



SWK 597: Special Topics

COURSE SYLLABUS

SUMMER 2025

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Ahfiya Howard, DrPH, LMSW

Office Location: Henderson Bldg., 3rd Floor

Office Hours: Tuesday, 4:00 p.m. (via Zoom) or by appointment

Office Phone: (903) 468-3040

Office Fax: 903-468-3221

University Email Address: ahfiya.howard@tamuc.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: Email

Communication Response Time: Within 2 business days

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to TELUS Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available for guidance and support whenever needed.



QR Code TELUS

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required:

Rothenberg, P. S. & Accomando, C. H. (2020). *Race, class and gender in the United States: An integrated study*. (11th ed). Worth Publishers.

The syllabus/schedule is subject to change.

American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

Software Required:

- D2L (in MyLeo)
- Microsoft Office

Access at: Student Instructions to Sign Up Free for Microsoft Office

Optional Texts and/or Materials:

All MSW students must purchase the following study materials to **prepare for the Graduate Comprehensive Exam** they will take in their final semester. You must pass the exam to receive your degree. It is never too early to begin studying for the exam.

Comprehensive Study Guide (Masters, Clinical, Adv. Generalist) Version 9.0. Social Work Examination Services.

To purchase access: <https://swes.net/all-products/#~:text=Masters%2C%20Clinical%2C%20Adv.%20Generalist>

Course Description

This course provides students with knowledge about social work with diverse populations, mechanisms of social oppression, and social work's efforts to bring about social justice. The emphasis of this course will be on developing an understanding of (a) those client groups who, because of factors of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status, are particularly oppressed in our society and (b) those client groups who perpetuate such oppression against individuals due to race, ethnicity, and gender or disability status. In addition, the course will also develop culturally relevant macro and micro strategies for empowering these diverse groups.

Prerequisites: Must be admitted to the MSW social work program and in good standing

Relationship to Other Courses

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) requires a competency-based approach to identify and assess what students demonstrate in practice. In social work, this approach involves assessing students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in the educational policy. Listed below are the competencies and associated knowledge, skills, values and cognitive and affective processes that comprise the expected outcomes for this course.

	Activity/Assessment	Dimension
Competency 2: Students will engage in diversity and difference in practice.		

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Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	Reaction Papers Mid-term Final Exam	Knowledge Values Skills
Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences	Reaction Papers Interviews of Social Justice Advocate	Skills Values Cognitive Affective
Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies	Reaction Papers	Values Cognitive Affective
Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice		
Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels	Mid-term and Final Exam	Knowledge Cognitive Affective
Engage in practice that advance social, economic, and environmental justice	Interview of Social Justice Advocate	Skills Values Cognitive Affective

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

In this course, you will utilize the Learning Management Systems (LMS) D2L for instructional and learning opportunities, submitting assignments, participating in online synchronous and asynchronous discussions, accessing resources, and completing quizzes/tests. Additionally, you will need the knowledge and skills to use Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook Email. If you have any issues with using the various systems or software, you must contact support services and notify the Instructor of the technical issue.

Instructional Methods

This course will be delivered via synchronous and asynchronous sessions via D2L. It will consist of live class sessions, pre-recorded lectures, group engagement activities, and various assignments, including experiential learning and practical application of the content areas. In

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addition, small lectures, discussion activities, and workshops may provide instruction during this course.

Student Responsibilities and Tips for Success in the Course

As a student in this course, you are responsible for engaging in active learning and reaching out to the Instructor if problems or challenges interfere with optimal learning. Communication is vital when engaged in a fully online, virtual environment.

