Calendar Description: Throughout this course we will examine and critique current debates, ideas and discourses relating to social work knowledge and practice. We will look at social work ideas (as they pertain to both practice and policy) historically and currently, and critically engage with them from a variety of perspectives, such as feminist, Indigenous, critical and post-structural. Emphasis is placed on these perspectives because they challenge prevailing assumptions about individualism, meritocracy, professionalism and philanthropy.

The course is composed of three modules. The first module provides an overview of the history and traditions of social work, setting these in a sociopolitical context. The second module begins with a discussion of critical reflexivity and continues with critical, anti-racist, post-structural and anti-oppressive theory and research about Whiteness and its implications for practice and policy. This module ends with a consideration of what Foucauldian ideas can contribute to our praxis and research. The final module offers critical perspectives on social work ethics in practice and research.

The presentation of student work in the final weeks of the course allows an exploration of debates, ideas and discourses in social work as they are related to students’ own thesis, project or work interests. My hope for this section is that students will use materials from the modules to assist them in critically engaging with a social work situation of particular interest to them.

Course Objectives:

- To provide an opportunity for you to critically reflect on your location/positionality (factors such as class, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation) and life/work history (with special attention to your previous encounters with social work discourses and ideas) and how these influence your perceptions, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes about social work theory, knowledge and praxis.
- To further your understanding of the assumptions and implications of social work traditions, theories and discourses: what assumptions about reality, knowledge, praxis and worldview do various traditions, theories and discourses entail?
- To explore social work practice and research ethics from a politically engaged perspective that emphasizes how relations of power shape the social work and the research encounter. Underpinning this section is a key question: what ethical framework (if any) should we draw on to frame our practice and our professional (personal) identity?
- To provide opportunities for collaborative teaching/learning, exploration of student areas of interest, and the further development of research, writing and presentation skills.

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1 Many of these perspectives were introduced in SOCW 512 Knowledge and Inquiry. Students who have not taken SOCW 512 should know that they will have some background reading to do).
**Weekly Topics with readings:**

**Week 1** – Introductions, Review of syllabus and assignments, Establishing a respectful learning environment

**MODULE ONE: WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?**

**THE HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Week 2** –


**MODULE TWO: WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

**CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY, ANTI-OppRESSION and POSTMODERNISM**

**Week 3** –


**Week 4 – Whiteness 1**


**Week 5 – Whiteness 2**


**Week 6**

**Week 7**

**MODULE THREE: WHERE ARE WE GOING?**
**CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL WORK ETHICS**
**DISCUSSION WEEKS 8 and 9: ETHICAL ISSUES/DILEMMAS**

• Students are asked to bring an ethical issue or dilemma that relates to their research, practicum and/or work experience or interests for discussion in the context of the readings.

**Week 8 – Ethics and practice**
• Abramson, M. (1996). Toward a more holistic understanding of ethics in social work. *Social Work in Health Care* 23 (2), 1-14

**Week 9 – Ethics and research**

**Week 10**
No class – Reading Break

**Week 11 – and Week 12 –**
• Student presentations

**Week 13 –** Final paper due for November 18 presenters
• Final class – reflections and evaluation

**December 9 -** Final paper due for XXXXXXX presenters
Assignments/Learning Activities & Due Dates:

1. Reading review *(Weighting 10%: due September 23)*
   This assignment has several purposes: to provide students with an opportunity to develop their ideas and insights into the reading(s) of the week and the topic(s) they address; to assist students in preparing for class discussion; and to familiarize students with the expectations associated with graduate level course work.

2. Class facilitation *(Weighting 25%: due date according to lottery/agreement – available dates include September 30, October 7 and 14. Students should notify me by September 23 regarding their choice of option/week.)*
   **Option A:** Each student will be responsible for leading the teaching for half of a class, assisted by the instructor. Teaching will be based on the assigned readings – at least one reading and preferably two must be selected. If one of the readings you wish to review is short (i.e. 12 pages or fewer), please select two readings to review.
   **Option B:** Two students share the responsibility for teaching an entire class, assisted by the instructor. All other components of the assignment remain the same, except that all of the assigned readings for the week must be reviewed.

   This assignment has several purposes: to provide students with an opportunity to develop their ideas and insights into the reading(s) of the week and the topic(s) they address and to generate discussion; to build capacity in the educational process; and to balance hierarchical dynamics through formally recognizing that we are all teachers and learners.

   The components of this assignment include:
   1. Present review(s) of the assigned reading(s) for the week, including the authors’ theoretical perspectives and main argument.
      - Clear and concise summary/description of ideas, arguments and theoretical perspectives
   2. Relate readings to your professional and scholarly practice, with a special emphasis on contentious issues in social work practice, policy or discourse.
      - Clear and concise description of your responses to the readings, including critical analysis and highlighting some points for engagement with the readings
      - Ability to relate reading and discussion material to your location/positionality and/or your research, work or practicum interests.
   3. Facilitate class engagement and interaction (students are encouraged to be creative and use different teaching formats, such as workshops, activities, panel discussion, role play, use of audio-visual materials, etc.)

   **Evaluation criteria**
   - Evidence that student-instructors are well prepared.
   - Clearly demonstrated understanding of articles and ability to convey that understanding to class.
   - Ability to engage the class in discussion and/or other learning activity.
   - Organization and effective use of in-class time.

   The evaluation of this assignment will include peer review and feedback, though the instructor will be responsible for assigning the final mark.
3. Paper and presentation (weighting 45% [paper 30%, presentation 15%]:
presentation dates by lottery or agreement [November 18 or 25]; final paper due
December 2 or 9)
Each student is asked to prepare a 16 – 20 page paper on a debate, idea or discourse
which significantly relates to their own thesis, project, practicum or work interests. The
main ideas in the paper are to be presented to the class (time limit: 20 minutes) for
feedback and discussion prior to preparation and submission of the final paper. The
feedback is intended to constructively assist you in preparing your final paper.
There are several purposes to this assignment: to contribute to student learning pertaining
to their particular research, practicum or work interest; to provide the opportunity to
“workshop” ideas in a supportive and collaborative learning environment; to apply the
ideas and theoretical perspectives covered during the course; and to enhance presentation
skills.
Evaluation criteria - presentation
- ability to introduce your work in a clear and comprehensive fashion
- organization of ideas
- originality and creativity
- ability to engage the class in discussion related to your work
- time limit observed
Evaluation criteria - paper
- clarity of focus
- breadth and depth of analysis
- ability to introduce ideas that show a complex and in-depth understanding of both
  your topic and the course material
- organization of ideas
- use of resources outside required readings
- quality of written expression – presentation, grammar and style

4. Engagement and participation in class: (weighting 20%: assessment throughout the
course)
The purpose is to ensure that students are continually engaged in critically analyzing and
examining the ideas presented in the readings and in class and critically reflecting on and
engaging with these ideas, as well as actively participating in facilitating their own
learning, the learning of other students, and a respectful learning environment. In other
words, your active participation in class discussions and activities is expected, and it is
expected that your engagement in class will reflect that you have read and reflected on
the readings.
Evaluation criteria
Evaluation and assessment will focus on the points outlined in the “Self-assessment
Form” included in the course outline. Your self-assessment will be a factor in assigning a
mark for this section, though the instructor will be responsible for assigning the final
mark.