Sample Outline - Actual course outline may vary in structure, required readings, texts and assignments

SOCW 350A: SOCIAL JUSTICE, SOCIAL WORK AND THE LAW (1.5)

Course Description: Throughout this course we will examine and critique ideas and discourses related to social work and the law, particularly the law-society relation. We will explore the implications of law for social work practice and social policies, including whether/how it is possible to work with the law and its institutions to pursue reform and social change. We will critically engage with law from a variety of perspectives, including Indigenous, feminist, critical and post-structural views. Emphasis is placed on these perspectives because they challenge prevailing assumptions about law and the justice system as fair, objective and neutral.

Course Intentions:

- Describe the constitutional, legal and judicial systems that govern, control or impact individuals or groups with whom social workers are likely to engage;
- Articulate a critical analysis of the law and its institutions as these intersect with race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability and other positionalities;
- Develop an understanding of ways in which the law and institutions designed to ensure equal rights have been a source of oppression and exploitation as well as situations in which the law and its institutions have been a source of remedy and social change;
- Articulate a vision of social justice-informed social work practice and policy-making;
- Discuss alternatives to the existing justice system and critically analyze the potential and limitations of alternatives such as restorative practices.

Required Texts


Students will also need to access various statutes, for example the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Youth Criminal Justice Act and Divorce Act’ Federal statutes: [http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca](http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca); [www.laws.justice.gc.ca](http://www.laws.justice.gc.ca)

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**Dates, Class Topic, Materials and Links**

**Week 1 – Introduction to the Course/ Locating law-Locating Self**

**Required Readings:**


**Week 2—Understanding the ‘Law-Society’ Relation (1)**

**Required Readings/Videos:**


*Watch: Hunt, Sarah. (2013) In Her Name: Relationships as Law. Tedxtalk, 2013* [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmJZP2liqKler](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmJZP2liqKler) (CourseSpaces)


Law: Race, class, gender, sexuality connections (3rd Ed.) (pp. 9-33). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing. (Course Spaces)

Week 3—Understanding the ‘Law-Society’ Relation (2)

Required Readings


Watch: Crime is a Theory (Kim Pate: Elizabeth Fry Association) (Course Spaces)


Week 4- Locating Law: Intersections of Gender, Race, Class, Ability, Sexual Orientation.

Required Readings


**Choose one from the following list:**


**Week 5- Rights, Equality and Law**
Required Readings:


Recommended Supplementary Reading:


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Week 6 - Youth and Law/ Restorative Justice

Required Readings- Restorative Justice


Watch: Anisa White interview: Scroll down “Videos”
http://www.uvic.ca/law/about/indigenous/indigenouslawresearchunit/index.php

**Recommended Supplemental Readings**


Watch: The Restorative Justice “Industry” and Indigenous People (Course Spaces)


**Required Readings - Youth and the Law**

Youth Criminal Justice Act


Watch: Bernard Schissel (2010) Youth, the Law and Civil Liberties (Course Spaces)

**Recommended Supplemental Reading**


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**Week 7  Child Welfare Law**

**Required Readings**

British Columbia Child and Community Service Act


**Recommended Supplemental Reading:**


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**Week 8 - Family Law**

**Required Readings**

Relevant Family Law Legislation- For BC- British Columbia Family Law Act


Ontario Women's Justice Network (2014) "Understanding Matrimonial Property Rights on Reserves"


**Recommended Supplemental Reading**


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**Week 9  Immigration Law**

**Required Readings**


Bhuyan, Rupaleem. (2011) Negotiating social rights and social membership on the frontlines of service delivery to migrants with precarious status. CERIS Final Report. (Course Spaces)

**Recommended Supplemental Reading**


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**Reading Break**

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**Week 10 Mental Health and the Law**

**Required Readings**
Relevant Provincial Mental Health Legislation - For BC - British Columbia Mental Health Act


Fraser, S. E. (2008). *Sanism and the legal profession: Why mad people should be angry*. Paper presented to the 11th Colloquium of the Law Society of Upper Canada) [www.lsuc.on.ca/media/eleventh_colloquium_suzan.pdf](http://www.lsuc.on.ca/media/eleventh_colloquium_suzan.pdf) (Course Spaces)

**Recommended Supplemental Reading**


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**Nov. 24th - Unit 11 Welfare Law**

**Required Readings**

**Relevant provincial welfare legislation- For BC-** British Columbia Employment and Assistance Act

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (2008) "Chapter 2-Social Assistance in Canada: Overview"

Chouinard, V. & Crooks, V. (2005). ‘Because they have all the power and I have none’: state restructuring of income and employment supports and disabled women’s lives in Ontario, Canada. Disability and Society 20(1), 19-32. (Course Spaces)

**Recommended Supplemental Reading**


**Web Sites**


POVNET (Poverty Network): http://www.povnet.org/online_resources/welfare

**Unit 12 Course wrap-up/ Reflections**

No assigned Readings.

