

**UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Syllabus: SW-518 - Social Work and Oppression  
Summer 2006**

**Code of Conduct:**

It is the student's responsibility to have read the College of Social Work Ethical Academic and Professional Conduct code that is in the College of Social Work MSSW Handbook (<http://www.csw.utk.edu/mssw/>)

**The Honor Statement:**

An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity. (*Hilltopics*, 2005).

**Disability**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact the University of Tennessee Office of Disability Services at 191 Hoskins Library (865-974-6087). This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

**Course Description**

This course is a required Foundation course that examines the sources, dynamics, and impact of oppression in U.S. society as it is manifested in both social/ecological systems with an emphasis on economic systems, and personal experience. At the level of social/ecological systems, the course examines the ways in which oppression and discrimination are institutionalized in the various sectors of American society in forms such as racism, sexism, classism, ageism, physical and mental ability and heterosexism. At the level of individual experience, the course examines the impact of oppression on individuals who vary in such characteristics as race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, age, and religion. The course also considers connections among forms of oppression; the ideology of domination and subordination which supports and perpetuates oppression; and social work's role in challenging oppression and promoting a socially and economically just society and responsive, humane social agencies through strategies such as grassroots organizing and political activism.

**Course Rationale**

By virtue of its historical traditions, values, and professional code of ethics, social work has a commitment and responsibility to challenge oppressive social systems and to work with individuals and groups who experience the impact of all forms of oppression. In order to meet this professional commitment, students need to understand the forms and

consequences of oppression and institutional discrimination; they must be able to analyze and identify the dimensions of oppression and privilege in all institutional and organizational contexts; and they must know appropriate strategies to challenge and change oppressive conditions.

### **Course Objectives**

By the completion of the course, students are expected to be able to (through course assignments, class activities, class discussions and/or exams):

1. Describe the ways in which the intersections of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and other identifying characteristics shape both individual experience and social systems of privilege, discrimination and inequality in United States society ;
2. describe the mechanisms and effects of institutional forms of discrimination and oppression, including racism, sexism, social classism, economic classism, heterosexism, ablism, and ageism;
3. explain how the ideology of domination and subordination underlies, links, and perpetuates various forms of oppression;
4. describe between-group and within-group variations in individuals' experiences of and responses to oppression;
5. articulate social work's vision of an inclusive, socially and economically just society;
6. identify the role of strategies, such as grassroots organizing and political activism, in social change efforts to counter oppression within and across institutional sectors;
7. describe the role of social workers in regard to agency accountability in countering oppression in service delivery settings and organizations within and across institutional sectors'
8. analyze the mechanisms and effects of oppression and institutional discrimination within social agencies and service delivery systems and devise strategies for countering discrimination and creating responsive and humane agencies and service systems.