**McMaster University School of Social Work**

**SOCWORK 770 / Social Work and Social Justice: Theoretical Tensions**

Thursday September, 5, 2019 to December 5, 2019: 1:30pm – 4:20pm.

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Course Overview **Course Description:**   
This course addresses the fundamental tension in social work’s location within social programs and state practices that have the potential both to redress and to deepen social inequalities. Theoretical and practical dimensions of this tension are explored in the contemporary context in which social programs in the public and voluntary sectors are the focus of neo-liberal restructuring and of the struggles and claims of marginalized populations.

The basic assumptions of this course concurs with the broader curriculum context set by the **School of Social Work's Statement of Philosophy**:

*As social workers, we operate in a society characterized by power imbalances that affect us all.  These power imbalances are based on age, class, ethnicity, gender identity, geographic location, health, ability, race, sexual Identity and income.  We see personal troubles as inextricably linked to oppressive structures.  We believe that social workers must be actively involved in the understanding and transformation of injustices in social institutions and in the struggles of people to maximize control over their own lives.*

**Course Objectives**

1. To explore the substantive tension in social work between the potential for the profession to engage in emancipatory or regressive practice.
2. To situate this tension in historical, social, political and theoretical contexts.
3. To develop an understanding of some of the major theorists shaping the debate in the social work and social justice literature.
4. To develop an understanding of some of the major theoretical themes shaping the debate within social work and social justice literature.
5. To develop a capacity to be grounded in everyday worlds and able to theorize them, and to link everyday experience to larger social forces and relations.

**Course Texts**

1. Garrett, Paul Michael. (2018). Social Work and Social Theory: Making Connections. 2nd Ed. Bristol: Policy Press. E-book available at library

Required journal articles are available through the Mills Library.

# Course Assignments

1. **Participation (10%)**
   * Students’ attendance and participation are crucial for this course. You are expected to come to class on time, complete the required readings, and take an active part in the discussion.
   * There will be an opportunity for each student to introduce a reading that has been a key article in the development of your scholarship at an appropriate time in the course schedule, (excluding the last class.) Please indicate one week ahead of time what this reading will be and make the reading available to the class.
2. **In-class presentation (10%)**
   * Each student will be responsible for giving a presentation based on the readings of a selected week. The individual presenter should also prepare critical questions to be circulated in advance for class discussion. Please sign up *before* our third class.
   * The questions that will be circulated in advance are expected to lead to a discussion that can facilitate and enrich students’ understanding of individual articles, as well as the week’s topic. Students *may* send the questions to the instructor at least one day before the class for feedback before sending them to all students before the class.
   * The main objective of this presentation is to share your understanding – such as interpretations, “discoveries”, questions, critiques, and confusion (if applicable) – of the readings. The maximum length of the presentation is 30 minutes. Please respect the time limit to ensure that we will have enough time for discussion.
   * *Major evaluation criteria*: clarity, relevance, quality of discussion questions and analysis, respect for time, and capacity to initiate and facilitate discussion.
3. **Response paper (25%) Due November 14, 2019**
   * In the response paper you are expected to develop your own argument on an issue arising out of the readings of a particular week through a review of all of those readings. This paper is NOT a summary of these readings but YOUR in-depth and critical understanding of the readings and the topic of that particular week. Your discussion might be guided by such questions: How is a particular issue conceptualized or theorized? What are the strengths and limitations of a certain theory or concept? How are social work and social justice defined or understood in these readings? What are the connections and disconnections between social work and social justice suggested in these readings? How should we understand and tackle the related barriers, tensions, contradictions, and complexities under discussion in order to pursue social justice?
   * The topic you select should NOT overlap with those you choose for your in-class presentations. The paper (in hard copy) must be submitted in class on the day we address those readings. No outside research is necessary for a response paper. The paper should be double-spaced, 10 pages (about 2,500 words). The last day to submit the response paper is Thursday, November 14, 2019.
   * *Major evaluation criteria:* Structure and coherence; relevance; quality of argument and analysis; originality of ideas; and quality of communication and presentation (e.g., grammar, clarity, and reference style).

