

**UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

**SW 518 Social Work and Oppression**

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**Office hours:** By appointment thru e-mail or telephone

**Code of Conduct:**

It is the student's responsibility to have read the College of Social Work Ethical Academic and Professional Conduct code that is in the College of Social Work MSSW Handbook ([www.csw.utk.edu](http://www.csw.utk.edu))

**The Honor Statement:**

An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity. (*Hilltopics, 2002*).

**Disability**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact the University of Tennessee Office of Disability Services at 865-974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

**Course Description**

This course is a required Foundation course that examines the sources, dynamics, and impact of oppression in U.S. society as it is manifested in both social/ecological systems with an emphasis on economic systems, and personal experience. At the level of social/ecological systems, the course examines the ways in which oppression and discrimination are institutionalized in the various sectors of American society in forms such as racism, sexism, classism, ageism, physical and mental ability and heterosexism. At the level of individual experience, the course examines the impact of oppression on individuals who vary in such characteristics as race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, age, and religion. The course also considers connections among forms of oppression; the ideology of domination and subordination which supports and perpetuates oppression; and social work's role in challenging oppression and promoting a socially and economically just society and responsive, humane social agencies through strategies such as grassroots organizing and political activism.

**Course Rationale**

By virtue of its historical traditions, values, and professional code of ethics, social work has a commitment and responsibility to challenge oppressive social systems and to work with individuals and groups who experience the impact of all forms of oppression. In order to meet

this professional commitment, students need to understand the forms and consequences of oppression and institutional discrimination; they must be able to analyze and identify the dimensions of oppression and privilege in all institutional and organizational contexts; and they must know appropriate strategies to challenge and change oppressive conditions.

### **Course Objectives**

By the completion of the course, students are expected to be able to (through course assignments, class activities, class discussions and/or exams):

1. Describe the ways in which the intersections of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and other identifying characteristics shape both individual experience and social systems of privilege, discrimination and inequality in United States society ;
2. describe the mechanisms and effects of institutional forms of discrimination and oppression, including racism, sexism, social classism, economic classism, heterosexism, ablism, and ageism;
3. explain how the ideology of domination and subordination underlies, links, and perpetuates various forms of oppression;
4. describe between-group and within-group variations in individuals' experiences of and responses to oppression;
5. articulate social work's vision of an inclusive, socially and economically just society;
6. identify the role of strategies, such as grassroots organizing and political activism, in social change efforts to counter oppression within and across institutional sectors;
7. describe the role of social workers in regard to agency accountability in countering oppression in service delivery settings and organizations within and across institutional sectors?
8. analyze the mechanisms and effects of oppression and institutional discrimination within social agencies and service delivery systems and devise strategies for countering discrimination and creating responsive and humane agencies and service systems.

### **Required Textbook**

Andersen, M.L. & Collins, P.H. (1998). Race, class, and gender (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

### **Sources of Additional Required Readings**

Cohen, M.N. (1998). Transforming the culture of intolerance. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Cyrus, V. (Ed). (1993). Experiencing race, class, and gender in the United States. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.

Freeman, J. (Ed). (1994). Women: A feminist perspective (5th ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.

Katz, P.A. & Taylor, D.A. (1988). Eliminating racism: Profiles in controversy. New York: Plenum Press.

Kimmell, M.S. & Messner, M. A. (Eds.). (1995). Men's lives (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Ploski, H. A. & Williams, J. (Comps. & Eds.). (1989). The Negro American: A reference work on the African American. Detroit: Gale Research.

Rothenberg, P. S. (Ed.). (1995). Race, class, and gender in the United States. (3rd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Turner, J. H., Singleton, R., & Musick, D. (1980). Oppression: A socio-history of black-white relations in America. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

All of the required readings are on reserve in the Nashville library.

