

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Course Number:** SW 381S

**Instructor's Name:** Miguel Ferguson

**Unique Number:** 62815

**Office Number:** SSW 3.122b

**Semester:** Fall 2011

**Email:** [miguelf@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:miguelf@mail.utexas.edu)

**Meeting Time/Place:** Friday 8:30-11:20 AM  
SSW 2.122

**Office Hours:** Fridays 11:30-1:00 and by  
appointment

**FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE:  
VALUES, DIVERSITY, POWER & OPPRESSION**

**I Standardized course description**

This course is based on the following assumptions: 1) membership in a population-at-risk group (e.g., people of color, women, gay and lesbian persons) significantly influences an individual's life experiences, world view, and increases risk factors for exposure to discrimination, economic deprivation, and oppression; 2) professional social work ethics and values demand culturally competent practice and policy advocacy; 3) it is necessary for students to learn to apply social justice approaches to influence assessment, planning, access to resources, intervention, and research; and 4) professionals and programs have strategies to critically analyze distributive justice, human and civil rights, and global interconnections of oppression. There is an emphasis in this course on the impact of discrimination and oppression by individuals and society on people of culturally diverse backgrounds and orientations.

**II. Standardized Course Objectives**

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

1. Critique and apply culturally competent and social justice approaches to influence assessment, planning, access of resources, intervention, and research (**PB 18, 19, and 20**);
2. Demonstrate familiarity with the history and heritage of population-at-risk groups, including women and culturally diverse populations, globally as well as those prevalent in the southwestern region of the United States (**PB 14, 16 and 17**);
3. Understand the social construction of race and ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation (**PB 14**);
4. Examine the personal and professional use of self in ethical, culturally competent, and socially just social work practices (**PB15**) and,
5. Assess the impact of discrimination (e.g. racism, sexism, homophobia), and oppression on public policy, institutional structure, service delivery, and one's own role in promoting social and economic justice (**PB 18, 19, and 20**).

The School of Social Work has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952. In order to maintain our accreditation status, we engage in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE's Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Several required courses in our curriculum are part of this ongoing assessment, including this course. Below is a list of the specific Educational Policies (EP) and Practice Behaviors (PB) that are assessed in this course. The complete EPAS can be optioned from your Student Handbook.

EP2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice.

<PB14> Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power (Objectives 2 and 3)

Assignment: **Class Participation, Quizzes, Book Review**

<PB15> Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups (Objective 4)

Assignment: **Class Participation, Extra Credit**

<PB16> Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences (Objective 2)

Assignment: **Class Participation, Book Review**

<PB17> View selves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants (Objective 2)

Assignment: **Class Participation, Extra Credit**

EP2.1.5 Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

<PB18> Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination (Objectives 1 & 5)

Assignment: **Quizzes, Book Review, Extra Credit, Human Rights Analysis/Wrongful Convictions Paper, Human Rights/Social Justice briefing, Future Paper**

<PB19> Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice (Objectives 1 & 5)

Assignment: **Human Rights Analysis/ Wrongful Convictions Paper, Human Rights/Social Justice briefing, Future Paper**

<PB20> Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice (Objectives 1 & 5)

Assignment: **Human Rights/Social Justice briefing, Future Paper**

### III. Teaching Methods

The method of the course is founded upon student participation. As professional advocates, it is essential for credentialed social workers to be able to articulate ideas clearly and persuasively. All students are encouraged to participate through discussion in class, via email, or with the instructor during office hours. The format will include lectures, films, guest presentations, weekly readings, framed discussion or class debate, and group exercises.

### IV. REQUIRED READINGS

Hoefler, Richard (2012), Advocacy Practice for Social Justice, Lyceum Press.

Singer, Peter (2008) The Life You Can Save, New York: Random House.

\*Orleck, Annelise (2006), Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty, Beacon Press.

\*Sachs, Jeffrey (2011) The Price of Civilization: Reawakening American Virtue and Prosperity, Random House.

\* students need only choose one of these books to review

An additional set of required readings per week, drawn from an extensive assortment of articles, book chapters, essays, and electronic media sources, will be made available on Blackboard. In addition, an ensemble of films will need to be viewed outside of class throughout the semester. The films will be on reserve in the LRC.

### V. Course Requirements

There is no in-class midterm or final exam. Students will be graded on a series of proportionally weighted requirements, including:

A)	Class Participation	(10%)
B)	Quizzes	(30%)
C)	Book Review	(20%)
D)	Human Rights/ Wrongful Convictions Paper	(20%)
E)	NFP Pitch/Future Paper	(20%)

#### ■ Class Participation

Students will be graded on the quality of their contribution to the collective learning of the class. Since attendance is a key condition of participation, more than two absences will result in a letter at least one grade below an "A." Each subsequent absence will

reduce the overall participation by one letter grade. Students are expected to participate via class discussion, small group activities, and office visits with the instructor. Students may also participate by sharing electronic information and by engaging in activities outside of class that are related to the content covered in the course. On the final day of class students will submit a one page summary of their participation in the course. **[PB 14, 15, 16& 17]**

