COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to present human diversity and population-at-risk content for the academic foundation curriculum at the graduate level. This course serves as a base for content on human diversity and populations-at-risk that is integrated into other areas of the MSW curriculum. The course addresses human diversity and its complexity through the use of a multilevel approach, which includes looking at interactions and dynamics from within and between different size systems. It incorporates emphasis on the dual perspective and the strengths derived from a variety of theoretical frameworks (i.e. Ecological, Empowerment, Feminist, Social Class Stratification, Constructivist/Social Constructionist, and Narrative). Learning experiences guide students in the exploration of experiences such as race, ethnicity, culture, whiteness, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, other forms of human diversity, personal and social identities, oppression, and social justice. Oppressive and discriminatory experiences (i.e., economic deprivation, sexism, homophobia, racism, and classism) as well as resiliency and strengths often encountered by the poor, women, people of color, gay and lesbian persons, and individuals with mental and physical disabilities within the United States are major themes addressed throughout this course.

Students are expected to address these issues in relation to personal values, professional policy, and practice. In sum, this course is designed to introduce graduate students to a repertoire of social work skills and strategies for social work practice within the context of human diversity and populations-at-risk.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To provide a foundation for understanding human diversity through the use of theoretical frameworks, particularly in terms of cultural/ethnic, socioeconomic status, gender and sexual orientation: racism, sexism, and homophobia which are expressed in discrimination, economic deprivation and oppression in historical and current trends.

2. To explore and critique varying concepts of culturally/socially diverse values.

3. To promote professional/personal self-awareness regarding ways that racism, sexism, and homophobia affect the personal and professional lives of social workers.

4. To understand the institutional and attitudinal barriers which restrict access to life sustaining and life enhancing resources for particular groups.

5. To prepare students for culturally competent practice with applies the dual perspective multi-dimensional practice within the context of diverse populations.
6. To promote student understanding and use of a repertoire of strategies and approaches which will challenge discrimination, economic deprivation, and oppression and promotes social justice.

7. To promote critical analysis among students when exploring human diversity issues, needs, and strengths within the context of social work practice.

8. To develop the ability to control or even change assumptions, stereotypes and false beliefs, and therefore feel less need for defensive behavior.

9. To develop the ability to let others teach us about the differences that makes a difference for them.

VALUES AND AWARENESS COMPETENCIES:

1. To create a sense of cultural values and identity for the social work student in his/her own ethnic background.

2. To develop a sense of cultural awareness of self and other ethnic and cultural individuals and groups in the social work student.

3. To sensitize the social work student to his/her own racism, prejudice, and discrimination to others.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL COMPETENCIES:

1. To develop a historical and current knowledge and understanding of human diversity, racism, sexism, homophobia, discrimination and oppression as they exist in American society.

2. To develop an understanding of how racism, sexism, and homophobia impact the social service delivery system in the United States and impedes client access to resources.

3. To develop knowledge and skills in practice in working with people of color, women and gay/lesbian populations.

4. To foster knowledge and skills in counteracting discrimination, oppression and economic deprivation in populations of color, women, and gay/lesbian populations.

5. To promote knowledge and skills in practice assessment and intervention at the micro, meso, and macro levels including differential assessment with populations of color, women, and gay/lesbian populations.

6. To cultivate skills in conducting ethnographic and differential assessments and interventions with people of diverse values, world views, and communication patterns.

7. To develop knowledge and skills reflecting a broad repertoire of strategies for individual, family, group and community change which contributes to
culturally sensitive social work practice and social justice.

CLASS NORMS

1. Everyone understands that open communication through dialogue will foster mutually beneficial learning experiences in class.
2. Students feel as if they have a voice.
3. Students feel that when they speak, people listen with open minds, and open ears.
4. Everyone-students and faculty - expects to learn from this interactive and dialogic process.
5. Students realize that each has partial knowledge and therefore needs one another to develop a fuller understanding.
6. Students feel as if who they are is recognized, understood, and assumed to be a critical part of their capacity to learn.
7. Everyone realizes that the class is one forum to express one’s ignorance, misinformation, incomplete knowledge, and that voicing such ideas is one way of expanding learning.
8. Everyone recognizes the importance of the personal and the experiential as one source of knowledge in combination with other sources.

