I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course examines social work’s historical and current commitment to diversity and social and economic justice within a global context. Grounded in theoretical perspectives on injustice and oppression and conceptual models of social and economic justice, the course explores the relationship between the social construction of difference and persistent inequalities operating at personal, institutional, and societal levels. Utilizing a strengths perspective and principles of empowerment practice, the needs, experiences, and resilience of diverse and at-risk populations are addressed, including groups distinguished by race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion and spirituality, sex and gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and socio-economic status. Course content, structure, and learning activities are designed to enhance personal and professional self-awareness in order to develop knowledge, values, and skills required for culturally-sensitive social work practice.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Articulate the linkages between societal definitions of difference and the development of identity and worldviews among individuals and groups in a multicultural society.

2. Specify the major concepts of the distributive justice and capabilities models of social and economic justice and identify implications of both for social work practice.

3. Utilize theoretical perspectives to analyze the interlocking dynamics of discrimination and oppression as they operate at the personal, institutional, and societal levels.

4. Analyze the common characteristics and elements of oppression as they apply to diverse groups and at-risk populations.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the impacts of oppression in the lives of individuals from diverse groups and at-risk populations, as well as the adaptive strategies and sources of resilience used to cope with such oppression.

6. Demonstrate appreciation of human diversity within oneself and others and its importance to both personal and professional development and the profession of social work.

7. Demonstrate increased critical self-awareness of personal and professional beliefs, attitudes, and values as they influence one’s practice with diverse groups and at-risk populations.

8. Demonstrate the knowledge, values, and skills required for culturally-sensitive and ethical social work practice, including a working knowledge of the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice and the NASW Code of Ethics.

9. Integrate theoretical and empirical knowledge of oppression and oppressed groups into social justice strategies relevant to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

I. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts/Readings


[Indicated in Course Schedule as “Text:”]

Supplemental Readings: A number of additional required readings that are listed on the Course Schedule using full citations. These readings may be accessed through Blackboard or from the original sources.

B. Recommended Texts


C. Other Recommended Resources and Media

Southern Poverty Law Center website: www.splcenter.org
Teaching Tolerance: http://www.tolerance.org/
Understanding Prejudice website: www.UnderstandingPrejudice.org
United for a Fair Economy website: www.faireconomy.org
Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights: www.civilrights.org/
D. **Course Assignments**
Detailed instructions for all assignments are included at the end of this syllabus. Assignments are to be submitted to the instructor on the due date. *Unless you have prior permission from the instructor, five (5) points will be deducted for each day the assignment is submitted late. No extensions will be granted the day an assignment is due.*

Assignment 1: Personal/Professional Learning Journals – **Due Classes 4, 8, 10, & 13**

Assignment 2: Agency/Organizational Analysis – **Due Class 7**

Assignment 3: Class Presentation – **Due Classes 6-12 as assigned**

Assignment 4: Understanding Dimensions of Difference Paper – **Due Class 14**

E. **Grading Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Professional Learning Journals</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agency/Organizational Analysis</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Dimensions of Difference Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

F. **Attendance and Participation**
Students are required to attend classes and are expected to participate meaningfully in class discussion/exercises. The class participation grade will be determined by the instructor’s perception of the student’s preparation for and contributions to class discussion/activities. Different students will make different kinds of contributions. Some will have an easy time with spontaneous interactions while others will be more comfortable making planned statements about key ideas from the readings or other sources. Both types of contributions are valued. Unexcused absences will lower the attendance and participation grade. More than three unexcused absences will result in a grade of F.

G. **Course and Instructor Evaluation**
NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at [http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations](http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations) using your CUA username and password. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

IV. **CLASS EXPECTATIONS**

A. **Scholastic Expectations**
Please refer to NCSSS Announcements or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and be carefully proofread by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.
B. **Academic Honesty**
Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and Appropriate Program Handbooks.

C. **Accommodations**
Students with physical, learning, psychological or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.

D. **Additional Class Expectations**
In order to assure safe and honest exploration of sensitive issues in a course focusing on the consequences of oppression and privilege for all people, the following ground rules or guiding principles will be followed:

1. We acknowledge that social inequalities and oppression exist.
2. We acknowledge that we have all been systematically exposed to misinformation about groups to which we and others belong.
3. We cannot be blamed for misinformation we have learned, but we must take responsibility for repeating it after we have learned otherwise.
4. We will not blame people who have been oppressed for their oppression.
5. We will assume that people are doing the best they can - we will not demean, devalue, or in any way “put down” people for their experiences, perceptions, questions, or comments.
6. We will actively pursue information about our own groups and those of others, share it with classmates, and translate this knowledge into professional behavior.
7. We will respect the confidentiality of classroom discussions about specific individuals, groups, communities, or organizations that could be identified in any way. This includes information that classroom colleagues, including the instructor, share about themselves.

