

SOWO 501.004
Confronting Oppression and Institutional Discrimination
Spring 2009

Date.Time.Place Tuesday 9:00-11:50
Tate-Turner-Kuralt Building . Room 102

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Office Hours Before class and/or by appointment.

Course Description This course examines the legacy of systemic oppression and its implications for social work practice. Particular attention is paid to issues of gender, race, class, and the consequences of social inequality on individuals and families.

Course Objectives Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of prejudice and the impact of discrimination on individuals and groups, especially with regard to race, gender, and class.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the historical and social forces that have worked for and against the exclusion, underserving, exploitation, and oppression of groups of people at the personal, institutional, and cultural levels.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the roles played by advocacy groups in addressing barriers to opportunities and services for people and groups who experience discrimination.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of excluding and being excluded, underserving and being underserved, exploiting and being exploited, and oppressing and being oppressed as an individual, family, and group member.
5. Identify and manage feelings of difference and similarity as they relate to your development as a social work practitioner.
6. Identify and consider ways to address institutional and cultural discrimination in social welfare policy and in the management and practice of human services.

7. Demonstrate an ability to apply social work values and ethics to practice with diverse people and groups.
8. Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of human diversity and strengths.
9. Have a greater understanding of yourself, your own feelings, thoughts, and experiences in relationship to discrimination and inequality, particularly as those feelings, thoughts, and experiences affect your desires and goals as a social worker.

Course Rationale

This course recognizes that all social workers have a responsibility to meet the needs of diverse clients in our society, and therefore all social workers should have some specific knowledge about diverse people and groups. The focus is on groups in the context of the richness of their heritage and their historical and ongoing beneficial contributions to society (particularly those groups who have historically and culturally been presented as “problems” that need to be fixed). This course serves as a foundation for understanding the nature, character and consequences of being excluded, underserved, exploited, and oppressed from and by services and the institutions that offer them. Although institutional class oppression, racism, and sexism are the main thrust, the course also explores the implications and interconnections of discrimination of other people and groups who have been historically and institutionally affected by social, economic, and legal biases. These include ethnic groups, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender persons, older persons, and people with disabilities.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require assistance to insure full participation in the course should notify the instructor and the Department of Disability Services. You may reach the Department of Disability Services at 919.962.8300 (Voice/TDD) or <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu>.

Required Texts

Readings will be assigned in class and include the books listed below as well as additional readings available as handouts or on blackboard.

- Adams, Blumenfeld, Castaneda, Hackman, Peters, Zuniga (Eds.) (2000). *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*. NY: Routledge. Referred to in syllabus as Adams et al.
- Carlton-LaNey, I.B. (2005). *African Americans Aging in the Rural South: Stories of Faith, Family and Community*. Sourwood Press, Inc. Referred to in syllabus as Carlton-LaNey.

Evaluation

The School of Social Work operates on an evaluation system of Honors (H), Pass (P), Low Pass (L), and Fail (F). For this class, the numerical value of an H ranges from 94-100; a P ranges from 80-93; an LP ranges from 70-79. A grade of P is “entirely satisfactory.” On a traditional grading scale, a P

would range from an A- to a B-. The grade of Honors signifies that your work is clearly excellent in all respects.

Final Grade

The final grade will be calculated according to the following points (percentages):

Class Participation	15 points
Perceived Engagement	5 points
Research Project	40 points
Weekly Reflections	10 points
Community Mtg	10 points
Reading Facilitation	15 points
Reflection on Learning	5 points
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Total	100 points

You can also receive extra credit (up to 10 points) for an interview/book review (see details below).

Honor Code

The Student Honor Code is in effect in this course. The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance requires that you vouch for your compliance on all your written work. You must write the following pledge in full on each document and sign and date your statement: "I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment."

Attendance

Attendance is crucial to both your learning experience and the learning of your peers. Plan to attend every class. You may have one absence without penalty. Students with more than one absence can earn only a P or lower (depending on other work). Students with more than two absences will receive either an LP or F (depending on other work). Plan also to come to class on time and to stay for the entire class. You will forfeit points on your overall grade for late arrival and/or early departure, particularly if habitual. Note that the class begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 11:50 a.m.

