theory development and the application of that knowledge and theory to various areas of practice within the arenas of Communities and Social Systems (CSS). The course will critique various theories in terms of their relevance to practice at various levels and in various settings.

The course will also emphasize the significance of social justice as a desired goal of all planned change. This includes defining the meaning of social justice, identifying the forces working for and against social justice goals, and discerning those factors to be incorporated into theories of change if social justice is to be a goal. Among these factors are (1) forces that create and perpetuate unearned privilege; (2) forces that create oppression and discrimination related to group membership; (3) dimensions of diversity and their interaction/intersection with each other; and (4) various ways of understanding power and its relevance to the content outlined above.

**NOTE:** This course description has not yet been revised to include language and objectives that emphasize PODS goals. This will be completed in 2004-2005. Suggestions from students as to how this course could be modified to achieve these goals more effectively would be greatly appreciated.
Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed in this course by identifying theories espoused by and compatible with different cultural traditions, by critiquing theories from different cultural perspectives, and through course examples about the uses of theory in different interest and cultural communities, and with regard to the intersections among these group boundaries.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be addressed within the goals and assumptions of each theoretical approach. Most of the course will focus on how theories can illuminate and help to promote social justice goals, and disrupt the forces that perpetuate unearned privilege and oppression, by conceptualizing and operationalizing organizational, community, and societal change.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be addressed by examining theories about social change for their relevance and applicability in each of these areas. Students will compare and contrast theories that focus on a positive vision of the future with theories focusing on preventing, reducing or eliminating existing problems.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** as well as knowledge from other disciplines will be included by examining the evidence used to build and test theory through its applications in practice.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

Students will examine theories and explore the extent to which they aid social workers in fulfilling their ethical responsibilities to the general welfare. In particular, theories and practice examples will be critiqued with respect to such ethical principles as: preventing and eliminating discrimination, ensuring access to resources and services, expanding choices for all persons, promoting conditions that encourage respect for diversity, advocating for policy changes to improve social conditions and promote social justice, and encouraging informed participation by citizens in shaping policies and institutions.

Course Design

This course will use a variety of pedagogical strategies, including readings, class exercises, case studies, and debates. Students will focus on cognitive and analytic tasks, skills in the use and application of theory, and identifying underlying value and attitudinal issues related to particular theories. If size permits, the course will be run primarily as a seminar. The amount of reading for this class is demanding and students will need to come prepared to participate and provide leadership in the classroom.

Course Materials and Requirements

- A large course pack will be available at Excel, 1117 South University Avenue (upstairs). [734-996-1500] It will also be on reserve in the School of Social Work library.
Guidelines for Participation
During the first class session, we will develop guidelines for participation. Throughout the semester we revisit and revise these guidelines as needed. Students are encouraged to raise issues about the classroom environment that affect their educational experience in the course.

Electronic Devices
Due to their disruptive nature, please turn off cell phones and pagers while in class. In order to receive emergency messages, please set devices to vibrate only.

Course Assignments
In addition to completing assigned readings and engaging in class activities, students will complete several assignments designed to assess their interests, knowledge, and experience with organizational, community, and societal change; types and goals of purposive change; analysis and critique of theories about such change; and the application of theories to a change effort – either completed or planned – from one or more theoretical perspectives.

Appropriate referencing is required on all written assignments. If you do not know correct citation format, please seek assistance before you submit your assignments. One source for this information is the guide to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. This can be found on the School’s website at http://www.lib.umich.edu/socwork/apastyle.html. See also the information in the Student Guide to the Master’s in Social Work Degree Program and other appropriate University publications for policies and penalties related to academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism. Please note (1) Page ranges given for papers (below) are based on work that is double-spaced, with one-inch margins and a 12-point font; (2) Electronic submissions of assignments will not be accepted except in emergency situations and with the approval of the instructor.

The University has a College Writing Workshop with graduate fellows and faculty of the English Composition Board. The Writing Center assists students in completing specific assignments or projects to help them improve academic writing skills. Students are encouraged to use these resources. For further information and an appointment, contact:

Sweetland Writing Center
1139 Angell Hall, 1003
(734-764-0429).

Students’ final grades will be based on the following grading scale:

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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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Specific assignments include:
**A Social Justice Analysis Paper – 30% of final grade.** This paper will use theories to identify the social justice implications of change in selected change arenas. This assignment provides students with the opportunity to reflect on their understanding of a social change arena through the lens of social change theories, to analyze how these theories reflect (or do not reflect) concepts of social justice, diversity, privilege, and oppression; and to begin to discuss potential directions for their Planned Change Project. **The paper should be 8-10 pages (double-spaced). It is due on June 7.** An outline of the paper follows:

1. Describe a change arena of interest to you.
   -- What are some of the change goals with which you are familiar in this arena?
   -- What people, settings, organizations, and contextual factors have historically been important in relation to these goals? How have they affected this arena of change?
   -- How would you describe changes that have occurred or are occurring in these arenas? For what reasons? What strategies/tactics/methods of intervention have been used or attempted to be used to foster change in these arenas?
   -- What are some of the outcomes of the changes made in this arena – intended or unintended?