### ■ Quizzes

Students will be given three random quizzes throughout the semester. The quizzes may cover the books by Hoefler and Singer (titles given above) and films and readings assigned for that week, as well as lecture material from the previous week. Each quiz is worth 10% of the final grade. **[PB 14, 18]**

### ■ Book Review

Words Beyond Walls: In an effort to enhance the overall learning experience, students will interact with members of the “Concerned Lifers” book club, a group comprised of inmates from several prisons throughout the state of Washington. Members of the CL book club have completed critical reviews of The Price of Civilization and Storming Caesar’s Palace. Students must respond to one of these books and the corresponding CL review in a 6-8 page critical narrative (1.5 spaced, 12-point font). CL members have been given leeway to include personal reflections and comments about prison life in the course of their review, so students will need to be flexible and analyze the CL book review on its own merits. Student reviews should analyze the strengths and limits of the inmate’s book review, and advance your own ideas about the book’s major arguments. Overall, your critique should demonstrate your mastery of the book’s content and the CL review and your ability to provide constructive feedback.

Because this is a short paper, you will need to be concise, making your points clearly and succinctly. Please note that your critical point of view is more important than merely summarizing the main themes of the book or the CL review. A selection of student reviews will be sent to the CL members for comment and review. **[PB 14, 16 & 18]**

**Assignment due date: Friday, October 19**

### \* Extra Credit

In conjunction with the social justice and Words Beyond Walls components of the course, and to help students better understand a common prison experience that many feel to be a violation of human rights standards, students may elect to experience a 24-hour period of isolation akin to what takes place in Administrative Segregation (Ad Seg) or the Intensive Management Units (IMUs) of state prisons. The 24-hour experience may take place in a large bathroom, dorm room or small bedroom. Students may bring two pieces of reading material, but no electronic devices (e.g. television, cell/- phone, laptop, I-pod, etc.) are allowed. To receive credit for the experience, after the period of isolation students must submit a 2-3 page paper that adequately describes the experience and relate

it to themes covered in the course. Students who complete the assignment will have two points added to their final grade. [PB 15, 17 & 18]

### ■ Human Rights Analysis/Wrongful Convictions Paper

You are a student intern and have been asked to draft a position paper for NASW that analyzes significant human rights implications arising from the last session of the Texas legislature. NASW intends to use the paper to draft position statements which will be shared with social work students and professionals across the state. The position paper will analyze the legal, social, and economic implications of actions taken by the Texas “lege” through the lens of individual articles taken from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The paper should:

- 1) choose five separate articles from the UN Declaration of Human Rights;
- 2) describe and analyze legislative acts that represent clear and significant violations of each article chosen (to include particular population-at-risk groups that will be significantly affected). The dimensions, scope, and implications of the violation should be well conceptualized and researched, clearly organized, and supported by relevant data and verifiable detail;
- 3) clearly articulate the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination that may be at work; and
- 4) Cogently describe the steps that need to be taken to address the legal, social, or economic shortcomings that you have described and how particular population-at-risk groups would benefit.

The paper should be 5 pages (not including reference page), *single spaced*, 12-point font. Since this is a short paper, the writing will need to be crisp, detailed, and persuasive. Data sources should be current and multiple references should be used to document #2 above. [PB 18, 19]

### Wrongful Convictions Paper

A good argument can be made that one of the most severe forms of injustice takes place when the state uses its power to convict and imprison the innocent. You are an intern at a non-profit whose mission is to reduce wrongful convictions and work with the families of exonerated prisoners to promote a better transition to “free” society. The executive director of the agency has asked you to complete a report that includes the following:

- 1) Using information obtained from the Texas Tribune (<http://www.texastribune.org/library/data/texas-wrongful-conviction-explorer/>), provide a demographic breakdown of the 86 exonerees listed on the website. Include age (range and avg.), gender, alleged crime, county of residence, ethnicity, time served, and other information you feel is pertinent.
- 2) Identify and describe relevant trends evident from the analysis above.

- 3) Reference current articles/book chapters/essays that discuss the difficulties and needs of prisoners successfully returning to civil society after a wrongful conviction and summarize the main points of each. [hint: the recent book *Convicting the Innocent* may be a helpful source]
- 4) Based on your research, describe 2-3 services that you think the agency should provide to exonerees and their families. Make sure to defend why you think these are the most important services.