Readings

You are responsible for reading all assigned material before class.

Written Assignments

All papers and written assignments are due at the beginning of class. To obtain permission to submit a paper after the deadline, request a new deadline at least one week before the assignment is due. All written assignments should be typed (with some exceptions which will be announced in class), e-mailed (time sent must reflect submission before class) or printed and stapled or otherwise firmly bound (no folded corners please). The School of Social Work has adopted APA style as the preferred format for papers and publications. The best

reference is the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2001). Papers will be evaluated both on quality of the writing (technical aspects) as well as the quality of the content (your analysis and reflection). Papers should be carefully proofread for both spelling and grammar. You are encouraged to get as much help as you need to produce excellent papers; while plagiarism is completely unacceptable (and a violation of the honor code), as is having someone else do the original work, seeking and accepting help with either the technical writing and/or overall approach or analysis is encouraged. I will accept drafts and make comments in the weeks leading up to any deadline. I also encourage you to show papers to your peers and/or colleagues for their feedback and help.

ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation 15 points

Your participation and attendance is critical. The classroom, at its best, is a learning community. Any absence affects both your personal learning and the collective learning of the class. This course is designed to build both individual and collective learning as a process over time, drawing from our life experiences and sharing our thoughts and feelings with each other as each class builds on the next. Therefore the success of the class depends heavily on your presence and participation in class discussions and activities. Please arrange your schedule so that you can attend every class. Please note too that perfect attendance brings with it an additional 5 points (meaning that you will earn 20 points total for class participation).

Perceived Engagement 5 points

This represents 5% of your final grade and is given at our discretion based on our perception of how involved you are with the class and how much responsibility you have taken for your own learning.

Research Question 40 points

During the course of the semester, we will be looking at the following issues in social work:

- the role of social work in our society
- what is social work for?
- social work and the construction of “normal”
- issues of class in social work
- issues of race and racism in social work
- issues of gender and sexuality in social work
- social work for social justice

Over the course of our 14 weeks together, you will pursue a research question related to one of these topics that is of specific interest to you. If you choose, those of you interested in the same topic can work together (that is totally up to you). Each

student (or group) will present what you are learning about your topic as we address the topic in class. We will work with you as you go through the stages of this project – choosing a topic, defining the question you want to answer, figuring out where and how you want to get information that will help you answer your question, planning your presentation (display of knowledge) to the class, writing drafts of your paper. This project is 40 points of your final grade; you will work on it throughout the semester; we'll spend time on it in class as well.

<i>Points for the Research Question</i>	<i>40 points total</i>
• identifying your research question and approaches	5 points
• drafts (of different sections)	10 points (5 for each)
• presenting to the class (display of knowledge)	15 points
• final paper	10 points

Weekly Reflections 10 points (2 points each)

You will be asked to write five short papers where you reflect on the topics we're discussing in class. This is an informal reflection paper on your thoughts and feelings. The papers do not require research or footnotes or even proper grammar, spelling, etc. These reflections are designed to be an opportunity to document your questions, concerns, insights, frustrations, . . . You may be asked to share what you've written from time to time, although you will never be required to share at any time (except with the two of us). In some cases, we will make time in class for you to write these.

Public Meeting 10 points

You must attend a public meeting related to the topics we cover in class. We will offer examples in class as opportunities arise (i.e. speakers coming to campus or the community). Your assignment is to attend the meeting and submit a 2-3 page paper in which you describe the meeting – its purpose, audience, setting – and reflect on your experience of and response to the meeting and how the experience will (or will not) affect your practice as a social worker. The emphasis in this paper should be on what you took from the meeting (i.e. do not spend most of the paper writing about what you heard and saw, focus on the meaning you make of what you heard and saw). While not a research paper, this is a formal reflection paper (essay) and should be written with attention to both form and content.

