



**SOCW 3322: Human Behavior in the Social Environment II**  
**Tu ser completo es bienvenido aquí — Your whole self is welcome here!**

**SYLLABUS**  
**Spring 2026**

*Subject to any new Texas legislative mandate changes.*

**Course Information:**

**Section:** SOCW-3322-01-Spring-2026

**Meeting Days, Time, Location:**

Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00 pm to 3:15 pm  
ELABS 244; Edinburg Campus

[\*\*Campus Maps\*\*](#)

**Course Modality:** In Person

**Instructor Information**

**Instructor Name:** M. Christine Highfill, PhD, LMSW

**UTRGV E-mail:** [Christine.ChaceHighfill@utrgv.edu](mailto:Christine.ChaceHighfill@utrgv.edu)

**Office Phone:** (956) 665-3577

**Office Location:** EINNV 1.162 (Innovation Building, Edinburg Campus)

**Office Hours:**

Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00 pm to 1:45 pm. [Join the Teams meeting.](#)

I am also available in person for an hour immediately after class.

Other times by appointment, either in person or on Teams.

**Course Description, Prerequisites & Course Modality**

**Course Description:** HBSE II delves deeper into the intricacies of human behavior within diverse social environments, emphasizing the principles of Antiracism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI). This course examines how social identities—including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and socioeconomic status—shape individual and group experiences and interactions. Through theoretical frameworks, concepts, self-reflective exercises, and real-world case studies, students will explore the intersectionality of various identities and how systemic factors influence behavior and well-being. The course aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills to understand and advocate for social justice and equity in social work practice, fostering an inclusive approach to human behavior.

**Pre-Requisites:** SOCW 3321 HBSE I

**Special Designation:**

**Contextualized Sociolinguistic Practices (CSP) Designation.** By taking this course, you are on your way to becoming a B3 Scholar and receiving the B3 Scholar Seal upon graduation. Learn more about the [B3 Scholar Seal](#) and its requirements. Be sure to fill out the short [Intent to Pursue the B3 Scholar Seal form](#) so that the Office for Bilingual Integration may help you achieve this recognition.

This course aligns closely with UTRGV's vision of Contextualized Sociolinguistic Practices (CSP) because social workers view human behavior as dynamic and cyclical, recognizing that while individuals are shaped by their communities, cultures, and relationships, they also play an active role in shaping and transforming those same social worlds. Similarly, CSP emphasizes that learning is meaningful when it's connected to real social environments and when different kinds of knowledge —academic, community, and lived experience—are all valued equally. That's exactly how SOCW-3322 (HBSE II) works. As we explore identities like race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, and class, we focus on how these identities interact with systems, environments, and relationships. We will learn from each other's stories, community examples, real-world case studies as well as our text. The course encourages critical thinking, self-reflection, and dialogue, reinforcing the CSP idea that knowledge is built collectively through social interaction. By examining how social contexts shape well-being and behavior, and by honoring diverse voices and experiences, the course fully supports CSP's goal of helping students understand the world through multiple perspectives and develop inclusive, socially aware practices.

Tone and formality are essential components of professional communication. As a social worker, you will encounter diverse situations that require you to adjust how you express yourself. Your tone with a coworker may differ from how you address a supervisor, client, or community partner. In alignment with Contextualized Sociolinguistic Practices (CSP), this course provides intentional opportunities to practice shifting your communication style based on audience, purpose, and context. For example, the FutureMe assignment is private and reflective, giving you substantial freedom to write in a highly personal, conversational tone. The Dimensions of Human Behavior diary and other reflective activities may also be written informally, supporting CSP's emphasis on authentic voice and lived experience. In contrast, your Community Inquiry Group project (Contemporary Social Issues) invites your group to choose the tone that best fits your message and medium—whether a formal tone for a paper or slide presentation, or a more conversational style for a TikTok-style video or podcast. This flexibility mirrors real-world social work communication and reinforces CSP principles by valuing multiple modes of expression that emerge from different social, linguistic, and cultural contexts.

