

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Number: SW 381S

Unique Number: 63670

Semester: Fall 2009

Meeting Time/Place: 2.122

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FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: VALUES, DIVERSITY, POWER & OPPRESSION

I. Standardized Course Description

This course is based the following assumptions: 1) membership in a population-at-risk group (e.g., people of color, women, gay and lesbian persons) significantly influences an individual's life experiences, world view, and increases risk factors for exposure to discrimination, economic deprivation, and oppression; 2) professional social work ethics and values demand culturally competent practice; 3) it is necessary for students to learn to apply social justice approaches to influence assessment, planning, access to resources, intervention, and research; and 4) professionals and programs have strategies to critically analyze distributive justice, human and civil rights, and global interconnections of oppression. There is an emphasis in this course on the impact of discrimination and oppression by individuals and society on people of culturally diverse backgrounds and orientations.

II. Standardized Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course the students will be able to:

1. Critique and apply culturally competent and social justice approaches to influence assessment, planning, access of resources, intervention, and research;
2. Demonstrate familiarity with the history and heritage of population-at-risk groups, including women and culturally diverse populations, globally as well as those prevalent in the southwestern region of the United States;
3. Understand the social construction of race and ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation;
4. Examine the personal and professional use of self in ethical, culturally competent, and socially just social work practices; and,
5. Assess the impact of discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia), and oppression on public policy, institutional structure, service delivery, and one's own role in promoting social and economic justice.

III. TEACHING METHODS

The content of this course has the potential to be emotionally-charged. Guidelines will be established collaboratively by students and the instructor to create a respectful, safe and challenging learning environment. The instructor has the ultimate responsibility to manage differences and conflict that arise in the course. The instructor will incorporate a variety of teaching methods, including readings, lectures, discussions, audiovisual materials, guest speakers, small group activities, experiential learning exercises and student presentations. A variety of populations-at-risk groups will also be used to critically examine a social justice framework, with emphasis on values, diversity, power and oppression.

IV. REQUIRED READINGS

Required Textbooks

Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W.J., Castaneda, R., Hackman, H.W., Petters, M.L., Zuniga, X. (Eds.). (2000). *Readings for diversity and social justice: An anthology on racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism*. New York: Routledge.

Freire, P. (2007). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum International.

The reader that includes the assigned readings can be accessed in the following manner.

1. Go to the Electronic Reserves Home Page: <http://reserves.lib.utexas.edu>
2. Click "Student Access to Electronic Reserves Course Pages"
3. Search for course by course number, department or instructor (instructor is usually easiest)
4. Click on course number to access page
5. When prompted, enter course page password.

The instructor reserves the right to provide and/or assign additional reading to supplement the texts and reader.

Recommended Readings

Andersen, M. L., and Collins, P. H. (2007). *Race, class, and gender: An anthology*. Sixth Edition. Belmont, CA: Thompson Higher Education.

Dhooper, S. S., & Moore, S.E. (2000). *Social Work Practice with Culturally Diverse People*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

V. Course Requirements

Students will be evaluated on the following required assignments, as well as in-class participation and contribution.

1. Attendance, Preparation, Contribution (10% of grade)

Students are expected to attend all classes and to participate in class discussion and exercises. Students are expected to **complete the readings prior to class**, and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. Failure to regularly attend the class and demonstrate through discussions that one has comprehended the readings will be considered in determining the final grade. In cases where a student misses two or more classes, the instructor reserves the right to lower the student's final grade. Students should not leave class during the break. In extenuating circumstances of absence, the student is to inform the instructor; documentation may be required. Students are responsible for any material (class notes, handouts, etc.) missed due to absence. Periodically, students will be asked to complete brief reaction essays before the end of selected class sessions.

It is important for social workers to be aware of group dynamics including peer groups in which they participate. It is also important to contribute to the group process. A portion of the grade for this course will depend on your level of attendance, preparation, participation, and contribution. For some, this means learning to speak up, to add comments or to raise questions. For others, it means being sensitive and allowing others to contribute.

Policy on Absence for Religious Holidays:

<http://www.utexas.edu/cee/uex/resources/model.shtml>

The UT *General Information* catalog states that "A student who is absent from a class or examination for the observance of a religious holy day may complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence, if proper notice has been given" (p.79). Notice must be given at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates the student will be absent. For religious holy days that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, notice should be given on the first day of the semester.

2. Self Study Paper (15% of grade)

The Self-Study Paper is assigned to address course objectives #2, 3, and 4, and to heighten awareness of your own identity in relation to other cultural groups considered in this course.