Expectations for success include:

1. Always demonstrate professional behavior, including respect for the Instructor and peers; being open to feedback and guidance throughout this class and the program.
2. Adhered to the School of Social Work and University student code of conduct and NASW Code of Ethics.
3. Begin reading the assigned text and supplemental readings as soon as possible, focusing on completing all readings prior to engagement with the Instructor or peers.
4. Prepare to engage in live class sessions, discussions, and other activities so you can be a contributor as well as a receiver of knowledge and skills.
5. Actively participate in engagement activities, including live virtual class sessions, online discussions, and interactive learning opportunities -as this is vital for learning and success in both this course and the program.
6. Work ahead when possible. Completing assignments ahead of the due date so you are prepared to submit on the due date.
7. Sign in to the D2L course shell multiple times weekly to access updated announcements or posted resources.
8. Check your university email daily. This is the university, department, and Instructor's official method of communication.
9. Be open and focused on the "process" and not the "product," as earning this degree requires time, effort, work, growth in knowledge, skills, and abilities, along with personal and professional attributes.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100% of total points

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% or Below

Evaluation for the course grade is according to the following formula:

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Assessments	Value
Reaction Papers (3 @ 25 pts.)	75 pts.
Interview of Social Justice Advocate	75 pts.
Mid-term Exam	100 pts.
Final Exam	100 pts.
TOTAL	350 pts.

Assessments

1. REACTION PAPERS

See Rubric: Appendix A

Students will write three brief reaction papers (1-2 pages, double-spaced). Students will react to three chapters selected by each student from the Rothenburg text. Your reaction paper should follow APA guidelines. Your reaction paper will focus on a minimum of two concepts discussed in the readings. The reaction paper should include three sections: personal reaction, professional reaction, and significance.

Personal reaction- Here, you will identify specific feelings you experienced as a result of the chapter or specific concepts discussed in the readings, a clear and supported hypothesis of its origins, development, and connection to the course.

Professional reaction- Here, you demonstrate your understanding of the reading material by discussing what you learned in comparison to prior knowledge, impressions, and misconceptions. Be sure to use relevant skills, course knowledge, and specific quotations from the text to summarize your professional reaction.

Significance- Be sure to describe the significance of the concepts. Provide an explanation of why the topic of issue is important to more than the immediate group.

The due dates for the different sections of the book are listed in the course outline. Students will upload the paper to the appropriate submission folder on D2L Brightspace and provide a one-paragraph summary of their reaction under Reaction Discussion during the Module with the reading assigned. For example, if you choose to react to a chapter from Part III of the book, then you will post under Module Two's Reaction Discussion.

Please read each other's reactions and add to the discussion for Class Participation points.

2. INTERVIEW OF ADVOCATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

See Rubric: Appendix B

Students will interview a leader or employee of an organization that advocates for or assists an oppressed or special needs population group. The student will write a 3 to 4-page paraphrased summary of the interview that includes information received

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and personal reflections on the experience, and share the key findings with the class.

Upload to the appropriate submission folder on Brightspace and post a one-paragraph summary under Advocate Interview Discussion. Examine their advocacy efforts through the social, economic and environmental justice lens. Be sure to address each specific area.

3. MID-TERM EXAM

The mid-term exam will cover all course material from class “lectures”, class discussions, D2L Brightspace postings, and readings to date. Multiple choice, T/F, short answer, and brief essay.

4. FINAL EXAM

The final exam will cover all material from class lectures, class discussions, D2L Brightspace postings, and readings from the mid-term to date. Multiple choice, T/F, short answer, and brief essay.

Due Date Policy

No late work will be accepted; thus, you must submit assignments within the designated timeframe.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements:

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

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Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor via email. The Instructor will respond to email queries within two business days.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may require the Instructor to modify it during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Ethical Behavior

The School of Social Work expects all students to conduct themselves in an ethical, professional manner in the classroom and field settings consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics.

University Code of Conduct

East Texas A&M University has established standards of conduct to create and foster an environment that facilitates student learning and development. Students and university student groups are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates respect for the rights and property of others and is consistent with the educational goals and mission of the university. This Code of Student Conduct ("Code") focuses on personal responsibility and accountability for students' actions and the impact those actions may have on the greater community. To access student academic and behavioral expectations for students refer to the Student Guidebook.