**NCSSS** is committed to creating an open and inclusive learning environment where all members - including students, faculty, administrators, and staff – strive to listen to and learn from one another. We recognize that in a multicultural society, it is inevitable that issues or tensions relative to diversity and different life experiences will arise. It is how we handle these events that matters. Therefore, when such issues occur – inside or outside of the classroom - we agree to engage in respectful and productive discussion with one another until learning is enhanced and understanding is deepened by all involved.

Revised 6/28/12
Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>TOPICS, READINGS, &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Course Introduction &amp; Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Unit I: Theoretical Understandings of Diversity, Oppression, and Social &amp; Economic Justice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Defining Difference in Self and Others: The Social Construction of Difference</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Experiencing Difference: Privilege, Power, Inequality &amp; Stigma</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Text:</td>
<td>#3: “The social construction of difference”</td>
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<td><strong>Supplemental Readings:</strong></td>
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</table>
#4 The Meaning of Difference: The Dynamics and Consequences of Oppression

Required Readings

Text: #4 “Theoretical foundations” & “Conceptual foundations”; #5 “Five faces of oppression”; #6 “The cycle of socialization”

Supplemental Readings:


- 1st Journal DUE: Reflections on Class #2 or #3

#5 Models of Social and Economic Justice: Distributive Justice and Capabilities Approaches

Required Readings

Supplemental Readings:


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**Unit II: Dimensions of Difference and Oppression**

#6 Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigrant Status

Required Readings

Text: Section #2 -“Racism” (pp. 59-139)

- Student Presentation: Race, Ethnicity, & Immigrant Status
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>TOPICS, READINGS, &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Religion and Spirituality</td>
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<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Text: Section 4</strong> - “Religious Oppression” (pp. 227-313)</td>
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<td>• Student Presentation: Religion and Spirituality</td>
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<td>• Agency/Organizational Analysis Paper DUE</td>
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<td>#8</td>
<td>Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Sex and Gender</td>
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<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Text: Section 5</strong> – “Sexism” (pp. 315-369) and <strong>Section 7</strong> – “Transgender Oppression” (pp. 423-456)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student Presentation: Sex and Gender</td>
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<td>• 2nd Journal DUE: On Class #6 or #7</td>
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<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Sexual Orientation</td>
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<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Text: Section 6</strong> – “Heterosexism” (pp. 371-421)</td>
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<td>• Student Presentation: Sexual Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Disability</td>
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<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Text: Section 8</strong> – “Ableism” (pp. 457-529)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Students Presentation: Disability</td>
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<td>• 3rd Journal DUE: Reflections on Class # 8 or #9</td>
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<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Age</td>
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<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Text: Section 9</strong> – “Ageism and Adultism” (pp. 533-585)</td>
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<td><strong>Supplemental Reading:</strong></td>
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<td>• Student Presentation: Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>Dimensions of Difference: Socio-economic Status</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Text: Section 3</strong> - “Classism” (pp. 141-226)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student Presentation: Socio-Economic Status</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CLASS TOPICS, READINGS, & ASSIGNMENTS

#13 Social Work & Social and Economic Justice: Origins and Current Commitment

Required Readings

Supplemental Readings:


NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice on NASW’s website: www.naswdc.org

- 4th JOURNAL DUE: Reflections on Class #10, #11 or #12

#14 Working for Social and Economic Justice: Visions and Strategies for Change

Required Readings

Text: #7 “The cycle of liberation” and Section 10 – “Working for social justice: Visions and strategies for change” (pp. 587-639)

Supplemental Readings:

- Understanding Dimensions of Difference Paper DUE
Assignment #1  
Personal/Professional Learning Journal

During the semester, students will be exposed to various ideas and experiences of others that may be challenging to their worldview and personal beliefs or values. As developing critical self-awareness is a major objective of the course, this assignment is designed to help students consider reactions/responses they have to assigned readings and classroom experiences. Each student will complete 4 “journal entries” to be turned in as indicated on the course outline and the schedule listed below:

Each entry must include separate reactions/responses to:

a) **one reading** (specify title and author); **AND**

b) **some aspect of the class session** (lecture, class discussion, class exercise, speaker, etc.).