**Assignments and Due Dates**

There are three (3) assignments for this course, described in detail below. While each assignment has specific grading criteria, in general I am looking for evidence that you are familiar with and able to integrate course and outside material, that you are able to understand and critically analyse the material and your learning experiences, that you have critically self-
located in your assignments, and that you are able to address the individual components of the assignments with intellectual honesty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date and Time</th>
<th>Percent of Final Mark</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 – Media Analysis Part 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>#1 – Media Analysis Part 2</td>
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<td>#2 – Court Report</td>
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<td>#3 – Locating law/Locating self</td>
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ASSIGNMENT 1: LEGAL ISSUES MEDIA WATCH 35%

Goals and Objectives:
The goal is to examine the legal issues facing disadvantaged or marginalized populations in Canada and how these are reported in the news media. The ways in which the media depicts legal issues will shape public perceptions of these issues and populations. It is often what is missing or silent in the reporting that speaks to justice and injustice.

This assignment provides students with an opportunity to observe one particular form of Canadian media (mainstream daily or weekly newspapers), making a critical appraisal of how Canadian legal issues are depicted in newspapers, particularly with respect to certain populations. You will want to ensure that you have chosen an article, which will enable you to take up the questions highlighted in Part B. **You will be expected to use the same article for Part A and Part B of this assignment.**

Instructions:
Students will

1. Select and focus on only ONE particular newspaper article for the assignment using current newspaper articles. (Use articles published between January 2016 and the present) Do not use blogs or podcasts.

**TIP:** You can access most major Canadian newspapers through the UVIC libraries website. Many newspapers also have digital editions that may be
partly accessible by the general ‘reading’ public without subscribing. For a guide to using the library gateway to access newsstand articles, please go to the bottom of these assignment instructions.

PART A: The Brief

10%

The brief should be based on a current Canadian newspaper article that focused on a legal issue, which is concerned with issues of ‘equality’, ‘rights’, and or ‘justice’. Examples of recent Canadian legal issues in the news: cross-racial adoption (especially of Indigenous children); youth crime; discrimination, immigration and refugees; child welfare; prostitution, actions of judges or lawyers and human rights hearings or decisions. The legal issues facing disadvantaged or marginalized populations in Canada and how these are reported in the news media is important for social work and social justice.

Include a brief synthesis of the key points of the selected newspaper article including:

- A summary of the type of newspaper (daily, weekly, alternative etc.) and the geographic area of its distribution, as well as its readership or intended audience.
- The issue in the news article, the level of court or hearing involved (Provincial Court/ Territorial, Supreme Court, Appeal Court, Supreme Court of Canada, Family Court, Human Rights and so on)
- Is it an Indigenous legal order? Is it a civil, criminal matter? (if applicable)
- Highlight what and whose voices are included
- Identify what/who seems to be left out
- State two questions you have, related to the article, about justice and the “official version of the law” (Comack reading).
- State one additional question you see as particularly relevant to social work education/practice

Format: You will post this brief to Assignment 1, Part A Discussion Forum “Legal Issues in the News” on SOCW350A CourseSpaces; use point form with headings to answer the questions above.

Length: max 350 words
PART B: Media Analysis

25%

In Part B, the analysis, you are to integrate course concepts and theory to analyze how legal issues, decisions, or practices are presented by the media. You are expected to make explicit links to the readings and cite the readings in APA style. You are required to integrate a minimum of three required course readings/text in addition to citing concepts from class discussions. Your analysis should contain an APA style reference list that includes all sources cited plus the newspaper article that was selected.