Your paper should address the questions: Who am I? Who do others think I am? How do I imagine others see me? What judgments do I imagine they make about what they see? How do I feel about others' reactions to me? Who would I like to be or how would I like to be seen? You are to describe your cultural background, values, and beliefs associated with your group identities, and discuss how these attributes and dimensions of who you are influence your attitudes toward and interactions with others who are "different," as well as their attitudes toward and interactions with you. This paper is to be about 5-7 typed pages. *Self-Study Paper is due the beginning of class, September 11th. You are urged to begin working on this paper immediately.*

3. Book Study – Pedagogy of the Oppressed (20% of grade)

The Book Study is designed to address course objectives #1, 4, and 5, and to give a broader context to oppression, education and social change theory.

This assignment is designed to have the student examine social justice and social change through a theoretical/process lens. It is intended that you both a) demonstrate an understanding of the textual material, and b) discuss application of theory in practice. The Book Study should be between 5-10 typed pages in length.

A separate handout with a more detailed assignment description will be provided by your instructor and also put into the course Blackboard Assignment listing.

Due October 23

3. Immersion Experience and Reflection Paper (20% of grade)

The Immersion Assignment is designed to address course objectives #1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, by providing an opportunity for students to listen to various manifestations of the voices of people from a population for which students have little, no, or negatively charged familiarity. It is an opportunity to gain insight into the perspective and world of the other while simultaneously immersing in the values and ethical mandates of the social work profession.

Students will (1) interview a social worker or community leader (business owner, teacher, police officer, faculty member, city counsel person, minister, priest, etc.) from the community selected for this project, (2) solicit the help as "guide to the culture," of a person from a population-at-risk group with which they are unfamiliar, and attend two different culturally relevant events. The assignment culminates in a

research based paper about the sum of these immersion experiences. Students should remember to cover the intersection between class-gender-power-privilege-race in their interviews, and consider its manifestation in events and the paper.

The purpose of this assignment is to observe and experience a constellation of issues a person from a population-at-risk group different from your own. **Prior to the immersion experience students are asked to submit a type written plan to your instructor for approval (due with Self Study assignment on Sept.11).** Subsequent to the immersion experience, students are asked to write a 7-10 page paper composed on a graduate level (i.e., reflecting critical thinking and informed by the research literature) reflection on the shadowing experience and implications for applying social justice approaches to influence assessment, planning, access to resources, intervention, and research. Grounded in how the “host” perceives such issues, examine the current day oppression for this group and privilege for other groups in relation to this group’s oppression.

Due November 13

4. Culminating Paper: Analysis of Interplay of Social Justice, Values, Diversity, Power & Oppression (30% of grade)

This assignment is designed to bring all learning experiences of the semester together, and provide a context for the student to share his/her personal and professional journey of understanding social justice. In this paper it is intended that you demonstrate an understanding of the textual material, the ability to research concepts and ideas, and appropriate professional use of self; and present them in professionally written form. Cogent integration of what was learned through research, participation in other class assignments, and a depth of consideration of micro, meso, and macro level challenges facing population-at-risk-groups under study should be reflected in the culminating paper. I will be looking for this “depth” as it manifests in your questions and throughout your paper, in my grading of your paper.

A separate handout with a more detailed assignment description will be provided by your instructor and also put into the course Blackboard Assignment listing.

Due December 4

5. Presentation of Paper: Analysis of Interplay of Social Justice, Values, Diversity, Power & Oppression (5% of grade)

Each student will have the opportunity to share the major findings of his/her culminating paper in a professional presentation to the class. This 5-10 minute presentation will use appropriate visual aids and handouts to outline the key points addressed in the paper. Further criteria for professional presentations will be distributed in class.

November 20 or December 4

Overall Criteria for Evaluating All Student Assignments

Your written work should be well-conceptualized and researched, clearly organized (I do require subheaders), and supported by examples and details. Show evidence of your own creative and thoughtful analysis. Papers should follow the APA style format. Additional criterion and evaluation guidelines will also be provided. While any in-class reactions themselves will not be formally graded, the overall quality and depth of thought of students' critiques and reflections will be considered in assigning final grade.