**Linguistic Inclusivity.** In this course, your full linguistic repertoire is welcomed and valued. Consistent with Contextualized Sociolinguistic Practices (CSP) and UTRGV's definition of flexible bilingual pedagogy, you are encouraged to use English and Spanish in intentional and dynamic ways that support your learning. This approach recognizes language as a meaningful resource for expressing identity, connecting ideas, and engaging with course material. While most formal academic work is submitted in English, you are invited to draw on Spanish—or any language that feels authentic to you—in reflective or exploratory activities, as long as it supports full participation and understanding within your learning context. To ensure shared access for everyone, lectures and whole-class discussions will be conducted in English, which is the language your instructor can currently facilitate confidently (I'm learning Spanish!). Even so, you are encouraged to use your linguistic strengths throughout the course to enrich your

thinking, communication, and engagement. Spanish versions of the NASW Code of Ethics and the CSWE Core Competencies are available in your course materials, and you may cite either language version in any assignment.

**Language, Tone, and APA-7 for Course Components**

Course Component/Context	Language Options	Recommended Tone	APA Info
Whole class discussions	English	Respectfully conversational	N/A
Community Inquiry Group Discussions	Any language agreed upon by all group members	Respectfully conversational	N/A
Community Inquiry Group Summaries	English	Formal academic	APA-7 title page and reference page required
FutureMe Letters	Any language that feels authentic to you	Your choice	N/A
Dimensions of Human Behavior Experience: Activity	Any language that feels authentic to you	Dependent upon your activity	N/A
Dimensions of Human Behavior Experience: Diary	English, but may contain multilingual elements (e.g., a Spanish phrase explained in a footnote)	Informal	APA-7 title page is required. References are not required but must be included if you cite an outside source.
Dimensions of Human Behavior Experience: CRAAP Analysis	English	Formal academic, but bullet points rather than paragraphs are preferred	APA-7 title page is required. A reference list is not required because the APA-7 reference entry is an element in each article's analysis.
Dimensions of Human Behavior Experience: Presentation	English	Formal (paper, slide presentation) Or Informal (podcast, TikTok-style video)	APA-7 title page required. Reference list is required. For non-text-based submissions, include a Word document with a title page and reference list.
Interview	Any language agreed upon by you and your interviewee	Respectfully conversational	N/A

Interview Paper	English	Summary: informal Reflection: informal Cultural analysis: formal	APA-7 title page and reference page is required.
Contemporary Social Issue Project	Various. Group discussions may occur in any language. Final submission must be in English.	Formal (paper, slide presentation) Or Informal (podcast, TikTok-style video)	APA-7 title page required. Reference list is required. For non-text based submissions, include a Word document with a title page and reference list.
Emails/communication with instructor	English for Dr. Highfill, please ask other instructors their preference	Respectfully conversational.	Use your professors' title when addressing them: Doctor or Professor

