

# SW 770: Social Work and Social Justice: Theoretical Tensions

* **Course Information**
* **January 12 to April 14th, 2021, Tuesdays 9:30 – 12:20.**
* **Instructor: Saara Greene**
* **Virtual group office hours: By Appointment**
* **Email: greenes@mcmaster.ca**

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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.

## 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.

The basic assumptions of this course concur 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.*

## Required Texts:

Required journal articles are available through the McMaster University e-journal portal or online.

# Course Requirements/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 (15%)**
   * 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 (20%) Due March 16th, 2021**
   * 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 must be submitted 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 Tuesday March 16th, 2021.
   * *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 (35%) Due April 14th, 2021 & Short Presentation – (20%) March 30th and April 7th**
   * 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 both central to their theory chapter of their dissertation (recognizing this is early days and may change), and that reflect current priorities within their understanding of the social work/ social justice endeavor. Students should show how this framework takes up their theoretical leanings and queries, 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.**
   * *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).
   * Students should come to the final class prepared to share your ideas for your final paper.
     + Introduce and explain the dilemmas, tensions and ethical queries 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.
* 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 & Grading

Assignments must be submitted by email to [greenes@mcmaster.ca](mailto:greenes@mcmaster.ca) on the due date. Students who require accommodation should communicate with the instructor in advance.

## Privacy Protection

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 five 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.

## Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

# Student Responsibilities

* 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 results 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 suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

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

## Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the *Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities* (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

## Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s *Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities* policy.

## 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.

## Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## 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.

## Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

# Course Weekly Topics and Readings

All Term 2 Zoom links will be sent the morning of class by email

## I. SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: “THE SOCIAL” IN A CHANGING CONTEXT

### Week 1: January 12

Topic:

* Introduction to the Course

Readings:

* Hudson, K. (2017). With Equality and Opportunity for All? Emerging Scholars Define Social Justice for Social Work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 47:1959-1978,

### Week 2: January 19

Topic:

* Theories on social justice; Theories that make us think about social justice

Readings:

* Hudson, K. D. (2017). With equality and opportunity for all? Emerging scholars define social justice for social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 47(7), 1959–1978.
* Reisch, M. (2002). Defining Social Justice in a Socially Unjust World. Families in Society, 83(4): 343-354.
* Tuck, E. and Wayne Yang, K. (2012). Decolonization is not a Metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society, 1(1): 1-40.

### Week 3: January 26

Topic:

* Social work and Social Justice: Tensions, challenges, and re-imaginations

Readings:

* Rossiter, A. (2011). Unsettled social work: The challenge of Levinas's ethics. *British Journal of Social Work*, 41(5), 980-995.
* Macias, T. (2012). In the World: Toward a Foucauldian Ethics. Intersectionalities: A Global Journal of Social Work Analysis, Research, Polity and Practice, 1:1-19.

<https://www.academia.edu/1957942/In_the_World_Toward_a_Foucauldian_Ethics_of_Reading_in_Social_Work>

* Wilson, T. E. (2017). Repairing what’s left in social work, or, when knowledge no longer cuts.*British Journal of Social Work, 47(5),* 1310 -1325.

### Week 4: February 2

Topic:

* Social Justice and Ethics of Care

Readings:

* Peterson, T. (2011). The Ethics of Care: Normative Structures and Empirical Implications. Health Care Analysis, 19:51-64.
* Hamington, Maurice, "Liberté, Égalité, Sororité: How Care Ethics Informs Social Justice" (2011). Philosophy Faculty Publications and Presentations. 18. <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/phl_fac/18>
* Whyte, Kyle Powys and Cuomo, Chris J., Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies (April 25, 2016). The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics. Edited by Stephen M Gardiner and Allen Thompson, Forthcoming, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2770065>
* Hankivsky, L. (2014). Rethinking Care Ethics: On the Promise and Potential of an Intersectional Analysis. American Political Science Review, 108(2):252-264.

## II. SOCIAL INJUSTICE/JUSTICE: LINKING THEORIES AND PRACTICES

### Week 5: February 9

Topic:

* Reading Bourdeiu for theorizing in Social Work/Social Justice

Readings:

* Bourdieu, P. (1984). “Introduction”. In *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (pp. XXIIII-XXX). London & New York: Routledge.
* Anderson, J. M., Reimer Kirkham, S., Browne, A. J., & Lynam, M. J. (2007). Continuing the dialogue: Postcolonial feminist scholarship and Bourdieu—discourses of culture and points of connection.*Nursing Inquiry*,*14*(3), 178-188.
* Wiegmann, Wendy L. (2017) "Habitus, Symbolic Violence, and Reflexivity: Applying Bourdieu’s Theories to Social Work," The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare: Vol. 44 : Iss. 4 , Article 6.

