Social Work 502 – Syllabus—Fall 2006
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 process 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.

This 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 have an 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.

**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 the inclusion of knowledge gained via research 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 examined as part of our discussions 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.

Readings:

All readings listed on this syllabus are required readings. You should do the readings BEFORE the class for which they are assigned. In some cases, the same reading is listed for multiple
weeks. This means that we will be talking about material in the same chapter over the course of several weeks. Not all readings will necessarily be explicitly discussed in class. Some readings will simply serve as background for our discussions.

**Required Textbook:**


The textbook is available at Ulrich’s Bookstore across the street from the School of Social Work and at the Michigan Union Bookstore.

**The textbook is also available on reserve at the library.**

Articles are also assigned for this course. All articles will be made available electronically through coursetools and may be printed out at your discretion.

If you have trouble understanding the readings or concepts for this course, some students have found the following textbook to be helpful:


The instructor reserves the right to assign additional readings on an ad hoc basis and will give students at least a week’s notice of any additional reading assignments.

**More About The Course, My Philosophy Of Teaching, And Assignments And Grading:**

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, 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 have an impact on individuals, families, and groups. Another major goal of the course is to understand what it means to think theoretically about the political, social and economic structure of the U.S.

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.
Assignments:

1) **Help me to get to know you:** I would like to know a little bit about each of you and what you bring to this class. By the end of the second week of class, please fill out the “Get To Know You Assignment” available through the CTools site for the course.

2) **Response Papers** – During weeks 2 through 14 of the semester, you are expected to hand in 6 short response papers. Response papers should be posted to the CTools web site for the course. These papers should be roughly the equivalent of a paper that is between 1½ and 2 double spaced pages in length. You will probably want to compose your response papers in a word processing program before posting them to the web. The papers should contain your reaction to, and critical comment on, the readings for a particular week. You may also react to the postings that others have made, by agreeing and adding additional insights or information, by disagreeing, or by asking for more evidence for an assertion that one of your colleagues has made. Response papers that are turned in on readings that have already been discussed may be graded down for lateness. In your paper, you should cite the specific reading that you are responding to. You may write about things in the readings that you agree with or that you disagree with; or you may talk about how something that you are reading in the assignments relates to current events or to something that is going on in your own experience. The intention of these papers is to get you thinking about the readings, so simply summarizing the readings will not receive a very high grade. 3 of your response papers must be submitted by the eighth week of the semester.

3) **Group Presentation** – In this assignment, you will work in a group to understand and apply a particular macro level theory and will be responsible for teaching the rest of the class what you have learned. This will be an opportunity for you to direct our attention to areas and concerns that you find particularly important. Your peers will be grading you on the quality of your presentation and this grade will be factored into the final grade for this assignment. Your group presentation will be limited to 30 minutes in length, although if you have an innovative idea that you think will take longer, let me know, and we will work something out. Innovative ideas for presentations are welcomed. Unless you and I agree to another arrangement beforehand, going over 30 minutes will result in a reduction in your grade by approximately a letter grade for every 5 minutes you run over. More explicit details on this group presentation are forthcoming.

4) **Compendium of Theories**—Students will write a 10-15 page document summarizing the content of 3 to 5 theories in a way that will be useful for future program proposals, grant proposals, advocacy documents, and program evaluations. More details on this assignment are forthcoming.
Final grades will be based on the following scale:

“Get to Know You” Assignment   5%
Response Papers               20%
Group Presentation            25%
Compendium of Theories        25%
Class Participation and Attendance 25%

General Evaluation Criteria:

• Active Participation in class
• Degree to which you demonstrate understanding and ability to use macro knowledge and theory
• Systematic and logical presentation of arguments
• Appropriate use of evidence with citations
• Use of relevant literature and concepts
• Clarity of presentation
• Originality and creativity
• Attention to multicultural and social justice issues across different population and situations

Use Of E-Mail And University Of Michigan CTools

In the teaching of this class, I expect to make frequent use of e-mail as well as “CTools” provided by the University of Michigan. It is an expectation of this course that you will log on to your e-mail account and the CTools web site at least a few times each week. I will use e-mail to inform you of any changes to the course tools web site for the course.

Plagiarism

I use the definition—common in academic work—that plagiarism consists of using more than 6 consecutive words of another’s work without attribution. Plagiarism is unfortunately an increasingly common problem in the university. Plagiarism will be dealt with severely. Please familiarize yourself with the information on plagiarism in the School’s Student Guide.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>September 11, 2006</th>
<th>Introduction to the class and getting to know one another</th>
<th>Mullaly Chapter 1</th>
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</table>
|        | September 18, 2006 | What does theory look like? What does it mean to speak theoretically? How can counterfactual or causal theory help us to talk about connections between social phenomena?  
Training in use of CTools discussions by CTools staff |
| Week 3 | September 25, 2006 | If our theories are supposed to be tied to ethical ideals, what does it mean to talk about social ethics? | Mullaly Chapter 2 |
The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas, by Ursula K. LeGuin |
|        |                   |                                                                 | We will not have time to discuss these in class, but you may wish read and consider the application of ethical ideas to:  
NASW Code of Ethics (available on line at http://www.naswdc.org/code.htm)  
International Federation of Social Workers on “The Ethics of Social Work” (http://www.ifsw.org/Publications/4.4.pub.html) and “Definition of Social Work” (http://www.ifsw.org/Publications/4.6e.pub.html) |
<p>| Week 4 | October 2, 2006 | How are economic theories tied to social theories? | Guest Lecture: Jose Tapia on <em>Social Paradigms and Economic Theories</em> |
|        |                   |                                                                 | Mullaly Chapter 3-6 |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<th>The Theoretical Question</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>October 9, 2006</td>
<td>Theories of poverty: Why is there poverty?</td>
<td>&quot;The Class Analysis of Poverty&quot; (Chapter 2 from Interrogating Inequality by Erik Wright) (this is the major piece of reading for this lecture)</td>
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<td>Mullaly Chapter 3-6 (we will continue to apply Mullaly's organizing paradigm to our studies)</td>
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<td>Lewis, O. The Culture of Poverty (read this as an example of one of the theories discussed in &quot;The Class Analysis of Poverty&quot;)</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>October 16, 2006</td>
<td>Fall Break, October 16th-17th, no classes</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>October 23, 2006</td>
<td>Theories of the social welfare state: Why is there a social welfare system?</td>
<td>Mullaly Chapter 3-6</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>October 30, 2006</td>
<td>How do work and the workplace affect people's lives?</td>
<td>Guest Lecture: Larry Root on &quot;Social Work and Work&quot;</td>
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<td>Review American Profile Poster hanging on instructor's door (Can you &quot;find yourself&quot; on this poster? Why or why not? Does the poster tell you anything about how economic privilege is distributed in society based on different aspects of your identity?)</td>
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<td>Everyone must turn in one of their response papers this week. Your response paper should comment on your reactions to the American Profile Poster</td>
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**Readings and Assignments**  Page 2 of 4
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| Week 10 | November 13, 2006 | Oppression: How are certain groups discriminated against by the social structure? (Race and Ethnicity) | Mullaly Chapter 7-8  
| Week 11 | November 20, 2006 | **Library research day and office hours**                                                                                                    |                                                                          |
2 Group Presentations on Theories |
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2 Group Presentations on Theories

*Everyone must turn in one of their response papers this week. Your response paper should comment on the strengths of a community with which you are associated.*