I. COURSE DOMAIN AND BOUNDARIES

This purpose of this course is to delve into the larger environmental factors that influence the behaviors of individuals, groups, and communities. Economist Friederich von Hayek said that “Without a theory the facts are silent.” Theory and historical contexts are therefore used as the foundation to examine the nature of human aggression and group identity, the latter often serving as the *casus belli* for inequalities, aggressions and conflicts of all sorts, sometimes culminating in the ultimate act of aggression, organized warfare. A means to adjudicate conflict and, where possible, to palliate the conditions that lead to it have developed over time. Today, this means is often called politics. The course will then discuss politics and power as the basis for examine social, economic and political conditions and understand their impacts from a systemic perspective.

Several case studies will illuminate these ideas and provide fodder for student-led presentations on the proper use of power, politics and advocacy, in the pursuit of broader economic and social justice and the betterment of individual lives. As part of this, the effects of race, class, gender, social duty, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age and national origin on individual experiences with larger structural systems and institutions are discussed. A social justice framework is used to identify best practices for social workers to intervene, advocate and engage in the creation of a more just society and solutions to individual client problems. One premise of the course is that to create positive change, one must either wield power or influence others who wield it. The focus is largely upon the United States, although an international perspective will also be included.
II. MSW COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED IN THIS COURSE

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities
Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities
Competency 9: Evaluate Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

III. BROWN SCHOOL ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity in the completion of tests, oral presentations and written assignments (including statistical syntax) is expected. Violations of academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism) are very serious offenses. Violations will result in notification to the Assistant Dean for the appropriate (MSW or MPH) program and may result in referral to the Academic and Professional Integrity Committee, which could lead to dismissal from the program. Please review and adhere to the entire set of Academic Integrity guidelines in the student handbook on Inside Brown:

Student Handbook 2017-2018

Accommodations: If you have a learning disability, sensory, or physical disability or other impairment, and you may need special assistance in lectures, reading, written assignments, and/or exam taking, please contact the Brown School Director of Student Affairs who can provide coordination of accommodations at Washington University and the Brown School. The Disability Resource Center, a University-wide resource, provides diagnostic and academic accommodations support and referrals.

English Language Proficiency: If your English language proficiency is such that you may need special assistance in lectures, reading, written assignments, and/or exam taking, please communicate these needs to your instructor who may refer you to the English Language Program (ELP), a University-wide resource which provides classes and academic English language support designed to increase non-native English speaking students' English language proficiency and to facilitate their academic success at Washington University. You may also find the Academic Assistance resources available through the Office for International Students and Scholars to be helpful.

Professional Use of Electronic Devices in the Classroom: Computers or other electronic devices, including “smart pens” (devices with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder which
records the classroom lecture/discussion and links that recording to the notes taken by the student), may be used by students at the discretion of the faculty member to support the learning activities in the classroom. These include such activities as taking notes and accessing course readings under discussion. If a student wishes to use a smart-pen or other electronic device to audio record lectures or class discussions, they must notify the instructor in advance of doing so. Permission to use recording devices will be at the discretion of the instructor, unless this is an accommodation approved by Disability Resources.

Nonacademic use of laptops and other devices is distracting and seriously disrupts the learning process for everyone. Neither computers nor other electronic devices are to be used in the classroom during class for non-academic reasons. This use includes emailing, texting, social networking, and use of the Internet. The use of cell phones during class time is prohibited, and they should be set on silent before class begins. In the case of an emergency, please step out of the room to take the call. The instructor has the right to hold students accountable for meeting these expectations, and failure to do so may result in a loss of participation points, a loss of the privilege of computer use in the classroom, or being asked to leave the classroom.

Religious Holidays: The Brown School recognizes the individual student’s choice in observing religious holidays that occur during periods when classes are scheduled. Students are encouraged to arrange with their instructors to make up work missed as a result of religious observance, and instructors are asked to make every reasonable effort to accommodate such requests.

IV. WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC SUPPORT POLICIES

Accommodations based upon sexual assault: The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no-contact order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support services and accommodations. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center. Ms. Webb is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University’s Title IX Director. If you would like to speak with directly Ms. Kennedy directly, she can be reached at (314) 935-3118, jw kennedy@wustl.edu, or by visiting the Title IX office in Umrath Hall. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Conduct and
Community Standards or by contacting WUPD at (314) 935-5555 or your local law enforcement agency. See: Title IX

You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling (314) 935-8761 or visiting the 4th floor of Seigle Hall. See: RSVP Center

Bias Reporting: The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University’s Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. See: brss.wustl.edu

Mental Health: Mental Health Services’ professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression. See shs.wustl.edu/MentalHealth

Additional Issues or Concerns: If you feel that you need additional supports in order to be successful in your time at Brown, beyond the afore mentioned accommodations, please contact Essie Rochman, Director of Student Affairs at erochman@wustl.edu. She can assist you in navigating a myriad of concerns. Her office is in Brown Hall, room 320.

V. READINGS

Textbook:

All other readings provided via Blackboard.

VI. ORGANIZATION OF COURSE

The course is structured to provide a perspective through which to view current social problems as a means of enhancing social work practice. The knowledge base of the course is grounded in historical experience, theory and interpretation. Both students and the instructor should gain through the readings, course interaction and activities. Group exercises and guest lectures will also make up part of the course. In general, class will be divided into three sections.