2. Discuss the social justice implications of this change arena.
   -- How is social justice defined, either explicitly or implicitly, in this change arena?
   -- What are the implications of this definition for people of privileged or oppressed social identities?
   -- How is the concept of power defined in this arena?
   -- How can you use Hill Collins’ domains of power to understand how power is circulated within the change arena?

3. From a theoretical perspective, discuss a change goal you would like to see happen in this change arena.
   -- Why has change in the directions you desire not yet occurred?
   -- What theories/conceptual approaches to understand or foster change in this arena have been used, either implicitly or explicitly?
   -- Based on your experience and your understanding of change theories, what theories might be useful in pursuing change in this arena?
   -- In what ways could you use the theories discussed in this course and your experience/knowledge of the change arena to critique one another?
4. Construct a force field analysis based on your theoretical discussion around your change goal.
   -- Identify a specific, yet broad goal.
   -- What are the driving and restraining forces regarding that change goal?
   -- What theories might be used to analyze these forces?
   -- Discuss how theories in the course readings might be applied to explicate the relationship between these forces and the change goal you have identified.

5. Discuss the role your social identity and experience with privilege and oppression plays in relation to this change arena.
   -- How do these factors influence your perception and attitudes toward social change?
   -- How do these factors affect your understanding of power?
   -- How do these factors aid/hinder/bias your role as a change agent in this arena?

- **A Planned Change Project – 30% of Final Grade.** This assignment will build upon the student’s work in the Social Justice Analysis paper to create a strategy for planned change in a specific change arena. This might include:

  1. Developing a plan for a social change effort that you believe should happen regarding a particular issue in a specific action context;
  2. Presenting a case study of actual social change work done in the past (through a literature review, interviews with participants, and/or document analysis);
  3. Presenting a case study of ongoing social change work (through participation and observation, in addition to those methods listed above under #2).

The project will include research on your topic area outside of course readings. The intent is to examine what is known or what has been done in your change arena and to explore this knowledge and history through the lenses provided by the theories covered in the course and other relevant theories. **This assignment should be 8-10 pages (double-spaced). It is due July 12.** Steps involved in this assignment include:

  1. Review the force field analysis you did in the 1st assignment.
     -- Which forces are strongest? Which are most consistent? Which are most amenable to change?
     -- What specific change goal(s) will you pursue to modify these forces? What are your reasons for choosing these forces as targets of change efforts?
     -- What desired outcomes would you like to see as a result of these efforts?
     -- How do these outcomes reflect the social justice issues you raised?
2. Select and describe the contexts in which you could pursue your change goal(s).
   -- What are some domains in which change can occur within the issue area(s) you selected? What people, settings, organizations, and contexts are important in relation to the goal(s) you have established?
   -- What has been done in the past that is specifically relevant to the change goal(s) you have defined? To what extent have these efforts been successful? In what ways have they failed?
   -- What theories about change have been applied in efforts to achieve these goals in the past (explicit or implicit)? To what extent have these theories been accurate?

3. Use theories to analyze the change goal and the contexts in which you could make change.
   -- How do the theories and concepts from this course help you understand the change arena(s) you are exploring?
   -- How do the theories and concepts from this course help you think about stimulating change, identifying and addressing barriers to change, and applying particular change strategies or tactics in this arena?
   -- How would you compare, contrast, and critique these theoretical approaches, with regard to their assumptions and implied strategies, their likely effectiveness, and/or their concern with and impact on privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice?

4. Based on this theoretical analysis, construct another force field analysis.
   -- What are the driving and restraining forces for the goal(s) you have identified?
   -- What theories help explain the existence and relative strength of these forces? How do these theories help you think about developing a change strategy to modify these forces?
   -- What obstacles can you foresee in implementing this change strategy?
   -- What strategies and tactics would you propose to realize your change goal(s)?

