

**Diversity, Social Justice, and  
Culturally Competent Social Work Practice**

**Social Work 630**

3 Units

*"We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same."*

*~Anne Frank*

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**STANDARD SYLLABUS<sup>1</sup>**

**I. COURSE PREREQUISITES**

SOWK 546; SOWK 506; SOWK 536; SOWK 544

**II. CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION**

This course builds on the generalist practice curriculum and serves as an introduction to diversity and social justice in the context of specialized social work practice. The course aims to enhance cultural competence by raising students' awareness of their own values, assumptions, and biases, as well as their relationships and styles of interaction and communication with people from cultures different than their own. Competence is considered in dimensions of values, knowledge, skills, and cognitive and affective processes.

**III. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course, like the profession of social work, celebrates the diversity that characterizes and shapes the human experience and the formation of both individual and group identity. The course approaches diversity from the perspective of intersectionality, a perspective in which the dimensions of diversity are understood as the simultaneous interplay of multiple factors including but not limited to socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, nationality, color, sex, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, disability and ability, relationship status, political ideology, religion/spirituality, and tribal sovereign status. Regardless of cultural background and life experiences, every person has fundamental human rights. These rights include freedom, safety, honor and recognition of worth, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that your instructor may provide you with an addendum to this standard syllabus. If so, please refer only to the syllabus addendum.

Even though this course celebrates diversity, we recognize that diversity also has the potential to negatively impact identity, development, and life experiences, including perceptions of the world and oneself, and interactions and relationships with others. Sadly, in the United States and around the globe, some groups of people have long been overtly and covertly consigned to society's margins due to their cultural backgrounds, characteristics or life experiences. More than ever, social workers are needed to provide leadership dispelling harmful biases and stereotypes, exposing and rectifying unfair practices and policies, eliminating unjust disproportionalities and disparities, and eradicating systemic oppression and social injustice. To prepare you to do this work as a professional social worker, this course aims to enhance your intercultural competence, particularly your ability (1) to engage in diversity and difference in practice, and (2) to advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice. It is important to note that although we will address a range of aspects of diversity, culture and identity, the course does not attempt to provide a detailed or exhaustive examination of all cultural groups that exist or of all oppressions and social injustices experienced by various cultural groups. Instead, we provide you with frameworks and strategies that can be applied to varied populations, issues, and contexts and we **highlight** cultural groups and issues that are particularly salient or relevant to social work practice today. Further, because this is a specialized practice course, it is designed to provide you with opportunities to tailor your learning about diversity and social justice in a way that reflects the cultural groups and issues relevant to the area of specialized practice you have chosen to pursue as a professional social worker.

#### IV. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Objective #	Objectives
1	Appreciate how diversity and difference shape individual and group development, behavior, and life experiences.
2	Use mindful reflection to assess, understand and enhance one's own intercultural competence, consistent with an area of specialization.
3	Understand key concepts related to diversity, inclusion, and social justice, as well as those related to power, privilege, oppression, and injustice.
4	Apply an intercultural competence lens to identify and understand major forms and consequences of systemic oppression and social injustice.
5	Apply an intercultural competence lens to formulate social work practice strategies and to combat systemic oppression and social injustice as a professional social worker.

#### V. COURSE FORMAT / INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

The format of the course will consist of mindful reflections and self-assessments, individual and team-based experiential exercises and activities, trainings, instructor and student led discussions, and lectures. Case vignettes, videos, and role plays will also be used to facilitate student learning. Students are expected to come to class ready to discuss required readings and to apply concepts covered in readings.

#### Instructor's Oath

*"As your instructor, to each of you, I pledge the following:*

- *To appreciate you, your time and your effort;*
- *To be available and responsible;*
- *To be encouraging and supportive;*
- *To be objective and fair;*
- *To be prompt and timely;*
- *To be respectful, professional and appropriate;*
- *To accommodate when appropriate and within reason;*
- *To try to be an engaging and effective instructor; and*
- *To strive for excellence in carrying out my responsibilities as an instructor as described in the USC Faculty Handbook*

*If at any time you feel I have not honored this oath, please contact me so that I am aware of your concerns and have an opportunity to address them.”*

## VI. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The table below presents the nine social work competencies as defined by the Council on Social Work Education’s 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards. Items highlighted in yellow and in bold font indicate the specific competencies addressed in this course.

Social Work Core Competencies	
1	Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
<b>2</b>	<b>Engage in Diversity and Difference in Practice</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice</b>
4	Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
5	Engage in Policy Practice
6	Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
7	Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8	Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9	Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

The following table shows the competencies highlighted in this course, the related course objectives, student learning outcomes, and dimensions of each competency measured. The final column provides the location of course content related to the competency and methods for assessing whether the outcomes have been achieved.