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:

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<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the Attendance webpage (or copy/paste the following URL in your web browser:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>)

If a student believes the final grade is unfairly impacted by attendance requirements, an appeal can be made. This appeal process is explained in "Student Appeal of Instructor Evaluation" - Procedure 13.99.99.R0.05.

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty, see the following procedures:

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty Form

University Rules on Research

Students involved in conducting research and/or scholarly activities at East Texas A&M University must also adhere to standards set forth in University Procedure 15.99.03.R1 Ethics in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work.

AI Use Policy

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that can generate text or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the course instructor.

Any use of such software must be documented. Undocumented use constitutes academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow the use of such software entirely for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided, the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources. [Draft 2, May 25, 2023]

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The syllabus/schedule is subject to change.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

East Texas A&M University

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web URL:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connections to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

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**School of Social Work &
Council on Social Work Education-Specific Policies
Course Engagement**

Final Evaluation and Grade Depends on both Classroom attendance and Participation:

Inadequate participation or lack of required time commitment in each class significantly affects students' grades. No matter the course venue, students must engage in a comparable amount of time. Expectations of both Face-to-Face classes and those with Online components include time spent reading and studying course material.

To earn a level of competency within a specific course, students must demonstrate both mastery of content and active engagement.

Mastery of content areas is evidenced by successful completion of course assignments such as written papers, group project deliverables, tests/quizzes, and other tangible products designed by instructors to evaluate knowledge and skills.

Additionally, the Social Work Profession is built upon human interactions and building human relationships – which is defined as engagement. Engagement is defined as meaningful involvement in interactions with the Instructor, peers, and outside stakeholders as appropriate (such as contacting a social worker to interview for a required assignment). Within the classroom setting, whether virtual or F2F, students must actively participate in 80% of engagement activities as outlined by individual instructors. These activities may include but are not limited to, participation in live, synchronous virtual classes, attending a Face-to-Face course when appropriate, interacting with peers in posted discussions, and collaborating in group interactive projects.

Students must meet standards for content mastery on tangible assignments and meet the threshold of active engagement of the time set during a semester by the Instructor.

Instructors are experts in each course content area and set the standards for students to meet to successfully complete the course.

Student Conduct

Students preparing to become professional social workers must adhere to the *University Code of Conduct*, *Department Code of Conduct* and the *National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics*.

Department Code of Conduct

The Academic and Professional Issues Committee (API) hearing is the formal path of due process for a student in regard to the concern being expressed. A student will be referred to the School of Social Work's API by faculty, field instructors, or faculty field liaisons when a concern arises regarding academic and student conduct and/or professional preparation. When "a student who fails to meet the professional expectation of the field for which he/she is preparing may be suspended from further study in that program by the department administering that program" as demonstrated through ethical and/or legal violations; aberrant disregard for School of Social Work Code of Conduct or other concerns as determined by the Academic and Professional

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Issues Committee.

Graduate Students have the right to appeal to the Graduate Dean according to University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.39.

Undergraduate Students have the right to appeal to the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services according to University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.41.

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APPENDIX A Grading Rubric Reaction Papers

Aspect	Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary
Personal reaction (Feeling)	Identifies some feelings	Identifies feelings and speculations and cause of it	Identifies feeling(s) & has a reasonable hypothesis about its origins	Identifies feeling(s), has a clear and supported hypothesis about its origins, development and connection to specific concepts from assigned reading. 4 pts
Professional Reaction (Intellectual-knowledge and thoughts)	Knew little and had not thought about the topic	Comments on prior knowledge and interest in a global way-no specific related experiences/textural references	Describes prior knowledge and interests in specific terms relates topic to text	Outlines prior knowledge, impressions and misconceptions. Uses relevant skills, course knowledge, and specific quotations from the text (cite!) 10pts
Importance/Significance	Has no idea of any importance to the topic	Describe some importance to a discrete group of individuals	Describe importance to immediate and extended groups	Describes local and wider importance. Some explanation of why the topic of issue is important to more than the immediate group 4 pts
Additional information	No further information sought or desired	Identifies possible additional sources but does not consult them	Refers to other sources of information but does not integrate them into the paper	Consulted other sources and integrated the information in the reaction paper 2pts
Writing	Sloppy report with numerous grammatical and punctuation errors	Sloppy report but few errors	Neat report: one or two errors	Error free Correct APA citation format 5pts