The paper should be 5 pages (not including reference page), *single spaced*, 12-point font. Since this is a short paper, the writing will need to be crisp, detailed, and persuasive. **[PB 18, 19]**

**Assignment due date: Friday, November 16**

■ **Future Paper - Human Rights/Social Justice Pitch**

Future Paper: Like a modern day Rip Van Winkle, you awaken one day to find yourself inexplicably living fifty years in the future. Given your intense interest in social justice issues, you soon discover that the landscape of 2062 is much different from what you remember. You are amazed to discover that all U.S. citizens enjoy many if not all of the rights you had discussed in your social justice course as part of the UN Declaration of Human Rights (right before your inexplicable time travel!). Your task in this paper is to describe how these changes came to pass, and the social movements, prominent thinking, seminal events, and important figures that played an integral role. Finally, describe the ways in which society has changed because of the transformation that has taken place. Students should work in groups of two. The paper should be 8-10 pages in length, 12 point font, 1.5 spaced. **[PB 18, 19 & 20]**

or

Human Rights/Social Justice Pitch: In groups of two, students will present a compelling 15-20 minute pitch to a group of community philanthropists who want to establish a non-profit organization that advances the cause of human rights and social justice in Texas (and beyond). Your task will be to persuasively describe an interconnected set of 2-3 human rights or social justice subjects that will provide a foundation for the new organization's mission. Why do you think these topics are of paramount importance? What populations will be the subject of the organization's focus? What laws, conditions or trends will need to be accounted for? What actions will need to be taken, and how will these actions advance human rights and social justice? Finally, the philanthropists want to name the foundation after a well-known social justice activist. You will need to provide a suggested name for the foundation and solid information about how the historical figure you chose relates to the mission and core values of the new organization. More information about this assignment will be given later in the semester. **[PB 18, 19 & 20]**

**Assignment due date: Friday, December 7**

**Grading Scale**

100 - 94 = A            93 - 90 = A-            89 - 87 = B+  
86 - 84 = B            83 - 80 = B-            79 - 77 = C+  
76 - 74 = C            73 - 70 = C- (Class failed/no credit: 73 and below)

**A = *Significantly exceeds assignment/performance expectations*** (evidence of critical thinking, quality and quantity of research, and analysis that resulted in work additional to that set forth in the assignment directions);

**B = Assignment/overall performance in course meets all the requirements with evidence of critical thinking, evidence of research effort, and analysis (i.e. coherence and integration of ideas);**

**C = Average.** Assignment/performance meets all the requirements but lacks evidence of in depth thinking and analysis and lacks evidence of research from professional journals or recent or influential books

**VI. Course Schedule**

<b>Topic of Study and Assignment Due Dates</b>	
Aug 31	Overview of the Course Rules for Conscious Living
Sep 7	Conceptions of Social Justice & Human Rights Contemporary political thought
Sept 14	Early social justice movements: Abolition and suffrage  LRC film: <i>Not for Ourselves Alone</i>
Sept 21	The Progressive era Protest and reform in the Great Depression  LRC Film: <i>Scottsboro: An American Tragedy</i>

Sept 28	Great Depression, cont'd  In class film: <i>Desperate Measures</i>
Oct 5	Civil Rights, the Great Society & The War on Poverty  LRC film: <i>A Class Apart</i>
Oct 12	Poverty & Inequality as fundamental issues of social justice
Oct 19	Looking back: The African-American experience over the last century The catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina  LRC film: <i>When I Rise</i>  * Review of <u>Storming Caesar's Palace</u> / <u>Price of Civilization</u> due*
Oct 26	ADA and justice for people with disabilities
Nov 2	Social justice, poverty, and the Hispanic family  In-class film: <i>La Ciudad</i>
Nov 9	Feminism and the Women's Movement  LRC film: <i>Gloria: In Her Own Words</i>
Nov 16	Gay marriage and the question of GLBT rights  *Human Rights Analysis Paper due*
Nov 23	International and comparative perspectives on social justice Social Justice implications of the Great Recession  LRC film: <i>Inside Job</i>  Book: <u>The Life You Can Save</u>
Nov 30	Thanksgiving holiday – no class
Dec 7	Final paper and Presentations due  Course evaluations



## The University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

### Professional Conduct in Class

Students should act appropriately in class. This means students should arrive on time, be prepared to participate in class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, students are expected to engage one another with respect and professionalism.

### **Documented Disability Statement**

Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

### **Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty**

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/academicintegrity.html>).

### **Religious Holidays**

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students**

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their

e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

### **Safety**

As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

### **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

### **Emergency Evacuation Policy**

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you’re given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

## **List of Resources Related to Social Justice and Human Rights**

### **International**

UN Declaration of Human Rights (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>)

**International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**  
(<http://www.un-documents.net/icescr.htm>)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
(<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/cdw.html>)

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  
(<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>)

World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/en/>)

UNICEF (<http://www.unicef.org/>)

UN Millennium Project (<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/>)

Oxfam International (<http://www.oxfam.org/>)

Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org/>)

Amnesty International (<http://www.amnesty.org/>)

**Domestic**

United Students Against Sweatshops (<http://usas.org/>)

UNITE HERE! (<http://www.unitehere.org/>)

Plowshares (<http://www.craftech.com/~dcpledge/brandywine/plow/>)

Southern Poverty Law Center (<http://www.splcenter.org/>)

Freedom House (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>)

Physicians for Human Rights (<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/>)

National Civil Rights Museum (<http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/home.htm>)

Ford Foundation (<http://www.fordfoundation.org/>)

**University of Texas**

Human Rights Documentation Initiative (<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/hrdi/>)

Texas After Violence Project (<http://www.texasafterviolence.org>)

HRDI ([http://www.lib.utexas.edu/hrdi/ut\\_collections.php](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/hrdi/ut_collections.php))