Organizational, Community and Societal Structures & Processes

SW 502-001
Fall 2004
Monday 1pm-4pm
SEB 3003

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or by appointment
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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 workplace, improving agency policies and procedures, and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations.

Course Texts

Each reading is on reserve in the library. I have tried to be conscious of costs in choosing the readings. Although there are four texts, all the additional articles are online, therefore saving coursepack costs. Please see me if there are any issues in obtaining any of the course readings.

Available at Shaman Drum Book Store (on State Street):


Available at Common Language Book Store (215 S. Fourth Street (downtown Ann Arbor, just off Liberty):


Readings can be found on the course reserve section of the library (www.mirlyn.umich.edu)

A Little More About this Course

A goal of this class is to begin to see the macro social world as an essential context for all social work practice. Whether we are interested in community organizing, social policy advocacy, or individual counseling—social workers must be attuned to how the larger world of macro social work functions and how various social, organizational, and community structures impact the work we are individually trying to do. Some people have an “all or nothing” attitude toward theory, my hope is that you will see the importance of theory to social work.

In this class, we will explore theories and frameworks for understanding society, community and organizations as well as use critical theory as a tool for understanding the social environment.

Understanding various theoretical explanations and social paradigm perspectives provides a critical lens through which to explore the macro social setting. For example, why is there poverty? Why is there oppression? What are the various perspectives on the social welfare system? These become important questions for teasing out the forces, factors, and issues involved with marginalized and oppressed populations. Similarly, theories and paradigms can also help us to envision what a socially just society would look like, and in turn how socially competent communities and organizations would function.

This is a theory class, not a practice class. Instead of a tool box of practice skills, I see this class in part as building an “intellectual tool box” of theories, ideas, and frameworks which will be useful throughout the rest of your MSW program, regardless of your area of interest. I think you will also find that understanding paradigms, theories and macro social work will only strengthen your abilities to provide support to clients regardless of the issue and setting in which you plan to practice.

**My Teaching Philosophy**

My teaching philosophy is best described as participatory. I am not a lecturer. I view the classroom to be a space for collective learning and critical discussion. We each bring knowledge to the classroom which adds to the overall learning of the class. I see my role as instructor two-fold: 1) providing the context for the topic and readings and 2) helping to facilitate critical discussion and reflection in the classroom. I see your role as students in drawing on your own experience and background to lead discussion, raise questions, and provide examples to move the entire knowledge of the class forward. This class will be as strong as each of us makes it.

I find the most useful classes draw on a variety of teaching techniques and styles. Therefore, each session will incorporate a variety of learning formats, such as: discussion, small group activities, presentations, interactive exercises, simulations, and videos. I hope that this mix of elements will meet the majority of your learning needs. While classroom activities are fun and engaging, I also view them as critical learning spaces.
Reading is very important in this class. Each session we will draw on the readings to highlight key issues and to engage in intellectual discussion. For this reason, the major portion of the participation grade will involve each one of you raising questions about particular readings and helping to facilitate discussion around them.

As last note on my teaching philosophy...in a participatory classroom I expect that we will interact as colleagues and collective learners. I hope that you will provide feedback to me along the way in order to best meet your learning needs. Additionally, in a collective space I assume that we will respect opinions and ideas, and provide a mutually safe space for critical discussion.

Classroom Guidelines

Classroom Norms

Together we will create guidelines and norms for our classroom. These will enable us to create a classroom environment that fosters learning, critical thinking, and knowledge development. We will revisit and revise our guidelines as needed. Please contact me if you feel that the classroom no longer supports a participatory learning environment.

Course Tools Website

This course will use Course Tools technology to support in class learning. Course Tools is a class web-site that will contain information about the syllabus, assignment, and readings. Course Tools can also be used to submit questions and to hosting out-of-class discussions. This will be a great resource for you throughout the course of the term. Please offer suggestions or ideas as to how we can use this technology to maximize our learning experience. I will provide a training on using Course Tools, and can direct you to additional resources as needed.

Special Circumstances

If there are any circumstances that require me and/or the class adapt to your special needs, please consult with me about them.

Religious Observances

Please notify me if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Electronic Devices

Due to their disruptive nature, please turn off cell phones and pagers while in class. If you have a circumstance that requires you to have your cell phone on, please make sure that this is for emergency calls only. In these instances, please set devices to vibrate only.
Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, I encourage you to contact me at your earliest convenience. Many aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way that I teach can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress throughout the semester. The earlier you make me aware of your needs, the more effectively we will be able to use the resources available to us, such as the services for Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site, and the like. If you do decide to disclose your disability, I will (to the extent permitted by law) treat that information as private and confidential.