Available at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol44/iss4/6

* Menyhart, A. (2018). Rethinking Western perceptions of Indigenous knowledge and economy. *NEW: Emerging Scholars in Australian Indigenous Studies*, *2*(1), 50-55. https://doi.org/10.5130/nesais.v2i1.1473

### Week 6: February 16

* **Midterm recess (No readings)**

### Week 7: February 23

Topic:

Reading Foucault for Theorizing in Social Work

Readings:

* Foucault, M. (1977). “Discipline and punish, panopticism”. In A. Sheridan (ed.), *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (pp. 195-228). New York: Vintage Books. Available at: [**https://foucault.info/doc/documents/disciplineandpunish/foucault-disciplineandpunish-panopticism-html**](https://foucault.info/doc/documents/disciplineandpunish/foucault-disciplineandpunish-panopticism-html)
* Mona Lilja & Stellan Vinthagen (2014) Sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower: resisting what power with what resistance?, Journal of Political Power, 7:1, 107-126, DOI: [10.1080/2158379X.2014.889403](https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2014.889403)
* Deveaux, M. (1994). Feminism and Empowerment: A critical reading of Foucault. Feminist Studies, 20 (2):223-247.

Recommended readings:

* Chambon, Irving, & L. Epstein (Eds.), *Reading Foucault for Social Work*, pp.51-82. New York: Columbian University Press.

### Week 8: March 2

Topic:

* Feminism, the ‘Other’ and the politics of recognition and framing

Readings:

* Baum, B. (2014). Feminist politics of recognition. *Signs,* 40(1), 1073-1102.
* Grey, Sam (2003/4). Decolonising Feminism: Aboriginal Women and ‘Global’ Sisterhood. Enweyin, 3, 9-22.
* Garland-Thomson, R. (2002). Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory in Feminist Disability Studies, NWSA Journal, Vol. 14, No. 3: 1-32
* [**https://www.npr.org/2020/05/05/850963562/what-does-hood-feminism-mean-for-a-pandemic**](https://www.npr.org/2020/05/05/850963562/what-does-hood-feminism-mean-for-a-pandemic)

### Week 9: March 9

Topic:

* The complexity of identities and identity politics: The personal and the political

Readings:

* Cedersund, E. (2013). Categories of otherness: on the use of discursive positioning and stories in social work research. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 3(2), 130-138.
* Greensmith, C., & Giwa, S. (2013). Challenging settler colonialism in contemporary queer politics: Settler homonationalism, pride Toronto, and two-spirit subjectivities. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 37(2), 129-148.
* Phipps, A. (2016). Whose personal is more political? Experience in contemporary feminist politics. *Feminist Theory*, 17(3), 303-321.
* \*Roediger, D. (2016). Making Solidarity Uneasy: Cautions on a Keyword from Black Lives Matter to the Past. *American Quarterly*, *68*(2), 223-248.

### Week 10: March 16

Topic:

* Intersectionality and the interdependence of social justice

Readings:

* Mehrotra, G. (2010). Toward a continuum of intersectionality theorizing for feminist social work scholarship*. Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work,* 25(4), 417-430.
* Erevelles, N., & Minear, A. (2010). Unspeakable offenses: Untangling race and disability in discourses of intersectionality. *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, 4(2), 127-145.
* Joseph, A.J. (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.
* Nash, J. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review,* (89), 1-15. Retrieved December 3, 2020, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40663957

Recommended readings:

* Bancroft, K. H. (2012). Zones of exclusion: Urban spatial policies, social justice, and social services*. Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 39, 63-84.
* Anthias, F. (2013). Hierarchies of social location, class and intersectionality: Towards a translocational frame. *International Sociology*, 28(1), 121-138.
* Gibson, M. F. (2015). Intersecting deviance: Social work, difference and the legacy of eugenics. *British Journal of Social Work*, 45(1), 313-330.

### Week 11: March 23

Topic:

* Critical race theory

Readings:

* Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory 8*(2), 149-168.
* Solorzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research. *Qualitative Inquiry 8*(1), 23-44.
* Hill Collins, P. (2016). Black Feminist Thought as Oppositional Knowledge. *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research,* 5 (3): 133-144.
* Bernal, D. D. (2016). Cultural Intuition: Then, Now and into the Future. Centre for Critical Race Studies, UCLA. Research Briefs, Issue 1. <https://www.academia.edu/30770185/Cultural_Intuition_Then_Now_and_Into_the_Future>

### Week 12: March 30

Topic:

* Indigenous and decolonizing approaches

Readings:

* 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.

## III. WAYS OF KNOWING, DOING, AND IMAGINGING

### Week 13: April 6

Topic:

### Social Work and Social Justice: Artistically Speaking

Readings:

* Sinding, C., Warren, R., & Paton, C. (2014). Social work and the arts: Images at the intersection. *Qualitative Social Work*, 13(2), 23-38.
* Lindsey, T. (2015). Let Me Blow Your Mind: Hip Hop Feminist Futures in Theory and Praxis. *Urban Education*, 50 (1): 52-77.
* Schubert, L., & Gray, M. (2015). The death of emancipatory social work as art and birth of socially engaged art practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, 45(4), 1349–1356

### Week 14: April 13

Topic:

* Reflections on Social Justice, Social Work and Social Theory