Reading Discussion Facilitation 15 points (5 lesson plan, 5 facilitation, 5 reflection)

In pairs, you will lead one discussion over the course of the semester about the week's assigned reading. We will expect, obviously, that you demonstrate a thorough understanding of the reading. You will have at least 45 minutes (more, if you let us know ahead of time that you need more). You must hand in an outline or summary of what you plan to do, along with any discussion questions you will be posing, immediately before you facilitate. The week after you present, you must hand in a

page (each) summarizing your sense of how the discussion went, what went well, what you might do differently, and what you learned.

Reflection on Learning

5 points

In one of the last classes, we will give you a handout with questions designed to help you reflect on your learning over the course of the semester. Your responses to the questions, typed, will be due on the last class.

Extra Credit

up to 5 points

If you would like or feel you will need extra credit points, you can choose to attend a second public meeting. Discuss your intention to seek extra credit with us before beginning any extra credit work.

SAFER SPACE

As long-time facilitators of anti-racism and anti-oppression work, we have come to appreciate the power of a group of people to create transformative spaces where both individual and group learning can be quite profound. Our hope and intent is to do our part to create this kind of a classroom, where we all feel able to take the kind of risks necessary to grapple with the often overwhelming repercussions of our conditioning into oppressive behaviors and attitudes. Doing this work is never easy and yet we cannot promise a “safe” space; in our experience, people use the word “safe” to mean a space where they do not have to experience discomfort or pain. Coming to grips with oppression necessarily encompasses discomfort and pain. On the other hand, we do not expect or want a space where people feel misused, exploited, or manipulated by each other or by us. We take our guidance, therefore, from this statement about “safer” space, adapted from a draft paper presented by Marin Burton at UNC-Greensboro, and used with her permission:

Safer space is a place where people can come as they are to discover, assert, and empower their voices. Safer space is a place where people can come as they are to encounter and listen deeply to the voices of others. Safer space is grounded in respect; it is a place where we assume positive intent. People within safer spaces are working toward developing trust over time and are seeking to understand first. Safer spaces require continual work and mindfulness -- a seemingly safe space can turn unsafe within moments. How we handle those moments is what really determines the safety of the space. Spaces are safer when we take responsibility for what we say, feel, and think to the extent that we can and when we admit that we cannot when that is the case.

SYLLABUS

The following syllabus is our best approximation of what we will be doing during the class periods this semester. We have designed this course as a process, meaning that each class builds upon the next. At the same time, every process has its own unique path, which means that we may need to shift the specific focus of a class or series of classes based on the desires, concerns, and needs of the class as we move through the semester. So while this syllabus can serve as an overall guide, the focus of each class and the assignments will be reviewed week to week. If you miss a class, you must check with a classmate or look on blackboard to find out the specific homework assignments for the next class. The deadlines for the semester projects are as indicated in the syllabus, unless we agree as a class to change them.

We will be doing a lot of writing of various kinds in and out of class. Please keep everything you write (in a notebook or file) and bring your writing to class every week.

You will see multiple articles and readings listed each week. These are possible readings for the week; the required reading for the week will come from this list, another reason for you to check blackboard for the exact assignment. We've done our best to insure that the readings we post are relevant, interesting (at least in our opinion), accessible, so you are welcome and encouraged to read more than what's required.

Note: **Please check blackboard every week before you begin your assignment for the week;** do NOT go by this syllabus for your week to week homework assignment because it might have changed from what you see here. Make a habit to check blackboard each week.

1. January 13 **Setting the Stage**

- In Class Reflection: After this first class, I _____.

2. January 20 **Inauguration Day . No Class**

3. January 27 **Creating a Community of Learning**

- Read:
 - Chapters from *Prison Writings: My Life is My Sun-Dance*, Peltier – blackboard
 - *Stories of Faith, Family and Community*, Carlton-LaNey – pp. 1-43
- Bring to class a sentence, phrase, paragraph from the reading that strikes you in some way.