## Course Assignments & Learning Objectives

#	Assignment Title	Assignment Criteria ( <i>See rubric on BrightSpace for all assignments</i> )	Student Learning Objective	Maximum Points and Due Date
1	FutureMe Letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write <b>two letters</b> to yourself: one due Week 2 and one in Week 17</li> <li>Letter #1: respond to 4 reflection questions about identity, learning goals, and comfort discussing differences. Use the links in the assignment descriptions.</li> <li>Letter #2: reflect on learning, growth, challenges, and planned changes. Use the links in the assignment descriptions.</li> <li>APA not required</li> <li>May be written in any language that feels most natural to you</li> <li>Casual tone and first-person writing allowed</li> <li>Please refer to BrightSpace for full expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will demonstrate critical self-awareness by articulating their personal experiences, assumptions, and growth edges related to diversity, equity, and inclusion as a foundational component of ethical and professional practice (CSWE, 2022, Competency 3).</li> <li>Students will critically reflect on their learning journey and articulate a plan for integrating anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into their future ethical and professional practice. (CSWE, 2022, Competency 3)</li> <li>Students will engage in Contextualized Sociolinguistic Practices (CSP) by reflecting on how your identities, languages, contexts, and relationships shape your learning, and by using self-reflection as a way to connect lived experience with academic and community-based knowledge</li> </ul>	<b>FutureMe Letter 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.5 points</li> <li>Week 2</li> <li>2/1 at 11:59 pm</li> </ul> <b>FutureMe Letter 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.5 points</li> <li>Week 17</li> <li>5/14 at 11:59 pm</li> </ul>
2	Dimensions of Human Behavior Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in a cultural activity that you're unfamiliar with. See assignment details for more information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students apply principles of ethical decision-making and critical thinking to complete academic writing assignments that are grounded in relevant academic and professional standards (e.g., ethical use of citations; CSWE, 2022, Competency 1)</li> </ul>	<b>CRAAP Analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 points</li> <li>Week 6</li> <li>3/1 at 11:59 pm</li> </ul> <b>Diary</b>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a <b>CRAAP analysis of two articles</b> related to your chosen dimension of human behavior</li> <li>• Complete a <b>1-2 page diary-style summary</b> describing your experience.</li> <li>• <b>Present</b> what you learned in a paper, slide presentation, podcast, or video. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Address <b>one person dimension</b> (Biological, Psychological, Psychosocial, or Spiritual).</li> <li>○ Address <b>one environment</b> (Physical, Culture, Social Institutions, Families, Small Groups, Organizations, Communities, or Social Movements).</li> <li>○ Include an <b>APA7 reference list</b> citing the two analyzed articles and the textbook or a class lecture.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Please refer to BrightSpace for full expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will synthesize knowledge gained from an experiential activity and scholarly sources to critically analyze the impact of human diversity, demonstrating a foundational understanding of anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion in practice. (CSWE, 2022, Competency 3)</li> <li>• Students will integrate academic, community, and lived experience; reflecting on how social contexts shape meaning; and demonstrating that learning is co-constructed through interaction with diverse environments. (CSP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 points</li> <li>• Week 8</li> <li>• 3/15 at 11:59 pm</li> </ul> <p><b>Presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 points</li> <li>• Week 16</li> <li>• 5/10 at 11:59 pm</li> </ul>
3	Interview Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a semi-structured interview with someone whose background differs from yours (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, disability status).</li> <li>• Engage in CSP-aligned interviewing, valuing lived experience, community-based knowledge, and the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students apply principles of ethical decision-making and critical thinking to complete academic writing assignments that are grounded in relevant academic and professional standards (e.g., ethical use of citations) (CSWE, 2022, Competency 1)</li> <li>• Students will be able to critically analyze the impact of systemic</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paper</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 points</li> <li>• Week 13</li> <li>• 4/19 at 11:59 pm</li> </ul>