Some questions to be considered in your analysis:

- How is the law itself presented – is the ‘official version’ of law as neutral and objective presented or is law portrayed in some other way – if so, how? How does this portrayal shape/inform the reader’s understanding of the issue?
- How are concepts such as historical & social context, justice, equality and rights reflected in the article?
- What do you understand about power relations at work in the situation discussed? – are the ages, genders, races, ability, etc. of the participants described or not? If they are described, how are participants described? How does this portrayal shape/inform the readers understanding of the issue and who is most affected? How might the “rule of law” inform how the law is understood and presented to the readers? Note the headline and the author and publication. Does this give you any assistance with your analysis?
- What assumptions, competing values, biases and contradictions do you see reflected in the legal issue is presented? What is left out?
- Discuss your own social location and the influence this might have in your own analysis.
- Any comment on the headline?

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Clarity of description of media article and its intent (5pts)
- Ability to clearly and concisely describe area of law discussed, understanding of the intentions behind the media report, and understanding of the historical and social context.

**Critical analysis (15pts)**
- Depth of analysis; -your ability to apply course concepts to an area of law reported in the media. Please illustrate how power relations are reproduced and how the law and legal processes are presented by the media. Critically engage with assumptions, contradictions, views and biases.

- **Use of theory;** Your ability to use relevant theory and concepts from the course materials & to integrate course material into your work in a meaningful way, which does not rely on direct quotes (depth of analysis and use of theory)

**Clarity of arguments, writing and organization skills; (5pts)**
- written in essay format.
- Ability to make your writing understandable, readable & organized with accurate grammar and spelling.
- Ability to understand and follow assignment guidelines using appropriate and consistent referencing in APA style for citations.

**LENGTH- 6 pages double spaced (Times New Roman-12 font) plus references (INCLUDE ARTICLE WITH SUBMISSION please)**

**Note: Accessing Canadian Newsstand through the UVic Library Webpage**

The UVic libraries website hosts Canadian Newsstand, a searchable database of Canada's major newspapers.

1. Go to UVic library webpage, http://library.uvic.ca
2. Click on ‘**Databases**’, and then click on ‘**All Databases a-Z**’.
3. Enter **Canadian Newsstand** in the search box
4. Click on the database name
5. Enter your Netlink ID and Password when prompted
ASSIGNMENT 2: COURT REPORT
25%

Purpose: To test your understanding of events in the courts you have visited, to critique your experience and observations, and to explore their significance for social work practice.

You are expected to attend 2 different courts or administrative hearings for this assignment. (If you have a lot of exposure to court matters you can use a previous experience for comparison i.e. in place of one court visit, but consult with professor). The courts may include criminal, civil or small claims hearings, a child welfare hearing, or youth justice matter, a session of court related to custody, access or divorce or a welfare appeal or residential tenancy hearing. For administrative law hearings, you will need to find out if you require the participants’ permission. Students who are Ministry personnel or others with work experience in the courts should try to attend a different kind of hearing for their main observation.

The main part of your court assignment focuses on one court visit however the 2nd one is required for a comparison. Some students wait until they go to court to decide, which one will be the primary observation.

The overall objectives of this assignment are that:

- students will clearly understand what is happening in court.
- students will be able to critically analyze their experience and observations from an anti-oppressive, perspective.
- students will see the significance and implications of the court's operation for social work practice.

These objectives will be used in grading.

Outline

Students may observe a wide variety of situations on their court visits. During the two or three hours you spend on a court visit you may view only part of one case, all of two or three cases, or you may see as many as 20
people/cases make brief appearances. Students focus on one main court hearing, and then go to another in a different court as a contrast.

Students are expected to respond to all the following questions. You can use point form or essay format. If a question below is not relevant please give reasons.

Date, time and place of court/hearing observation are to be noted.

1. Understanding what is happening 1-2 pages

The Hearing
(a) Identifying data - what type of hearing and what level of court is this? Where does this court fit in the court system structure? What stage of hearing?

The Players
(b) Who are the principal parties involved in the case(s)? Who represents the key parties? What would be the legal citation for this hearing?

(c) What court or hearing staff are present and what (briefly) are their roles? "Staff" includes judge, lawyers, court officers, sheriffs, tribunal members, etc. What others are present? What are their roles?

(d) What significance does this case have for the principals? How might the outcome or potential impact them? To answer this you need to think broadly and deeply about what might be at stake for the participant(s). Discuss briefly.