Assignments and Requirements

This class will have four assignments. The assignments are meant to challenge and engage you with the material. Most assignments will allow you to apply the course readings and materials to an issue you care about and a macro setting to which you best relate. Specifics of each assignment follow:

Assignment #1: Participation (25%)

Participation is a critical component to this class. I expect that everyone will participate and contribute in her/his own way to the overall functioning of the class. I respect that everyone participates in different ways and that some forms are more comfortable for some than others. I expect at a minimum that people will come to class, be alert and engaged, complete the readings, and participate in class activities. If you have any questions or concerns around participation, please see me.

In addition to general participation in classroom activities, discussion and exercises, you will be expected to participate in an on-line discussion of course readings and class topics. Each of you will be expected to sign up for one week in which you agree to post 2 critical discussion questions based on the readings on to our Course Tools class website. You will be expected to post these questions by the Thursday before class by 5pm.

All other class members will be expected to sign-on to Course Tools between Thursday at 5pm and Sunday at 9pm to post a response to the questions and/or engage in dialogue with your classmates. I will also sign-on to see who is participating and will post responses as well.

Those individuals who post questions will be expected to assess the discussions before class and come prepared to share general observations and trends in the responses. These comments will help lead off our discussion about the readings and general class topics for the week.

The grade will reflect your participation in the on-line posts and questions, your class presence, and your willingness to participate in classroom activities.
Assignment #2: Theoretical Perspectives Paper (5-7 pages) (Due: 11/8) (20%)

This paper will require you to compare and contrast theoretical perspectives as they relate to a social work issue.

The goal is that this paper can be a compliment to the policy paper being written in SW 530. This assignment has 5 parts:

1) Choose an issue that compliments your social work policy paper and provide a brief context for the issue. Your topic should focus on some aspect of the relationship between society and social welfare. Please provide 1-2 paragraph context for your issue.

2) Choose two different theoretical perspectives which you will use to analyze the issue you choose. These perspectives should draw largely from Mullally, but you can use other theoretical perspectives (postmodern, feminist) we have touched on as well.

3) Develop a framework for comparing and contrasting theories. What are the relevant categories for comparison? Please choose 3-5 criteria for your analysis and justify your rationale for using them. I expect that you will integrate the readings thus far, in helping you develop these criteria. The framework should be clear and should be applicable to any perspective (i.e. do not create a framework that is specifically adapted to the analysis of the perspectives you select).

4) Compare and contrast the two theoretical explanations for the issue you choose based on the framework you developed. This section represents the core of your paper. How do these two perspectives help illuminate your issue?

5) In the conclusion, please (briefly) critique your method of analysis (framework) by focusing on its implications for social work practice and/or social work policies related to your issue.

The total assignment should be 5-8 pages, 12 point standard font, double-spaced, using 1 inch margins. References should be listed in a “Sources Cited” at the end of the paper. Please use standard bibliographic format. Use in-text referencing to cite quotes and ideas, when appropriate.

Assignment #3: Theory Presentation (Begin 11/1) (25%)

Each student will be asked to work in a group to research, prepare, and present a macro social theory to the class. You will have the opportunity to rank your choices of theories from a list. Groups will be formed based on choices. I will give ample time for group formation, and give at least one session of in-class time for your group to work on the presentation.

Each presentation should be no more than ½ hour in length and will cover the major ideas of the theory, its context and history, its relationship to social work values and ethics, its application for macro social work processes, its usefulness to the social work
issues your group cares about, and references for others who are interested in additional
information. Each group will be asked to present a handout covering the bullet points of
each of these ideas for the class. The presentations should be informative but also
creative. This is your opportunity to “teach” the class. Have fun with it!

Upon completion of the presentation, I will ask each group member to write a two-page
reflection paper covering the following questions: what did you learn? How well do you
think it went? How did you work as a group? What issues/challenges did you face?
How did you overcome them? What lessons did you learn as a result of this activity? I
will also ask each member to grade themselves and others on their effort and
contribution to the project.

Grades will be determined based on: 1) an overall class assessment of your presentation,
2) the content and quality of your presentation, 3) ability to cover the topics required of
the presentation, 4) your reflection paper, and 5) self-assessment of your work (and
your group’s self assessment of your work).

Assignment #4: Integration and Compendium of Social Theories for Social
Work (10-12 pages) (Due 12/15) (30%)

This final assignment will enable you to pull together your learning across the entire
semester in a way that will be helpful to you for other classes. It will have components:

1) Choose a social work issue/area that you care about and that you hope to learn
more about over the course of your MSW.
2) Identify levels of “macro” applications for your topic (societal, community,
organizational, inter-organizational levels) and provide a brief description of
information about each.
3) Using the various theories and perspectives we have learned through out the
semester, identify various 2-3 theories for each macro level which would be
useful to illustrate key issues and highlight practice and policy interventions. I
expect that you will describe each theory in depth (1/2 page-1 page per theory)
and how it is helpful for social work. Included across your analysis should be a
discussion about how these theories address issues of power, oppression,
diversity, and privilege (i.e. what factors of social justice or injustice do these
illuminate?; how would these impact the issue you care about?)
4) Discuss how these theories help identify aspects of competent multicultural
communities and organizations, and how this would further policies or practices
related to the issue you choose.
5) Finally, in your own analysis, I want you to integrate your learning from across
the course and across the theories to address how you could use this knowledge
for creating macro level change (either in practice or policy) for the issue you care
about.
Grading

Students’ final grades will be based on the following grading scale based on the assignments described below.