Grading and Weighting of Assignments

Attendance, Preparation, Contribution 10%

Self Study Paper 15% (due Sept. 11)

Book Study 20% (due Oct. 23)

Immersion Experience and Reflection Paper 20% (due Nov. 13)

Culminating Paper 30% (due Dec 4)

Presentation of Paper 5% (Nov 20 or Dec 4)

FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS +/- GRADES WILL BE ASSIGNED AS FOLLOWS:

A = 100-94, **A-** = 93-90, **B+** = 89-87, **B** = 86-84, **B-** = 83-80, **C+** = 79-77, **C** = 76-74, **C-** = 73-70, **D+** = 69-67, **D** = 66-64, **D-** = 63-60, **F** = 59 and below

A = Significantly exceeds assignment/performance expectations (evidence of critical thinking and analysis that resulted in work additional to that laid out in the assignment directions);

B = Assignment/overall performance in course meets all the requirements with evidence of critical thinking and analysis (i.e. coherence and integration of ideas);

C = Average. Assignment/performance meets all the requirements but lacks evidence of in depth thinking and analysis;

D = There are important gaps in the assignment/performance both in terms of requirements and critical thinking and analysis.

VI. CLASS POLICIES

1. It is important for social work practitioners to be punctual in both attendance and in meeting deadlines. Therefore, class attendance is expected, as is handing in assignments on time. Students will lose 3 points for each day that an assignment is late. Any adjustments in due dates must be discussed with the instructor at least 24 hours PRIOR to the regularly scheduled due date.
2. Students who fail to attend class on a regular basis (missing more than one class without a valid excuse, e.g., medical documentation) may receive one or more course grades lower than their final grade when points are totaled.
3. Social work practitioners assume responsibility for themselves. Therefore, it is expected that work handed in will be your own. Scholastic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating during examinations, violates social work values and will result in recommendation for dismissal from the social work program and a referral to the Dean of Student's Office.
4. Social work practitioners are assertive and function as team members. Therefore, feedback about the course is welcome and the course will be viewed as a joint effort between students and the instructor.
5. Social work practitioners respect others. Therefore, differences in values, opinions, and feelings of class members and guest speakers will be respected.

6. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.
7. The University of Texas at Austin provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY.

SW381S Foundations of Social Justice: Values, Diversity, Power & Oppression

Class Discussion And Rules of Participation:

The primary objective of this course is learning through dialogue. Assignments and in class discussions are designed to provide class participants an opportunities to articulate their own views and experiences with the goal of promoting self-exploration and awareness among discussion participants. A further goal is to highlight the **guidelines for having such interactive discussions** of some of the most difficult topics in our society so that students are prepared to more effectively negotiate “diversity,” in their field and subsequent work and life settings.

Ground Rules – Class participation and Discussions

The purpose of these rules is to assist and encourage contributions from the largest number of students possible—safely. We are all encouraged that “safety” is an “ideal,” and that **there is a big difference between “comfort,” and “safety.”** Our clients should not be responsible for making us feel comfortable when race, religion, sexual orientation, class, gender, etc. are issues that impact how they are treated.

- Controversy is not always bad. It can be a tool to promote learning because the situation itself forces complex thinking and effective communication, and can result in more tolerant attitudes towards different points of view.
- Remember your role in this course/school is to be open minded and a respectful learner.
- Remember your goal in discussions of the ‘isms and other issues of diversity is to learn rather than WIN; to risk a little to grow rather than protect to stay the same; to realize there are generally two or more ways to look at a situation/issue; to build relationships not tear them down; to look for and allow possibilities; to illuminate similarities and understand and appreciate differences; to break down assumptions and stereotypes; to give each other strength and courage to go on in the face of the challenge you will all encounter in this great and important profession
- Everyone sets their own boundaries for self disclosure with a commitment to pushing the envelope and not sticking with the status quo...stretching and challenging oneself is key for such a course to be meaningful
- Speak from experience and avoid generalizations about groups
- Respect confidentiality
- Personal information shared in the group, stays within the group.
- Allow others equal time to speak and acknowledge what was said before moving on
- Avoid, or rather everyone agree to observe when the response to a participant is criticizing, judging, patronizing, etc. and agree to work on reducing and eliminating these tendencies in our response set
- Respect other’s developmental process, and rights to express and form their own opinions
- Listen to others without interrupting
- Refrain from blaming or scapegoating others
- Focus on your own learning

- **Amnesty**: a general pardon granted by a government, especially for political offenses; an act of clemency by an authority (your profession and your peers); a period during which offenders are exempt from punishment.
- Granting amnesty does not absolve your instructor of the responsibility to use every available opportunity to correct misinformation, misinterpretation and other challenges in thinking that will impair students' abilities to think and practice according to NASW cultural diversity standards and to provide culturally competent services.