In addition, students should also address **at least one major concept** that applies to that class session (e.g., privilege, oppression, the norm, the other, lack of prior claim).

For each entry, include:

- The **number and topic of the class being discussed and the date the journal is being turned in** should be listed at the top of each journal entry (e.g., Journal #1: Class #2 - Defining Difference in Self and Others; turned in 9/27/10).

- **Reflections and insights** regarding the experience [for both the specific reading and the specific class activity separately (lecture, class discussion, class exercises, guest presentation, etc.)]. Address the following 4 steps:

  1) What was your **immediate reaction** to the experience? What is your reaction as you **think back** on it now?

  2) Explain what it is **about you** that **predisposes** you to this reaction. For example, can you connect your reaction to previous personal or professional experiences; family or cultural heritage; societal messages; prejudices, biases or lack of knowledge/exposure?

  3) Identify **specific strengths** and/or **limitations** of your personal and professional development that are revealed in your self-reflection in Step #1.

  4) For each strength or limitation identified, list an **implication for further growth** and identify a **specific plan for supporting** this growth.

Journal entries are expected to move beyond description to demonstrate self-analysis based on **thoughtful reflection and critical self-assessment**. Simply stated, the point of this assignment is to turn “the eye inward” and conduct an honest self-assessment. It is important to note that students’ entries will be kept confidential and will not be graded on the **content** of their entries, but rather on students’ **ability to thoughtfully reflect** about their reactions/responses and walk themselves through the 4 steps of the process.

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Entries should be approximately **4-5 pages long, typed, numbered, and double-spaced**. They will be assessed based on the following criteria:

a. Comprehensive coverage of the **4 required areas** for both a **reading** and a **class activity**.
b. Evidence of thoughtful and **critical self-reflection** and analysis.
c. Ability to produce **readable, well-organized** journal entry.

**Points assigned as follows:** Journal submissions that provide comprehensive coverage of the reading, class experience, and self-analysis and show evidence of critical thinking and are well organized and written will yield 5 points. Journal submissions that have limitations in one of these three areas will yield 3-4 points. Journal submissions that have limitations in more than one area will yield 1-2 points depending on the limitations.

Assignment 2
Agency/Organizational Analysis

Select an agency or organization that is committed to fighting for social justice for an oppressed group or special population. Develop an analysis using course concepts that addresses the areas listed below. Students may gather the necessary information for this analysis through interviews with agency/organization staff, review of agency/organization material, observation of agency/organization operations, or other relevant data collection methods. At **least 2 means of data collection** must be used. Students should also utilize readings and class discussion in the development of this analysis.

1. Briefly describe the **major data collection methods** utilized to gather information for this analysis.

2. Briefly describe the agency/organization, including a **description of the targeted group or population** that this agency/organization serves (try to get specific agency information that describes the client population) and the **specific social justice issues** that the agency/organization addresses.

3. State the agency/organization’s **overall mission and major objectives**. How does the mission and objectives relate to the concepts and definitions of social justice covered in class, especially in regards to the **utilitarian, libertarian or egalitarian** perspectives? Give details or examples to justify your conclusions.

4. Describe the **major strategies/interventions** utilized by this agency/organization in working towards social justice and analyze using the following: Do these strategies/interventions reflect an approach best characterized as:
   a. **Distributive justice** (ala Rawls) or
   b. **Capabilities approach** (ala Sen/Nussbaum)?
   Give a clear rationale with examples to provide a foundation for your analysis.

5. Identify the **strengths and limitations** of the agency/organization’s work toward social justice. What do they do well and what areas need improvement?

(Instructions continue…)
Papers should be between 6-8 pages long, typed, numbered, and double-spaced. All citations and reference list should follow 2010 (6th ed.) APA referencing style. Papers will be assessed based on the following criteria:

a. **Comprehensive coverage** of all assigned areas
b. **Organization** and **logical flow** of ideas
c. Evidence of **ability to use course concepts** in analysis of agency/organization
d. Correct **grammar, spelling, punctuation**, and use of **APA referencing** style.

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**Assignment 3**

**Class Presentation**

Each group (2-4 students per topic depending on class size) will be responsible for a 45 minute class presentation (30 minutes presentation; 15 minutes for questions and discussion) on an **issue related to oppression as it applies to a particular dimension of difference**. Groups are encouraged to apply what we are learning in class about the connection between the social construction of difference and the experience of oppression. Presentations should go beyond facts and statistics to increase and deepen understanding. Presentations should also make explicit the specific implications of their presentation for generalist social work practice.