**4. Theoretical Framework Essay (45%) Due December 12, 2019**

**& Short Presentation – (10%) November 28, 2019**

This paper will permit students to develop their own theoretical framework. In developing this framework, students are expected to draw on course material and may also bring in new material from their own area of study. Students should present the issues and questions that are central to their priorities within their understanding of the social work/ social justice endeavor and present a theoretical framework(s) that best engages with these questions. Students should show how this framework takes up their questions and walk the reader through the strengths and weaknesses of the framework.  ***The paper is to be 25 pages long, double spaced, 12 point font, properly sourced.***

M*ajor evaluation criteria:* Structure and coherence; relevance; quality of argument and analysis; originality of ideas; and quality of communication and presentation (e.g., grammar, clarity, and reference style).

Students should come to the final class prepared to share your ideas for your final paper.

* Introduce and explain the question(s) you will explore in your paper.
* Introduce us to the theory or theories that you will draw on to construct your framework. Why does this framework seem to be the most appropriate? What are its strengths and does it have any gaps or shortcomings? Are there other theories you will draw on to fill in those gaps?
* Include some beginning sources you will use, discuss why they are important and the directions you think your paper will take.

Each student will present for 15 minutes, plus time for questions and comments from the class.

# Assignment Submission and Grading

**Form and Style**

Please adhere to the following criteria for assignment preparation:

* All assignments must include a title page with all relevant course information, adhere to the page limits specified, be formatted with 12 pt. font and standard margins, and be stapled;
* The citations and references in all assignments (if applicable) must use APA style: more information is available through the e-Resources link on the library home page <http://library.mcmaster.ca> and at <http://www.apastyle.org>.

**Submitting Assignments**

Assignments must be submitted on the due date. Students who require accommodation should communicate with the instructor in advance.

**Privacy Protection & Grading**

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;
2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

**Course Modification Policy**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

# Student Responsibilities and University Policies

* Students are expected to contribute to the creation of a respectful and constructive learning environment. Students should read material in preparation for class, attend class on time and remain for the full duration of the class. A formal break will be provided in the middle of each class, students are to return from the break on time.
* In the past, student and faculty have found that non-course related use of laptop computers and hand-held electronic devices during class to be distracting and at times disruptive. Consequently, during class students are expected to only use such devices for taking notes and other activities directly related to the lecture or class activity taking place.

**Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all classes of this courses and come to class on time.

**Academic Integrity**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that result or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or 6 suspension or expulsion from the university. It is the student’s responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3 at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>. The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained;
2. Improper collaboration in group work; or
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic dishonesty also entails a student having someone sign in for them on a weekly course attendance sheet when they are absent from class and/or a student signing someone in who is known to be absent.

**Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

**Accessibility Statement**

The School of Social Work recognizes that people learn and express their knowledge in different ways. We are committed to reducing barriers to accessibility in the classroom, and working towards classrooms that welcome diverse learners. If you have accessibility concerns or want to talk about your learning needs, please be in touch with the course instructor.

**Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student’s religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/current-students/riso) about how to request accommodation.

**Academic Support Services**

We’ve collected the following useful links that will assist you in accessing student resources at the University:

Information for International Students: [International Student Services](https://iss.mcmaster.ca/)

Advising and Counselling Services: [Student Wellness Centre](https://wellness.mcmaster.ca/), [Graduate Student Life](https://gs.mcmaster.ca/graduate-student-life/graduate-student-life), [Student Success Centre](https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/), [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/), [Ombuds Office](http://www.mcmaster.ca/ombuds/), [Chaplaincy Centre](http://www.mcmaster.ca/chaplain/)

My Grad Skills: [Professional Skills Development for Graduate Students](https://www.mygradskills.ca/)

**E-mail Communication Policy**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, they may not reply.

# Course Schedule

**September 5: Introduction**

**September 12: “Unsettling times”: Introduction to theoretical challenges**

Bonnycastle, C. (2011). Social Justice along a Continuum; a Relational, Illustrative Model. *Social Service Review 85*(2), 267-295.

Chambon, A. (2013). Recognizing the Other, understanding the Other: A brief history of social work and otherness. *Nordic Social Work Research, 3*(2), 120-129.

Strier, R., & Feldman, G. (2018). Re-engineering Social Work’s Political Passion: Policy Practice and Neo-liberalism. *British Journal of Social Work 48*, 751-768.

Watts, B., Fitzpatrick, S., & Johnson, S. (2018). Controlling Homeless People? Power, Interventionism and Legitimacy. *Journal of Social Policy 47*(2), 235-252.

**September 19: A Shrinking Public? Introduction to neo-liberal landscape**

Garrett, Chapter 5

Brodie, J. (2007). Reforming social justice in neoliberal times. *Studies in social justice, 1*(2), 93-107.