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Appendix B
Grading Rubric
Interview of Advocate for Social Justice

Students will interview a leader or employee of an organization that advocates for or assists an oppressed or special needs population group. The student will write a 3 - 4 page paraphrased summary of the interview that includes information received and personal reflections on the experience, and share the key findings with the class. Upload to D2L and post a one-paragraph summary under "Advocate Interview Discussion".

Mandatory Outline
(headings are bolded)

Interviewee Background: Name, organization, job title and job duties, educational background, general social problem/population, how long have they been working in an advocacy role? **5 pts.**

Specific Social Problem/Population: Describe the problem/population. How do they experience discrimination and/or oppression? Give some examples. **10 pts.**

What **SPECIFIC social advocacy efforts and interventions** does the person/organization embark on in attempts to address the discrimination/oppression? Examine their advocacy efforts through the social, economic and environmental justice lens. Be sure to address each specific area. **15 pts.**

What are some of the **challenges and barriers** in doing this advocacy work? **10 pts.**

What **3 pieces of advice** does the advocate have for future social workers, in terms of doing effective advocacy work? **5 pts.**

Do they know of any **resources** for addressing the social problem/population needs? i.e. laws, websites, education. **5 pts.**

What are your **personal reflections** on the interview and what the advocate shared? **15 pts.**

Writing– **10 pts.**

COURSE OUTLINE /CALENDAR

Weeks	Class Meetings (Zoom)	Topics & Instructional Materials	Activities, Assignments & Examinations
Week 1 06/02/2025	Zoom: Tues., June 3 @ 4:00 pm CST	Part I– The Social Construction of Difference: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read pages 5-46 • Read pages 48-100 • Read the Syllabus
Week 2 06/9/2025		Part II– Understanding Racism, Sexism, Heterosexism, and Class Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read pages 103-165 • Read pages 166-195
Week 3 06/16/2025	Zoom: Tues., June 17 @ 4:00 pm CST Holiday: June 19 th (Juneteenth)	Part III– Complicating Questions of Identity: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read pages 199-264 • Read pages 272-319 • Reaction Paper # 1 <p>(Any chapter from Part I) Due: Sat., June 21st</p>
Week 4 06/23/2025		Part IV– Discrimination in Everyday Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read pages 320-346 • An advocate needs to be identified for interview
Week 5 06/30/2025 Midterm Exam	Zoom: Tues., July 1 @ 4:00 pm CST Holiday: July 4 th (Independence Day)	Review for Exam!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-term Exam Due Sat., July 5th • Reaction Paper #2 <p>(Any chapter from Parts II, III of IV) Due: Sat., July 5th</p>
Week 6 07/07/2025		Part V– The Economics of Race, Class, and Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read pages 349-400 • Read pages 403-438
Week 7 07/14/2025	Zoom: Tues., July 15 @ 4:00 pm CST	Part VII– How it Happens: Legal Constructions of Power and Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read pages 503-585 • Reaction Paper #3 <p>(Any chapter from Part V) Due: Sat., July 19th</p>

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Week 8 07/21/2025		Part VIII- Maintaining Race, Class, and Gender Hierarchies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read pages 589-677
Week 9 07/28/2025	Zoom: Tues., July 29 @ 4:00 pm CST	Part IX– Social Change: Revisioning the Future and Making a Difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read pages 679-755 • Advocate Interview Due: Sat., Aug. 2nd
Week 10 08/04/2025 Final Exam (Last Day Aug. 7 th)	Classes End Graduate Commencement August 8th	Review for finals!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete online class evaluation • Final Exam Due: Tues., Aug., 5th

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