COURSE FORMAT

This course is conducted on a discussion-laboratory basis. Students are expected to have read all assigned readings prior to class sessions. Readings are not rehashed in class. Student preparation and participation are integral parts of this learning process. Students will lead and participate in exercises and group discussions on relevant issues. The instructor may use a variety of teaching methods including, lecture, video, role-play, discussion, small and large group activities, in and out of class assignments, tests and quizzes. The instructor may make changes to the syllabus and will provide oral and/or written explanation previous to doing so.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the use of distinctive ideas or works belonging to another person without providing adequate acknowledgement of that person's contribution. Regardless of the means of appropriation, incorporating another's work into one's own requires adequate identification and acknowledgement. Plagiarism is doubly unethical because it deprives the author of rightful credit and gives credit to someone who has not earned it. Acknowledgement is not necessary when the material used is common knowledge. In this course a grade of {F} can be expected by students who plagiarize. For more information go to the University website at (http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual/UMP14150.htm).

WRITING GUIDELINES

Written work must be mechanically and stylistically acceptable. Serious deficiencies in areas such as spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and coherent organization will result in lower grades. Where appropriate, the following criteria are used to evaluate assignments:

- Effective use of knowledge: the integration of concepts, theories, models, and information from readings, lectures, and class discussions is used in a way that demonstrates that students understand the concepts used.
• Clarity: syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Sentences and paragraphs are clear, unified, and coherent. The inclusion of personal points of view along with rationale, logic, and examples: generalization of ideas, observations, concepts, and experiences are carefully supported with empirical data, conceptual work generated by authors, practitioners, or researchers, and/or original thoughts.

• The inclusion of personal points of view along with rationale, logic, and examples: generalization of ideas, observations, concepts, and experiences are carefully supported with empirical data, conceptual work generated by authors, practitioners, or researchers, and/or original thoughts. Use refereed journal articles.

• Organization: thesis in introduction, smooth relationship between ideas and between paragraphs, clear overall structure, including an integrative concluding section. Careful planning is evident in the organization.

• References in appropriate format (use of APA format).

• If students need help or have questions, they are encouraged to contact the instructor in a timely manner. Incompletes are not given automatically. A grade of Incomplete may be assigned only in cases clearly beyond the student’s control. It is the students’ responsibility to fulfill the University’s and/or Divisions policies and procedures for obtaining an incomplete for a course grade. Students who fail this policy will automatically be assigned a grade of FAIL for this course.

* (Students are reminded to retain a duplicate copy of all written assignments prior to submitting them for grading in the event of accidental loss or destruction.).

As a guideline for organizing your workload, note that it is standard educational expectation that students spend 2-3 hours outside of class time for every hour spent in class. Homework is an expected part of class and is counted as part of your classroom participation. Homework may include in-class informal writing, take-home assignments, readings, preparing for tests, watching movies and other assignments given by the professor.

Criteria for Evaluating Writing

+= Thoroughly Covered = The points made in the essay answer are all relevant to the thesis and support it. The paper makes all the points essential to the thesis. Essay elements demonstrate a correct understanding of the material covered, or, where room for disagreement exists, present thoughtful and plausible interpretations of difficult material. Essay elements use terms, examples, comparisons, criticisms, and the like, as needed, to unambiguously convey a coherent view or explanation of the ideas or arguments being explained.

√ = Well Covered = The points made in the essay answer are all generally relevant to the thesis and tend to give it solid support. The essay answer makes most of the points essential to the thesis. Essay elements evince a mostly correct and a competent understanding of the material covered, or, where room for disagreement exists, present, overall, thoughtful and plausible interpretations of difficult material, even if one or two key elements are not covered or are given questionable treatment.

∗ = Partially Covered = The essay makes one or more of the points essential to development of the thesis, although a number of points essential to the thesis may be overlooked or glossed-over, and the argument advanced may include more than a few elements that lend little if any support to the thesis. Some important and obvious points may be misunderstood or missing.
Some points may be undeveloped or unrelated to each other. Connections may have to be supplied by the reader.