1) The first 30 minutes will be devoted to small group work and discussion on the readings and assignments.
2) The middle part of class will be devoted to lecture and discussion.
3) The final part of class will be devoted to a practice related activity, student presentations or further instructor/student discussion.

VII. ROLE OF FACULTY AND STUDENT
Attendance and Participation: Being present and participating are important elements in any life activity, including this course. Success will be difficult to achieve without showing up participating. Of course, the universe is a vast and complex system, so things will come up. Illness, emergencies or other unanticipated events may on occasion make attendance impossible. If this is the case, please contact the instructor in advance, or as soon as possible. Excessive absenteeism (three or more missed classes per semester) will result in a deduction of five points to a student’s final grade. Disagreement with the instructor’s position on any issue will not affect any student’s grade.

Assignments: Assignments are made at the beginning of the semester to allow for proper planning and management of course work. Assignments will be submitted through Blackboard. They will be considered late if not submitted prior to or concurrent with the beginning of class of the date due. Late assignments will receive a 5 point per day reduction past the due date. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted. Extensions will be considered should extraordinary circumstances apply.

Extra Credit or Rewrites: There is no such thing as extra credit in this class. Any rewriting should be completed prior to submitting any assignment.

Email: Both instructor and students should check this regularly. This will be the primary means of communication outside of class.

Writing Help: Writing is a critical life skill, and good writing is critical to receiving a high grade in this class. Submitting drafts of your papers to the Writing Center to ensure proper grammar, lucid thought and clear expression.

Preferred name: If you would like to use a name other than your legal name for the purposes of this course, provided that this is not for the purposes of misrepresentation, please let me know.

VIII. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA

Class participation: You will be evaluated by your participation in classroom discussion, group and individual activities.

25% of total grade.

News briefing papers and discussion: Each week, you will select at least one news item in some way relevant to that week’s general theme and compose a briefing paper on the item of no more than 2 pages (double spaced). I will look for at least two students to volunteer to present and discuss their news item each week. The news item must be from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), either print or electronic. Your briefing may discuss the content
of the item and its relevance to the discussion of the week, or the quality of the journalism including any perceived bias, or both.

15% of total grade.

**Case study group project:** This will be discussed further in class. The class will either be divided into four groups (or self-select into four groups), and take up a large-scale political, economic or social problem (crime, poverty, policing, environmental justice, gender inequality, and the like). Within that topic, you will be asked to refine a particular question that examines how a person or population is affected by this problem from a social, economic and political perspective. Both the history of this problem and its current status should be considered, along with a strategic planning framework and a work plan to address the problem in some meaningful way through political, economic or social means. The paper resulting from this work should be 15 pages minimum, and due at the start of class, Week 15. A preliminary outline is due at the start of class, Week 11.

20% of total grade.

**Case study group presentation:** In addition to the project paper itself, the group will present its findings to the class. All members of the group must have a meaningful role in both the preparation of the project and in the presentation. Presentations should be no longer than one hour, including Q/A.

20% of total grade.

**Interaction with guest speakers:** The opportunity to listen to, question, challenge and learn from guest speakers is an important part of this class. Thoughtful interaction is expected.

20% of total grade.

Grading criteria: Grading is based on the quality of the work you turn in, the clarity of your ideas and expression (whether or not they align with my own), and your ability to work within the classroom community. If you have questions about how to approach and assignment, or want additional feedback on past assignments, please see me. The Writing Lab is a good resource for writing or formatting papers.

### IX. COMPETENCY ALIGNMENT TO ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE ACTIVITIES

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X. COURSE OUTLINE

All readings will be on Blackboard, except for the Wills textbook. Additional readings may be added, no later than two weeks before a scheduled class.

Week 1: January 22, 2018

Introduction to the course, the issues and to each other

Readings:
None.

Week 2: January 29

Conflict, Culture and Politics

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.

Readings:

Week 3: February 5

The Haves and the Have Nots

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.

Readings:

Guest speaker.
Week 4: February 12

“The extirpation of slavery”

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.

Reading:

Week 5: February 19

“Mighty scourge”

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.

Reading:

Week 6: February 26

“Oh altogether fitting and proper”

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.


Week 7: March 5

Strategic structure to create results
News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.


Case study/presentation assignments.

Week 8: March 12

SPRING BREAK; NO CLASSES.

Week 9: March 19

The real world

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.

Readings:

Guest speaker.

Week 10: March 26

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.

Policing: “Constrained by fear of superior force”

Reading:
Guest speaker.

**Week 11: April 2**

**Power and the Thucydides Trap**

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.

Reading:
“What to do about China’s ‘Sharp Power’” The Economist

Case study outline due.

**Week 12: April 9**

**Case study: women’s rights**

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.

Reading:

Guest speaker.

**Week 13: April 16**

**Case study: overlords**

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.

Reading:
Week 14: April 23

Gratifying fantasies

News briefing and discussion (2 students minimum):
No more than 2 page (double spaced) briefing on a relevant press item of your choice from a reliable source (if in doubt about reliability, see me), print or electronic.


Week 15: April 30

Case study project paper due.

Project presentations.

Week 16: May 7

Project presentations.