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

   Additional 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
   Understanding Prejudice website: www.UnderstandingPrejudice.org
   United for a Fair Economy website: www.faireconomy.org

Revised 6/15/09
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, 6, 8, 10, & 12
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>
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<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<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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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 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.
# Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Course Introduction &amp; Orientation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unit I: Theoretical Understandings of Diversity, Oppression, and Social &amp; Economic Justice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Defining Difference in Self and Others: The Social Construction of Difference</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Text Reading #1:</strong> “The complexity of identity: ‘Who am I’”</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Experiencing Difference: Privilege, Power, Inequality &amp; Stigma</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Required Readings</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Text Reading #15:</strong> “Complexion”</td>
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</table>
4 The Meaning of Difference: The Dynamics and Consequences of Oppression

Required Readings

**Text Readings:** #2 “The cycle of socialization”; #3 “Prejudice and discrimination”; #4: “Discrimination comes in many forms: Individual, institutional, and structural”


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

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

Required Readings


*Unit II: Dimensions of Difference and Oppression*

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

Required Readings

**Text Readings on Racism: Introduction** “Racism”; #7 “A different mirror”; #8 “Racial identity and the state: Contesting the federal standards for classification”; #9 “Defining racism: 'Can we talk?'”; #11 “Seeing more than black and white”; #12 “The heartland’s raw deal: Meatpacking is creating a new immigrant underclass” #13 “White men and the denial of racism”; #16 “An Asian lesbian’s struggle”; #17 “A bill of rights for racially mixed people”


- **Student Presentation: Race, Ethnicity, & Immigrant Status**
- **2nd Journal DUE: Reflections on Class #4 or #5**
- **Agency/Organizational Analysis Paper DUE**

7 Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Religion and Spirituality

Required Readings


- **Student Presentation: Religion and Spirituality**

8 Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Sex and Gender

Required Readings

**Text Readings on Sexism : Introduction** “Sexism”; #32 “‘Night to his day’”: The social construction of gender”; #33 “Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity”; #34 “Which outlaws? Or, ‘Who was that masked man?’”; #37, “Feminism: A movement to end sexist oppression”; #38 “Ain’t I a woman?”; #39 “I’m not fat, I’m Latina”; #40 “The body politic”; #43 “Why I fight back”; #44 “Adopting the principle of pro-feminism” #45 “Revving up for the next twenty-five years”

- **Student Presentation: Sex and Gender**
- **3rd Journal DUE: On Class #6 or #7**
9 Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Sexual Orientation

Required Readings
Text Readings on Heterosexism: Introduction “Heterosexism”; #46 “How homophobia hurts everyone”; #47 “Biphobia”; #48 “Internalized homophobia among gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals”; #51 “What does the Bible say about homosexuality?”; #52 “Murder will out – but it’s still open season on gays”; #53 “Dragon ladies, snow queens, and Asian-American dykes: Reflections on race and sexuality”; #54 “Memoirs of a gay fraternity brother”; #55 “The men with the pink triangles”; #57 “Why don’t gay people just keep quiet? Listening to the voices of the oppressed”; #58 “International Bill of Gender Rights”; #59 “Becoming an ally”

• Student Presentation: Sexual Orientation

10 Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Disability

Required Readings
Text Readings on Ableism: Introduction “Ableism”; #60 “The Disability Rights Movement”; #61 “Disability beyond stigma: Social interaction, discrimination, and activism”; #62 “A separate and unequal education for minorities with learning disabilities”; #63 “The deaf community and the culture of deaf people”; #64 “The hidden dimension of learning: Time and space”; #66 “Wheel power”; #67 “Recovering our sense of value after being labeled mentally ill”; #68 “Equal opportunities – yes, please”; #71 “Computers and disability”; #72 “Invisible and on center state: Who do we think we are, anyway?”

• Students Presentation: Disability
• 4th Journal DUE: Reflections on Class #8 or #9

11 Dimensions of Difference and Oppression: Age

Required Readings


Revised 6/15/09


- **Student Presentation: Age**

**12**

**Dimensions of Difference: Socio-economic Status**

**Required Readings**

**Text Readings on Classism: Introduction** “Classism”; #73 “Sharing the pie” & “The sinking majority”; #74 “Who owns how much?”; #75 “Tired of playing monopoly”; #78 “Two hierarchies”; #79 “Why are droves of unqualified, unprepared kids getting into our top colleges? Because their dads are alumni”; #80 “Working-class students speak out” #81 “So how did I get here?”; #82 “On the meaning of plumbing and poverty”; #85 “Responsibility for reducing poverty”

- **Student Presentation: Socio-Economic Status**

**Unit III: Social Work and Social and Economic Justice**

**13**

**Social Work and Social & Economic Justice: Origins and Current Commitment**

**Required Readings**


**NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice** on NASW’s website: [www.naswdc.org](http://www.naswdc.org)

- **5th JOURNAL DUE: Reflections on Class #10, #11 or #12**
Working for Social and Economic Justice: Visions and Strategies for Change

Required Readings

Text Readings on Working for Social Justice: Introduction; #86
“Reflections on liberation”; #88 “The cycle of liberation”; #92 “How to interrupt oppressive behavior”; #93 “Working assumptions and guidelines for alliance building”; #95 “Having the tools at hand: Building successful multicultural social justice organizations”


- 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 6 “journal entries” to be turned in as indicated on the course outline and the schedule listed below:

Each entry must include 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 (diversity, privilege, oppression, the norm, the other, lack of prior claim, etc.).

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., Class #2 - Defining Difference in Self and Others; turned in 9/24/07).

- 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 how you specifically plan to support 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.
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.

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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 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 answers.

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?
Papers should be between 6-8 pages long, typed, numbered, and double-spaced. All citations and reference list should follow 2001 (5th 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.

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 tend to be 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 group may assign additional readings necessary for the class to benefit from 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.
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 2001 (5th 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.
### Group Presentation Evaluation Form

**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA**  
*National Catholic School of Social Service*  
Washington, DC  20064  
**SSS 570: Diversity in a Multicultural Society**

#### 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. **Media That Reflect Stereotypes (if used)**
   
   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:**

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