∅ = Not Covered = The essay answer has a thesis and appears to argue for it, but the essay is a series of scattered or unrelated points. The content of the essay evinces misunderstanding of several key concepts (relative to the purposes of the assignment) or understanding of them is not conveyed, yet some key concepts are covered and are not entirely misunderstood.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

If you would like to request academic accommodation due to a disability, please contact Services to Students with Disabilities- Lassen Hall room 1008, phone: 916-278-6955 (voice only) or 916-278-7239 (TDD only) or http://www.csus.edu/sswd. Office hours are Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (except holidays). If you have a letter from Services to Students with Disabilities please present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations you may need for this class. Remember it is the students' responsibility to let the instructor know what accommodations may be needed.

COURSE GRADING

Each student’s final grade will result from averaging the grades obtained from all the assignments and classroom participation required by the course.

1. Participation (25 points)
2. Reaction Paper (25 points)
3. Mid-Term (50 points)
4. Ethnographic Paper (100 points)
5. Group Presentation Final (50 points)

Total 250 points

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ATTENDANCE

Because this class uses group exercises, experiential exercises and class discussions, student’s interest, time, commitment to the course, as well as personal/professional development, is highly valued. Attending all scheduled class sessions and being prepared for class discussion and activities are required. The following criteria will be used to assist in assessing students’ attendance. There is no substitute or make-up for attendance.
As a matter of fairness and equity anyone missing three (3) excused or unexcused scheduled class sessions loses a letter grade on the final course grade.

Missing five (5) or more scheduled class sessions will result in a grade of Fail from the course and will require the student to make arrangements to complete the course in a fashion acceptable to the Program Director and Division of Social Work.

Repetitive lateness will affect the final grade. Being 15 minutes or more late (or leaving class early) to class more than three (3) times will affect the final grade.

**PARTICIPATION (50 points)**

*Guidelines for student contribution to class participation*

1. Arrive for class on time.
2. Turn off cell phones.
3. Attend each class and be an active participant by participating in class discussions, small group discussions, role plays, group exercises, and homework assignments.
4. Read and think about the readings prior to each class so that you may contribute to the class in an intelligent manner.
5. Challenge yourself to be an active learner by asking questions, discussing the course content with your classmates, and by addressing your concerns and criticisms to the professor.
6. Challenge yourself to be open to hearing the ideas and thoughts of people with whom you disagree.
7. If you have concerns about your understanding of the course content or assignments I expect that you will let me know so we can discuss your concerns.
8. Thoughts on ethical practice. As developing social work professionals, it is expected that students will become familiar with and adhere to the *NASW Code of Ethics*. This code for professional behavior should guide your actions in class and in the field agency setting.
9. Disrespect for student colleagues will not be tolerated as classroom dynamics must be safe, appropriate, on topic, open and respectful of diverse opinions and experiences.
10. Students take ownership of expression of bigotry. In other words, rather than attribute negative characteristics to a social group or to a member of that group, students begin with, “This is how I have been taught to believe,” or “I don’t like to admit it, but I do have the belief that…”

**Criteria for Evaluating Participation**

**Outstanding Contributor:** Contributions in class reflect exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are always substantive, provide one or more major insights as well as direction for the class. Challenges are well substantiated and persuasively presented. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished markedly.

**Good Contributor:** Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive, provide good insights and sometimes direction for the class. Challenges are well substantiated and often persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished.
Adequate Contributor: Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive, provide generally useful insights but seldom offer a new direction for the discussion. Challenges are sometimes presented, fairly well substantiated, and are sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished somewhat.

Non-Participant: This person says little or nothing in class. Hence, there is not an adequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be changed.

Unsatisfactory Contributor: Contributions in class reflect inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive, provide few if any insights and never a constructive direction for the class. Integrative comments and effective challenges are absent. If this person were not a member of the class, valuable air-time would be saved.