Dean, M. (2014). Rethinking neo-liberalism. *Journal of Sociology 50*:2, 150-163.

Aronson, J. and Smith, K. (2011). Identity work and critical social service management: Balancing on a tightrope? *British Journal of Social Work*, 41 (3), 432-448.

**September 26: Unsettling the story of the lost welfare state**

Brown, C. (2012). Anti-Oppression Through a Postmodern Lens: Dismantling the Master’s Conceptual Tools in Discursive Social Work Practice. *Critical Social Work 13*(1), 34-65.

Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality. *Cultural Studies 21* (2-3):168-178.

Smith, K. (2015). Mourning the Death of Social Welfare: Remaining Inconsolable before History. In C. Janzen, K. Smith & D. Jeffries, Eds. *Unravelling Encounters: ethics, knowledge and resistance under neo-liberalism*, pp. 30-54. Kitchener: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Thobani, S. (2007). Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada. Chapter 3: The Welfare of Nationals. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

**October 3: Thinking with Bourdieu & Gramsci**

Garrett, Chapters 6 & 7

Pennisi, S. & Baker Collins, S. (2017) Workfare Under Ontario Works: Making Sense of Jobless Work. *Social Policy and Administration 51*(7), 1311-1329.

Tyler, I. (2015). Classificatory struggles: Class, culture and inequality in neo-liberal time. *The Sociological Review 63*, 493-511.

**October 10: Thinking with Fraser**

Garret, Chapter 10

Boone, K., Roets, G. & Roose, R. (2018), Social Work, Poverty and Anti-Poverty Strategies: Creating Cultural Forums. *British Journal of Social Work 48*, 2381–2399

Fraser, N. (2014). Behind Marx’s Hidden Abode: for an Expanded Conception of Capitalism. *New Left Review 86*, 55-72.

Webb, S. (2010). (Re)Assembling the Left: The Politics of Redistribution and Recognition in Social Work. *British Journal of Social Work 40*, 2364–2379

**October 17: Mid-Term Recess**

**October 24: Thinking with Foucault**

Garrett, Chapter 9

Chambon, A., Irving, A., Epstein, L., (1999). *Reading Foucault for Social Work*. New York: Columbian University Press. Chapter 3, Foucault’s Approach: Making the Familiar Visible.

McKee, K. (2009). Post-Foucauldian governmentality: What does it offer critical social policy analysis? *Critical Social Policy 29* (3), 465-486

Gilbert, T. and J. Powell. (2010). Power and Social Work in the United Kingdom: A Foucauldian Excursion. *Journal of Social Work*. Vol. 10, Issue 1, pp. 3-21.

**October 31: Confluence, difference and critical race theory**

Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory 8*(2), 149-168. .

Joseph, A. (2015). Beyond Intersectionalities of Identity or Interlocking Analyses of Difference: Confluence and the Problematic of “Anti”-oppression*. Intersectionalities: A Global Journal of Social Work Analysis, Research, Polity, and Practice 4(1)*, 15-39.

Hill Collins, P. (1997). How Much Difference Is Too Much? Black Feminist Thought and the Politics of Postmodern Social Theory. (pp. 3-37). In J. M. Lehmann (Ed.), *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*. London: JAI Press.

Solorzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research. *Qualitative Inquiry 8*(1), 23-44.

**November 7: Indigenous and decolonizing approaches**

Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is, & T’lakwadzi. (2009). Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation. *Ethnic and Cultural Studies 35*(1), 137-159.

Deepak, A. (2011). Globalization, power and resistance: Postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives for social work practice. *International Social Work 55*(6) 779–793.

de Leeuw,S. Greenwood, M. & Lindsay, N. (2013) Troubling good intentions, *Settler Colonial Studies, 3*:(3-4), 381-394.

Meekosha, H. (2011). Decolonizing disability: thinking and acting globally. *Disability and Society 26*(6), 667-682.

**November 14: Focus on the other; ethics before knowledge**

Baker Collins, S. & Cranmer-Byng, S. (2018). “THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE”: Moral Distress in the implementation of Ontario Works. *Canadian Social Work Review 35* (2), 5-24.  
Rossiter, A. (2011). Unsettled Social Work: The Challenge of Levinas’s Ethics. *British Journal of Social Work. 41*, 980-995.

Tronto, J. (1998), An Ethic of Care. *Generations 22*(3), 15-20.

**November 21: TBD.**

**November 28: Student presentations**