The Process
(e) Briefly outline the procedures & setting – For example, the order in which things happen, the degree of formality, adversarial nature, court atmosphere and more.

(f) What substantive law is involved? What procedural law is involved?

(g) Briefly summarize the main arguments used by both sides. What facts were at issue? Was the interpretation of law at issue? What is the standard of proof and where does the onus lie?
2. Locating self and law (1 page)

Reflect on and summarize how your experience or lack of experience with law and your social, cultural, historical and political location impacts your perception and values concerning law, the legal system, those involved and justice. How did this influence your observations and experience in this assignment? What did you learn about yourself? If you are doing this as a pair include a specific separate individual page each.

3. Critical Analysis (1-2 pages)

Critique your observations from a critical/anti-oppressive perspective, including power, race, class, ability, gender, age, sexual orientation and other marginalized locations. What assumptions (ideological, class, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability etc.) did you make about the people in the court and how this impacts the process and your observations? How far were the primary parties (and others) empowered or disempowered by the process? What changes in the law, system, process, staff function, might enhance empowerment?

4. Structural Issues/Social Justice (1 page)

What larger issues of society, of social policy, of justice, equality and rights, or of law seem to you to be involved here?

What ideologies and values (political, social, ethical, personal) are embodied in this particular court experience? How do they impact the process and outcome? What value conflicts/dilemmas do you observe? How compatible are your personal values with these observations? Explain.

5. Contrast (½-1 page)

Contrast your main impressions of this court or hearing with one other you have visited. Note that a different level (provincial, appeal,
supreme) or type of court (civil, criminal for example) should enhance the contrast.

6. Implications for Practice (1 page)

From your observations in the court or hearing, what is the significance for social work practice? From your observations and reactions, what legal reforms and other changes might you suggest? Give reasons.

**FORMAT** The assignments must be typed and double-spaced.

**LENGTH:** Maximum length is 8 typed pages. Unjustified, excessive length may be penalized. Organization, clarity and creativity will be credited.

(Times New Roman font 12)

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**ASSIGNMENT 3: LOCATING LAW: LOCATING SELF 40%**

To prepare for this assignment, you should have read and reflected on the readings, class content and discussions throughout the course. You may find it useful to keep a journal throughout the course that you can draw on in preparing this assignment. You may also find it useful to discuss these questions with a study partner or other students in the course. Remember the law has a whole range of functions: some are regulatory, some are empowering, some are enforcing and others are there to resolve disputes.

This assignment is intended to provide you with an opportunity to identify and reflect on your beliefs and values about the law and how they have been challenged throughout the course. You will need to consider the sources of your values and beliefs and your personal experiences (or lack of them) with the law and its institutions in light of the course readings and discussions. You need to consider how your beliefs, assumptions and biases are likely to affect your practice especially in matters related to law.

The course readings and text offer a multitude of reflections on how experience with and perspective on the law and its institutions are shaped by factors of location: historical, social, cultural and political. While race, class, ability, and gender are featured in the readings, other factors such as ability and sexual orientation not explicitly referred to in the readings also enter in. These matters of location shape the value base from which we approach the law and its institutions as do our personal biographies, and various
influences to which we are exposed. This assignment asks you to develop an understanding of your current value base in relation to the law and its institutions and to reflect on how that might impact your present and future social work practice.

1. Where, when and how did your very first understandings of the law develop? How were these understandings shaped by your historical, social, cultural and political locations? Which of these understandings have shifted through the course (and why) and which have not (and why not)?

2. Briefly describe a situation in which you were involved where a law or one of law’s institutions formed a significant part of what happened. Many people think of criminal laws but this assignment is much broader than that.
   a) Describe your feelings at the time.
   b) Describe the relative historical, social, cultural and political locations of yourself and those you dealt with. How do you think these factors contributed (or didn’t) to how the situation played out?
   c) What role did conflict or different viewpoints play in the situation, and how were various differences/conflicts resolved or not resolved? Identify historical, social, cultural and political aspects of location that contributed to how conflict arose (or didn’t) and how it was dealt with.
   d) Describe how this experience influenced your perception and understanding of the law and its institutions.