5. Form a conclusion that answers the following questions:
   -- How does your plan address the social justice issues you identified in Assignment 1?
   -- What are the relevant ethical and value questions raised by your change goal(s) and strategy? How do these questions affect your analysis?
   -- How would you assess and evaluate change efforts informed by the theories of change selected?
• **Critical Reflection Essay – 15% of Final Grade.** This essay provides students with the opportunity to reflect on the semester, including areas of major learning, gaps and issues in learning, goals for future learning, and integration of learning with awareness of positionality. Specifically, this essay should address:
  -- Changes in your understanding of social identities and positionality and their impact on your learning.
  -- Changes in your understanding of social justice.
  -- Your understanding of the concepts of privilege and oppression as they relate to aspects of diversity.
  -- Major learning this semester related to social change theories.
  -- Questions you still have about the themes and content of the course and your goals for future learning.

This essay should be 3-5 pages (double-spaced). It is due on August 2.

• **Online Commentaries and Responses – 15% of Final Grade.** The course will use the Coursertools website to process course themes and weekly readings. Each student will have responsibility for posting three (3) commentaries on the website during the semester. Details on these commentaries follow.

**Commentary 1: Social Change Interests & Experience – Due Thursday, May 14**
Discuss those arenas of social change and social justice that most interest you. What are you passionate about regarding social change and social justice? What experiences have you had with social change/social justice? What goals do you think are important in this change arena? What theories do you think underlie the change work that has been done and is currently being done in this arena? What questions about social change do you hope to answer this semester?

**Commentaries 2 & 3: Exploring the Course Readings – Due the Thursday before the course reading is assigned on a sign-up basis.**
What do you consider the main points (themes) of this reading? How does the author describe social change? How would you apply these concepts to the change arena you discussed in Commentary 1? What questions do you have about this theory – in general and as it relates specifically to your change arena? How do the author’s ideas relate to the Intensive Focus criteria of privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice? What connections can you make between this reading and the other readings for this week? From past weeks? To other theories with which you are familiar? To social work as a field? How does your social identity influence your reaction to the reading? How does the reading inform your critical consciousness?
In addition to these three commentaries, students are also expected to make at least three (3) responses to the commentaries that are posted each week – not to each commentary, but to all of those posted in a given week. (That is why the due date for the commentaries is several days before the class – to give everyone time to post their responses.) Responses should address some aspect of the reading and relate it to your knowledge, experience, or interest area. The purpose of this assignment is to facilitate discussion, analysis, and application of theories outside of class, and to enhance in-class discussion of the theories and related course content.

- **Class Participation – 10%**. This includes attendance and punctuality, consultation with colleagues, participation during class activities, use of coursetools website, presentation and discussion of key aspect of the change project with the class.

**Coursetools Website**
The class will make use of a Coursetools website to support other educational activities. Further details will be discussed during the first class.

**Special Circumstances**
If there are any personal circumstances that require the instructor and/or other students to adapt to your special needs, please consult with the instructor about them as soon as possible. These could include:

- **Religious observances**: If any religious holidays or observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments, please make arrangements with the instructor in advance.

- **Disabilities**: If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, please speak with the instructor at your earliest convenience. Many aspects of the course (e.g., the assignments, in-class activities, etc.) and lecture/discussion can be modified to facilitate your participation and learning during the semester. All information disclosed will be treated as private and confidential to the extent permitted by law.
Course Schedule

May 10  Introductions & Overview. The Nature of Social Change
       Education as Social Change

To be read and discussed in class:


** May 14 : 1st Coursetools Commentary Due **

May 17  Theory and Consciousness in Social Work Practice

- Johnson, Allan (2001). *Privilege, power, and difference*, chapter 2: We’re in trouble, and chapter 3: The trouble we’re in, Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

May 24  Social Justice & Critical Social Theory


May 31 Memorandum Day Holiday – No Class

June 7 Theories of Planned Change


June 14 Theories and Conceptions of Power

• Coser, Lewis, ed. (1963). Power and authority, from *Sociology through literature*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 150-174. This chapter contains brief excerpts on the subject of power and authority from the following writings:
  -- Norman Mailer (1948). *The naked and the dead*
  -- Arturo Barea (1946). *The forging of a rebel*
  -- George Bernard Shaw (1923). *Preface to Saint Joan*
  -- Charles Dickens (1848). *Dombey and son*
  -- Ralph Waldo Emerson (1850). “Napoleon; or the man of the world”
  -- Lev Tolstoi (1869). *War and peace*


** Social Justice Essay Due **

June 21  Social Movement Theory


June 28  Theories of Organizational Change


July 5 Independence Day Holiday – No Class

July 12 Theories of Policy Change


** Planned Change Project Due **

July 19 Postmodern Theories

July 26  Non-Linear Systems and Chaos Theories


August 2  Theoretical Linkages and Closure


** Critical Reflection Essay Due **
Sources


Journals

Annual Review of Sociology
Catalyst
Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences
Journal of Community Practice
Journal of Social Issues
Social Work
Sociological Practice