

The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Social Work

**Course Number:** SW 381S

**Instructor's Name:** Miguel Ferguson

**Unique Number:** 60535

**Office Number:** SSW 3.122b

**Semester:** Fall 2015

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

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

SSW 2.118

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, human rights, 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, Human Rights Paper**

<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, Extra Credit**

<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, Human Rights Paper, Human Rights/Social Justice briefing, Alternative Policy Paper**

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

Assignment: **Human Rights Paper, Human Rights/Social Justice briefing, Alternative Policy Paper**

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

Assignment: **Human Rights/Social Justice briefing, Alternative Policy 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.

#### 1. Required readings

Gottesdiener, Laura (2014). A Dream Foreclosed: Black America and the Fight For a Place to Call Home. Zucotti Park Press. (\$13.15 paperback)

Singer, Peter (2010) The Life You Can Save. New York: Random House. (\$11.43 paperback)

\*Stevenson, Bryan (2014). Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption. Spiegel & Grau. (\$14.40 paperback)

\*Herbert, Bob (2014). Losing Our Way: An Intimate Portrait of a Troubled America. Anchor Books. (\$10.95 paperback)

\* Freeland, Chrystia (2013), Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else. Penguin Books. (\$11.33 paperback)

\* 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, some films will need to be viewed outside of class throughout the semester. The films will be available on Netflix, Amazon streaming video or 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 (20%)
- E) NFP Pitch/Alternative Spending 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 descriptive summary of their participation in the course along with a suggested numeric grade. [PB 14, 15, 16& 17]

### ■ Quizzes

Students will be given three random quizzes throughout the semester. The quizzes may cover the books by Singer and Gottesdiener and films and readings assigned for the particular week in which a quiz is given, 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 long-term inmates from several prisons throughout the state of Washington. Members of the CL book club will complete critical reviews of Just Mercy, Losing Our Way, and Plutocrats. 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 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 2**

### **■ Human Rights Analysis 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 three separate articles from the UN Declaration of Human Rights;
- 2) describe and analyze legislative acts that represent clear and significant support for or 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]**

## **Assignment due date: Friday, November 20**

### **■ Alternative Spending Paper - Human Rights/Social Justice Pitch**

It is estimated that the Iraq/Afghanistan Wars will cost the U.S. treasury approximately \$4 trillion. Students should imagine that this amount of money is now available for social welfare spending. Submit a spending proposal for 2-3 social policies or programs that are cumulatively funded at this level. For each policy/program, students must choose a primary population that will benefit from the policy/program and describe the following: size and scope of the policy/program, an explicit duration of time for the proposal to be funded, rationale behind choice of population and policy/program, general details of the policy/program, the human rights implications of the proposals and estimated impact on the target population and society as a whole. Finally, the proposal should conclude with a paragraph that describes the primary points of learning accrued in this exercise. More

detail on this assignment will be made available on Canvas. 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 4**

**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

**\* Extra Credit**

For two points of extra credit students may attend a significant event related to social justice and provide a one page description of the event and what was learned. Students must submit the extra credit by the last day of class (Dec 4).

## VI. Course Schedule

Topic of Study and Assignment Due Dates	
Aug 28	Overview of the Course Current Social Justice Topics Rules for Conscious Living
Sept 4	Conceptions of Social Justice & Human Rights What are “basic needs?” Contemporary social justice topics
Sept 11	The Progressive era Protest and reform in the Great Depression
Sept 18	Civil Rights, the Great Society & The War on Poverty  Film: <i>A Class Apart</i>
Sept 25	Poverty in America Global Poverty *Reading: <i>The Life You Can Save</i>
Oct 2	Economic Inequality SNAP and food security  *Book reviews due*
Oct 9	Black Lives Matter
Oct 16	Black Lives Matter, cont’d  *Reading: A Dream Foreclosed
Oct 23	Social justice, poverty, and the Hispanic family Demographic trends in Texas (aka la Reconquista...!)  Film: <i>La Mission</i>

Oct 30	Mass incarceration Criminal Justice in Texas <i>Grits for Breakfast, anyone?</i>
Nov 6	ADA and justice for people with disabilities Aging in America The Importance of Social Security
Nov 13	And Ain't I a Woman?  Women, economic hardship, and the assault on the American family  *Human Rights Analysis Paper due*
Nov 20	Sexual Orientation, Heterosexism, Homophobia & Transgender Oppression
Nov 29	Thanksgiving holiday – no class
Dec 4	Final Paper and Presentations due  Course evaluations

**UT-SSW**

**Fall 2015**

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**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 AND CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM.** The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement



and mutual respect. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

**UNANTICIPATED DISTRESS.** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at [www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/](http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/).

**POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION.** Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image.

Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including *any* information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in *any* way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

**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/>).

**USE OF COURSE MATERIALS.** The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

**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). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. 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/>.

**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, examination, work assignment, or 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.

**TITLE IX REPORTING.** In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct based on gender. Students who report incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, or sexual misconduct to faculty, instructors, and/or staff who supervise students, will be provided a list of University resources. If the incident is impacting the academic environment, a report will be provided to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may be found at <https://www.utexas.edu/student-affairs/policies/title-ix>.

**CLASSROOM CONFIDENTIALITY.** Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

**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 for keeping the university informed about a change of 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 between 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 in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering 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 are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

### **GRADING SCALE**

94.0 and Above	A	74.0 to 76.999	C
90.0 to 93.999	A-	70.0 to 73.999	C-
87.0 to 89.999	B+	67.0 to 69.999	D+
84.0 to 86.999	B	64.0 to 66.999	D
80.0 to 83.999	B-	60.0 to 63.999	D-
77.0 to 79.999	C+	Below 60.0	F

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

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://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>)

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.civilrights museum.org/>)

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))