3. Feb 3 **Why Are People Poor? A First Look at Class**

- Read:
 - *Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*, Alfred Lubrano – blackboard
 - *A Question of Class*, Dorothy Allison – blackboard
 - *Profiles of Elderly African-American Farm Women*, Carlton-LaNey – pp. 44-73
- Research Question: identify your question, methods, sources
- 5:30 today – view *Walls that Bleed* about the 1969 riots on NCA&T's campus, in auditorium

4. February 10 **Class and Race: A look at the intersections**
Reading Facilitation 1

- Read:
 - Doubly Divided: The Racial Wealth Gap, Meizhu Lui – blackboard
- Writing Reflection 1
- Research Question: draft a general outline of your approach to the question, the research needed, interview interests and possibilities

5. February 17 **Race: Digging deeper**
Reading Facilitation 2

- Read:
 - Defining Racism: ‘Can We Talk’, Beverly Daniel Tatum – Adams 9
 - What is Whiteness, Paul Kivel – blackboard
- Public Meeting Assignment deadline

6. February 24 **Privilege and Internalized Oppression**
Reading Facilitation 3

- Read:
 - Privilege, Allan Johnson – blackboard
 - White Men and the Denial of Racism, Cooper Thompson – Adams 13
 - Internalized Racist Oppression, Donna Bivens – blackboard and/or http://www.thewtc.org/Internalized_Racism.pdf
- Writing Reflection 2
- Research Question: first draft due, introduction complete, one or two sections begun, interview completed, next steps clear
- Displays of learning on race

7. March 3 **Race and Gender**
Reading Facilitation 4

- Read:
 - The Color of Violence Against Women, Angela Davis – blackboard and/or <http://www.colorlines.com/printerfriendly.php?ID=72>
 - Misogyny, Gangsta Rap, and The Piano, bell hooks – blackboard
- Displays of learning on race and/or gender

March 10 **Spring Break**

8. March 17 **Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Class**
Reading Facilitation 5

- Read:
 - Age, Race, Sex, and Class, Audré Lorde – blackboard
 - Dragon Ladies, Snow Queens, and Asian-American Dykes – Adams 53
 - Disposable People, Bob Moser – blackboard and/or <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=149&printable=1>
- Writing Reflection 3

9. March 24 **Sexism and Heterosexism**
Reading Facilitation 6

- Read:
 - “Night to His Day”: The Social Construction of Gender, Judith Lorber – Adams 32
 - For Men, Straight Label is Inflexible, Zane – blackboard
 - The Transgender Spectrum, Lisa Lees – Adams 56
- Research Question: second draft due, introduction and several sections completed, final sections and conclusion drafted (including relevance to social work)
- Displays of learning on sexism and/or heterosexism

10. March 31 **Heterosexism and Class**
Reading Facilitation 7

- Read:
 - Can’t Afford to Get Sick, Leslie Feinberg – blackboard
 - Homophobia: Why Bring It Up? Barbara Smith – blackboard
 - Becoming a Black Man, Daisy Hernandez – blackboard
- Writing Reflection 4
- Displays of learning on sexism and/or heterosexism

11. April 7 **Intersections Revisited**
Reading Facilitation 8

- Read:
 - Poverty is a Woman’s Issue, Donna Brazile – blackboard
 - Racist Politics and Homophobia, Suzanne Pharr – blackboard
- Displays of learning on intersections

12. April 14 **Resistance and Liberation**
Reading Facilitation 9

- Read:
 - Walking Our Talk, Leslie Feinberg – blackboard
 - Reflections on Liberation, Suzanne Pharr – Adams 86
 - Developing a Liberatory Consciousness, Barbara Love – Adams 89
- Writing Reflection 5
- Displays of learning on resistance and liberation
- Research Question: final paper due

13. April 21 **Taking Action**

- Read:
 - To be assigned
- Displays of learning on social justice and social work

14. April 28 **Reflection and Evaluation**

- Read:
 - On Getting Along, Zinn – blackboard
- Reflection on Learning due
- All extra credit projects due