Each group will need to work together to develop the presentation and every group member should take an active role during the presentation. Be creative! Presentations that are simply read in class are less interesting and less appreciated by fellow students. Examples from media (newspaper articles, videos, books, etc.) that reflect societal stereotypes, hate crimes, prejudicial behavior or treatment by individuals or institutions or that provide examples of resiliency, strengths, and positive social change by the targeted group or population are encouraged.

- It is the responsibility of the presenters to arrange for any audio-visual equipment needed for the presentation. **This should be done well in advance**. The form to request equipment set up is found on the CUA website at: http://digitalmedia.cua.edu/requestforms/event.cfm
- The group may assign additional readings necessary for the class to benefit from the presentation, which must be made available at least 1 week prior to the presentation.
- Any additional readings, surveys or guest speakers must be approved by the instructor in advance of the date of the presentation.

Presentations will be evaluated based on feedback from your peers (see the evaluation form at the end of the syllabus) and the instructor’s assessment of the content and delivery of the material. Each student in the group will receive the same grade. Therefore, each group member is expected to contribute equally to the presentation.

**NOTE:** It is important to realize that you cannot cover everything about your general topic area in this presentation - that is not the point of the assignment! Your task is to select one aspect of the topic and provide a presentation that deepens or expands understanding of your selected focus.

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Revised 6/28/12
Assignment #4
Understanding Dimensions of Difference Paper

Students will select a “dimension of difference” that represents a substantially different life experience than their own. They will explore this dimension of difference in two ways: through a review of the literature and a personal interview. The paper should include the following sections:

1. Introduction: Briefly identify the “dimension of difference” you selected and discuss why you targeted this aspect of the human experience. Why were you drawn to enhance your understanding in this particular area?

2. Literature Review: Summarize the scholarly literature on the experiences of this targeted group or population in the dominant culture within the United States. Using the 2 class handouts on the “5 Characteristics of Oppression” and the “12 Common Elements of Oppression,” identify and analyze the major dynamics and consequences of oppression that are reflected in the literature. Use a minimum of 8 scholarly sources from the professional literature beyond the class materials.

3. Interview: Interview an individual who represents your selected “dimension of difference.” Ask about his or her personal experiences of living with difference, remembering to set aside your own preconceived assumptions and listening with both open heart and open mind. Solicit his or his perspectives on the impacts of oppression especially as they may have affected his or her biopsychosocial-spiritual development and visions for both self and the world. In writing up this interview be sure to include:
   a) a summary of the major or most critical points that the interviewee offered and
   b) a reflection on what the experience was like for you (e.g., how easy/difficult was it to ask someone to be interviewed, how was it to ask the questions and invite the stories, what did you notice about yourself during the interview, and what impact or meaning did this experience hold for you once it was completed.)

Papers should be between 6-8 pages long, typed, numbered, and double-spaced. All citations and reference list should follow 2010 (6th ed.) APA referencing style. Papers will be assessed based on the following criteria:

a. Comprehensive coverage of all assigned areas
b. Organization and logical flow of ideas
c. Evidence of ability to identify/apply course concepts reflected in the literature review
d. Ability to provide thoughtful reflection about the interviewee’s sharing and your own reactions/responses throughout the interview process
e. Correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and use of APA referencing style.

NOTE: The person selected as the interviewee for this assignment cannot be a client in your field placement or work setting!!!
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
National Catholic School of Social Service
Washington, DC  20064
SSS 570: Diversity in a Multicultural Society
Group Presentation Evaluation Form

Topic of Group Presentation_______________________________   Date ____________

Please circle the appropriate answer using the following Rating Key:
5 = Excellent      4 = Very Good     3 = Average      2 = Fair      1 = Poor

1.  Presenters’ Knowledge of Subject Matter
   5  4  3  2  1

2.  Organization of Material/Ability to Deliver Information
   5  4  3  2  1

3.  Effectiveness of Presentation/Relevance to Generalist Social Work Practice
   5  4  3  2  1

4.  Creativity and General Teaching Methods (visual aids, handouts, lecture, etc.)
   5  4  3  2  1

5.  Effective Use of Media (if applicable)
   5  4  3  2  1

6.  Overall Rating
   5  4  3  2  1

7.  What did you like most about this presentation?

8.  What suggestions would you give for improvement?

9.  Instructor Feedback:

10. Group Grade (Instructor Only):

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