OR ALTERNATE

2. If you have NEVER interacted with the law or one of its institutions, please take this assignment up through the following questions:
a) How is your lack of interaction with the law or one of its institutions related to your historical, social, cultural and political locations? How is it related to other factors? Explain.

b) Who has had to interact with the law so that you haven’t had to – which people, by reason of their historical, social, cultural and political locations, have afforded you the luxury of not interacting with the law?

c) Describe how your lack of experience with the law influences your perception and understanding of the law and its institutions. What are the sources of your non-experiential knowledge and perspective on the law? To what extent, and how, is your knowledge and perspective on the law shaped by those who occupy historical, social, cultural and political locations that are different from your own? To what extent, and how, is your knowledge and perspective on the law shaped by those who occupy historical, social, cultural and political locations that are similar to yours?

3. Discuss the implications of your current value base in relation to the law and its institutions and to reflect on how that might impact your practice.

WHETHER YOU HAVE HAD EXPERIENCE WITH A LEGAL SITUATION OR NOT, YOUR PAPER SHOULD:

Explain your assumptions, values and beliefs related to law and its institutions and legal processes and explore how are these are shaped by your history, location and life/work experiences.

Discuss how your social location(s) (e.g. race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, culture, ethnicity, etc.) influences your knowledge, understanding, assumptions, values and beliefs about law, institutions and legal processes.

Discuss how you have (or have not) challenged these assumptions, values and beliefs throughout this course and how that is related to your location.
Explore where, how and why it has been difficult for you to challenge your knowledge, assumptions, values and beliefs, and how that is related to your location.

Discuss how your location(s), life history and life/work experiences and present value base regarding the law and its institutions and processes may impact your practice.

**Grading Criteria:**

- **Clarity of description of experience:** shared details of experience which offers a clear picture of the event or encounter (5 pts)

- **Organization and writing skills:** ability to write in a clear, concise, comprehensive and organized manner utilizing proper referencing. (10 pts)

- **Critical self-reflection and analysis of one’s social locations:** ability to examine and interpret your own experience, to question underlying assumptions, and to apply concepts to the everyday. AND

- **Use of theory/course concepts/class discussions:** ability to use relevant theory and concepts from the course material to examine how you make sense of experience and to integrate course material into your work in a meaningful way, which moves beyond the sole use of direct quotes. (25 points)

**LENGTH**- 8-10 pages double spaced (12 font) References and cover page are in addition to the 8-10 pages.

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**Inclusive Learning: Accommodation Statement for the School of Social Work**

The UVic School of Social Work is committed to creating a supportive, welcoming and inclusive classroom that aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities within both the virtual and face-to-
face learning environment. We aim to create a learning context that recognizes different learning styles and needs.

**It is the School of Social Work’s expectation that students meet the established criteria in each course in our professional program**. The School of social work appreciates that students may require specific academic accommodation. Some examples of where accommodation may be necessary include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Disability related (e.g. physical, emotional, intellectual, developmental, psychological and/or learning disabilities);
- Medical and/or life emergencies (e.g. sudden illnesses, accidents, death in the family, etc);
- Environmental sensitivities (e.g. allergies to chemical, perfumes and/or dust, sensitivities to light and/or noise levels, etc.);
- Caregiving responsibilities (e.g. responsibilities with caring for children, partners, immediate and/or extended family members, etc.)
- Cultural and/or religious observances

If you have particular needs around your learning, please speak with your faculty advisor, your instructor, and/or the Disability Resource Centre about how to make this the best learning opportunity. Accommodations provided will be done in a respectful manner that protects the individual’s self-respect, privacy, comfort and autonomy. Information shared with the instructor will be held confidential as required under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act unless the student provides consent to release information.

Please familiarize yourself with School of Social Work’s following policies:

- [Assessing student learning policy](http://www.socialwork.uvic.ca/policies/)
- [Policy for people with disabilities](http://www.socialwork.uvic.ca/policies/)
- [Grade review/appeals](http://www.socialwork.uvic.ca/policies/)

Please download the PLAGIARISM STATEMENT.
Students are expected to adhere to the University policies respecting plagiarism. See the University’s Policy on Academic Integrity at: http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2013/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html
A first plagiarism violation may result in a warning. Subsequent violations will result in either failure of the assignment or a grade of F in the course.

Class Attendance

It is the School’s policy that students attend at least 80% of the classes. You are expected to follow this policy. Student’s who attend less than 80% of their classes will be not qualify to write the final paper assignment which means you would not receive a passing grade.