REACTION PAPER (25 points)

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate your ability to think critically about theory, research, practice and current events related to diversity issues covered in this class. A reaction paper is a concise and critical evaluation of the weekly readings, articles or other media. A good reaction paper manages, in a few pages, to synthesize the kernel of the readings. By "synthesize" I don't mean "to summarize" but rather to re-present the material as you have understood it, through your own interpretive lens. This isn't easy to do, but is a valuable writing skill to acquire or perfect. It requires that you have thoroughly read and understood the article(s) or chapters assigned for the week, and have seen the "big picture" behind the words. You have to be an active reader. In addition, you have to carefully and innovatively think about the readings.

MID-TERM (50 points)

Each student is expected to complete his or her work independently. This is an in-class open-book exam. The purpose of this exam is to prepare students for more conscientious practice with diverse and vulnerable populations.

ETHNOGRAPHIC ASSIGNMENT (100 points)

The goal of ethnographic interviewing is to understand and appreciate experiences and worldviews of people who are different from us. We do this by asking the client to be a cultural guide. The practitioner is no longer the expert, but a learner. The social worker assumes a position of informed not-knowing, in which the clients educate the practitioner about their lives. This information should come from the client own words, since they can offer the most accurate description of their experience (Walker, 1997).

Chose a person to interview who is culturally different from you in one or more ways. Use the following categories as guidelines:

Ethnicity
Religion/Spirituality
Socioeconomic Class
Paper Guidelines

Introduction: Include who you are interviewing and why you wanted to interview them. Why was interviewing this person important to you? What did you want to know about them? What were your assumptions about them going into the interview? What did you assume you would learn? State clearly your interview question or statement which encompasses what you want to know. For example; What is the experience of a Latina woman who is the first in her family to go to college?

Interview Summary:
Where did the interview take place? Do you think this affected the outcome of the interview in any way? Include a BRIEF synopsis of topics covered in the interview. Interview should be no longer than one hour in length. All interviews to be audio-taped.

Literature Review:
You have collected several articles, chapters, etc. Integrate the information you have found throughout the literature review. Using this method you will need to be able to clearly understand the concepts in the different material to make smooth transitions. The information should flow and not be choppy. This literature review should include clear connections and/or transitions between the literature and the interview (see Course Writing Expectations).

Themes and Discussion:
After you have completed the interview, you will need to listen to the interview and choose a theme or themes which emerged during the interview. This means you may have to listen to the tape more than once. A theme is defined by the client and interpreted by you. This mutual exploration is an important part of the ethnographic process.

Discuss why you chose the theme. Did it fit into your original question? Include excerpts of what was said which was meaningful to you or to the interviewee. Was it the opposite? Were there other themes that also overlapped or were relevant? Be cautious not to choose too many themes.

Conclusion:
Bias can be introduced simply by observing. Did you find this to be true in your interview? Why or why not? Were you trying to solve a problem or simply listening? Whether or not you understand the person’s point of view, were you able to accept their voice as a valid and reliable realistic form of data? As a social work profession how does this information impact your understanding of this particular group? How will it affect your future practice with diverse and/or vulnerable populations? What did you get out of this experience?

12-15 pages

Bibliography
Include APA format of all references cited in paper.

Understanding Marginalization : Final Group Presentation (50 points)
The purpose of this presentation is to give students the opportunity to focus on a diverse group different from themselves. Students will teach their classmates/colleagues what they have learned regarding this group. Select a group that you are interested in learning about. Be creative in your presentation. Your goal is to educate your colleagues. All members of the group will receive the same grade. Prepare a 35 - 50 minute presentation (including time for class discussion) on that group which includes the following information.

- Introduce your groups chosen population
- Provide (illustrate) a detailed timeline of events of this marginalized population
- Discuss how historical oppression and marginalization of this group affect this population in the present day
- Provide the class with an outline of your presentation and timeline.

All group members will receive the same grade. In some instances where a student’s performance is below average, the instructor reserves the right to give this student a separate grade apart from the group grade.

Required Texts


Required Readings: Found on LOCUS; Accessed through the Library Homepage.


References

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