		<p>influence of context and relationships on meaning-making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect confidentiality by assigning the interviewee a pseudonym. (They may choose their own, if appropriate.)</li><li>• Write a 2-4 page paper (not including title page or reference list) following APA 7 guidelines.</li><li>• Include three required sections<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a summary of the interview,</li><li>• a cultural analysis grounded in scholarly literature, and</li><li>• a reflective journal section connecting your reactions, insights, and learning.</li></ul></li><li>• In the cultural analysis, cite at least three sources<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ two scholarly articles,</li><li>◦ your textbook (or class lecture).</li></ul></li><li>• Use a professional, academic tone in the cultural analysis and follow disciplinary writing conventions.</li><li>• Demonstrate thoughtful engagement with concepts related to identity, power, intersectionality, oppression, and context.</li><li>• Please refer to BrightSpace for full expectations</li></ul>	<p>oppression, privilege, and intersectionality on an individual's lived experience by synthesizing insights from a personal interview, scholarly literature, and self-reflection, and by articulating their findings in a formal, professional academic paper. (CSWE, 2022, Competency 3)</p>	
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4	Community Inquiry Group Contemporary Issue Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form a Community Inquiry Group and collaboratively explore a contemporary social issue relevant to social work practice.</li> <li>• Select one individual component to complete (summary of issue, theory application, policy analysis, NASW Code of Ethics application, or NASW Cultural Competence Standards application).</li> <li>• Create an individual contribution of 1-2 pages, 1-2 slides, or 1-2 minutes of recorded audio/video, depending on the chosen presentation format.</li> <li>• Develop an individual personal plan describing how you will promote cultural humility and social justice related to the issue in future practice (required for all students).</li> <li>• Use at least one course source (textbook, lecture, or posted materials) and two additional sources (peer-reviewed articles, NASW Code of Ethics, or NASW Cultural Competence Standards).</li> <li>• Follow APA 7 formatting for all citations and include an individual reference list, regardless of presentation format.</li> <li>• Present your group's combined work in one of the approved formats: APA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will apply principles of ethical decision-making and critical thinking to complete academic writing assignments that are grounded in relevant academic and professional standards (e.g., ethical use of citations) (CSWE, 2022, Competency 1)</li> <li>• Students will collaboratively apply their knowledge of social work theory, ethical frameworks, and policy to a contemporary social issue, demonstrating their capacity to analyze systemic oppression and inequity and develop a plan for promoting social justice and cultural humility in their professional practice. (CSWE, 2022, Competency 3)</li> <li>• Students will collaboratively investigate a contemporary social issue by integrating their individually specialized contributions—summary, theory, policy, NASW ethics, and NASW cultural competence standards—to co-construct a multidimensional, CSP-aligned analysis that strengthens their ability to understand, contextualize, and ethically respond to complex social problems in diverse communities. (CSP)</li> <li>• </li> </ul>	<b>Social Issue</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 points</li> <li>• Week 16</li> <li>• 5/10 at 11:59 pm</li> </ul>
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		<p>paper, slide presentation, podcast, or TikTok-style video.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate CSP-aligned collaboration by integrating multiple perspectives, supporting shared meaning-making, and showing how group dialogue informed your individual contribution.</li> </ul>		
5a - 5l	Community Inquiry Group: Critical Discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in five community inquiry group discussions across the semester; a sixth may be completed for extra credit.</li> <li>• Each discussion must involve a live, real-time conversation (in person or via video/phone); text-based exchanges are not permitted.</li> <li>• Each group submits one 1-1.5 page reflection per discussion, and each student must serve as primary author for at least one reflection.</li> <li>• Reflections must include: engagement with course materials; the group's perspectives; two discussion questions; and a brief update on Contemporary Issue Project progress.</li> <li>• APA 7 title page and reference list required for each reflection.</li> <li>• All students must follow norms of respect, civility, and professionalism in discussion and writing.</li> </ul>	<p>Students will be able to engage in professional and ethical communication within a small group setting by demonstrating respectful dialogue, managing personal values, and applying principles of critical thinking to course content in preparation for future interprofessional practice. (CSWE, 2022, Competency 1)</p> <p>Students will be able to apply principles of ethical decision-making and critical thinking to complete academic writing assignments that are grounded in relevant academic and professional standards (e.g., ethical use of citations) (CSWE, 2022, Competency 1)</p> <p>Students will collaboratively engage in reflective, community-informed dialogue that integrates academic, lived, and contextual knowledge to deepen their understanding of human behavior within diverse environments. (CSP)</p>	<p><b>Summaries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 points total</li> <li>• 4 points each</li> <li>• Weeks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 3 (2/28)</li> <li>○ 5 (2/22)</li> <li>○ 7 (3/8)</li> <li>○ 10 (3/29)</li> <li>○ 12 (4/12)</li> <li>○ Extra Credit 14 (4/26)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 11:59 pm</li> <li>.</li> </ul>