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General Criteria for Evaluating Assignments

General evaluation criteria for assignments #2 and #4:

- Demonstrate understanding of and ability/apply 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; degree of integration across topics and levels
- Clarity of presentation;
- Originality & creativity;
- Attention to multicultural and social justice issues across different populations and situations.

Citing Readings and Using Terminology

I expect that you will use the reading and actual course terminology in your assignments. This is important for your own professional development and for internalizing the ideas, authors, and terms that are important to this course. Because this is a foundation course, these are ideas that you will use throughout the rest of your MSW. Being comfortable with the ideas now will only help you down the road.

Please use the following formats for citations:

- When quoting from a reading : (Mullaly, 2001, p. 45)
- When paraphrasing from a reading: (Mullaly, 2001)
- When citing from in class (Richards-Schuster, in class)
- When citing from a handout (Authors/Title of Handout, handout)

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.
Plagiarism

Plagiarism is whenever you take someone else’s ideas as your own. This is not an acceptable practice in this course, this school or at the University of Michigan. You are expected to cite the sources of all ideas, whether from the readings or from your classmates, in your assignments. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please feel free to talk to me if you have any questions.

Format

All papers should follow the page limits assigned. You should use a double space, 12 point standard font in writing. The goal of the papers is to produce quality analysis not quantity of analysis. I will not accept papers or assignments electronically unless under an emergency situation and will prior approval.

Due Dates

I ask that assignments be turned in on the day and by the time they are due. This is mainly to be fair to your classmates. I do understand that extenuating circumstances may arise. If this becomes an issue for you, please come talk to me as soon as possible. Assignments that are turned in late without prior approval will be penalized.

Writing Help

The University and the School of Social Work offer resources and writing assistance to students. I strongly encourage that you seek out these resources, if needed. For further information and an appointment, contact:

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

The Office of Student Services in the School of Social Work offers writing assistance to international students.

Contacting Me

I will hold office hours on Wednesday 9-11 am. I am also available to meet students at other times, as needed. Office hours will be held in my office: SSW # 3764.
The best way to contact me is by email: kers@umich.edu. I will respond to your email within 48 hours of your posting. I will do my best to respond before then, but can not guarantee so. If your email is a true emergency, please note that in the subject line and I will try to respond as soon as I can.

You can also reach me during office hours at the office phone # 763-8058. Just a note: this is an adjunct faculty office shared by multiple people. If you leave a phone message please be aware that others may hear your message before I am able to retrieve it.
Course Schedule: Topics and Readings

Note: All items (except books) are located in electronic course reserve (Note: please don’t use instructor’s name to locate readings, search for sw 502 and then search by title/author). These readings can also be accessed through our Course Tools webpage. All “*” readings are chapters from required books. These books are also on reserve in the library. I will also create a hard copy of all the journal and chapters (outside of the required books), which will be placed in the library before the second week of class.

9/13 Week #1: Welcome and Introduction

No Reading

PART 1: Paradigms & General Theories about Organizational, Community & Societal Structures

This section will critically examine various paradigms, theories and frameworks for macro social work.

9/20 Week # 2: Understanding the Concept of Theory & the Importance of Macro Social Work


9/27 Week # 3: Theories & Frameworks about Organizations


10/4 Week # 4: Theories & Frameworks about Communities


10/11 Week # 5: Theories & Frameworks about Society (Social Paradigms):


10/18 Week # 6: FALL BREAK

NO CLASS

10/25 Week # 7: Theories & Frameworks about Privilege, Oppression & Power Diversity (PODS)


PART II: Macro Structures & Processes: Societal, Community & Organizational

This section examines macro structures and forces how they impact well-being (both positively and negatively) within society, communities, organizations and inter-organizational processes.

11/1 Week # 8: Societal Structures: Cultural Mechanisms & Oppression in Society


11/8 Week # 9: Societal Structures: Economics & the Market


11/15 Week # 10: Societal Structures: Economics, Public Policy & the State


**11/22 Week #11: Communities: Risk, Resilience, & Participation**


**11/29 Week # 12: Organizations: Privatization, Globalization & Innovation**


12/6 Week # 13: Organizations & Communities in Context: Interorganizational Relations & Community Coalitions


**PART III: Macro Social Change & Social Work Practice**

This last section focuses on creating conceptual models of change. How do systems change? What are perspectives for influencing systems and structures?