Students may note that some of the readings assigned for a given week might, on the surface, appear to have better fit better the subject matter for a different week. For example, readings on racism appear throughout the Course Outline, as do readings on gender and class. In fact, these readings are not misplaced. They have been included where listed for two reasons: 1) because they illustrate a central characteristic of oppression that is relevant to that day's reading, and 2) because this course uses an iterative process in which subject area are periodically revisited to deepen or expand the student's knowledge of that area. Similarly, *Eyes on the Prize* is shown at various points throughout the semester to illustrate concepts central to oppression and to provide iterative opportunities for learning.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. In order to receive a "B" in the course, all students are to write six (6) brief papers. Credit will be given for a paper if it is responsive to the assignment, clearly written, and generally free of grammatical errors. That is, the paper must merit a grade of "B" or better.

In the brief papers, students are to respond to the question or questions distributed in class that will address the readings in the syllabus units covered in the course from September 9 through December 2. The papers are to be two pages long, and typed, double-spaced. Starting with the class on September 6, a question or questions on the following week's readings will be distributed in each class. The paper responding to the question(s) is due that following week. These papers are to be distributed among the syllabus units as follows:

Paper # 1- Distributed September 6, dues September 13

Paper #2- Distributed September 20, due September 27

Paper # 3- Distributed October 4, due October 11

Paper # 4- Distributed October 18, due October 25

Paper # 5- Distributed November 1, due November 8

Paper # 6- Distributed November 15, due November 22

2. For a grade of "B+," students are to write six (6) brief essays as discussed in "1" above **and** write a term paper. The term paper is due on **November 8**. Guidelines for the paper will be distributed in class. Credit will be given for this paper if it merits a grade of "B" or better.
3. For a grade of "A," students are to complete the six (6) brief essays, the term paper, **and** develop a presentation for the class on some aspect of oppression.

### **CLASS POLICIES:**

1. Students are expected to attend class regularly. They are expected to arrive on time and to remain in class until the completion of the class period. Any student missing more than 3 classes will receive a failing grade.
2. Incompletes will be given only according to the rules specified in the UT Catalogue. Please refer to the catalogue for additional information.
3. All written assignments are due at the beginning of the class period of the date specified on the course outline. Assignments received after that time will be marked down significantly.
4. Assignments are to be completed correctly at the time of submission. The instructor will be available to discuss papers and group assignments until one week prior to their due date. After that no assistance will be given. No papers or assignments may be resubmitted once a grade has been given.

5. Cheating and/or plagiarizing will not be tolerated. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be subject to the disciplinary procedures outlined in the UT Student Handbook.

6. University policy regarding religious holidays will be observed. As stated by the UT student handbook, any student may request to be excused from class to observe a religious day from his/her faith.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Class 1: August 21, 2002- Syllabus and introduction to the course**

Introductions of class members

Review of syllabus

Discussion of examples of oppression in the news

#### **Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

#### **Readings for next class:**

Anderson & Collins, pp. 1-93; 328-353 (Introductory Concepts in Oppression)

### **Class 2: August 28, 2002- Introductions to the mechanisms of oppression**

Discussion of the basic mechanisms and processes that create and sustain oppression:

Outgroups

Colonization

Types of racism

Privilege

Social work ethics and oppression

Exercises using the articles from today's reading

Guest speaker

#### **Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

#### **Readings for next class:**

Anderson & Collins, pp. 403-505 (American Identity and Culture)

### **Class 3: September 4, 2002- Introduction to the mechanisms of oppression, continued.**

Oppression in the news (Class discussion)

*Eyes on the Prize I*

Discussion of *Eyes on the Prize I* focusing on the mechanisms of oppression identified in the readings

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

#### **Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

#### **Readings for next class:**

Anderson & Collins, pp. 94-125 (Race and Privilege)

Kincaid, "Girl" in *Cyrus* (pp. 70-71)

**Class 4: September 11, 2002- Racial oppression**

Oppression in the news (Class discussion)  
Guest speaker regarding racism  
Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Spickard, P.R., Fong, R., & Ewalt, P.L. (1995). *Undermining the very basis of racism, its categories*. Social work, 410, 581-584.

Turner, Singleton, & Musick, Chapter 2. *Types of Racism*.

**Class 5: September 18, 2002- Racial oppression**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)  
*Eyes on the Prize 2*  
Discussion of *Eyes on the Prize 2* with emphasis on illustrating the concepts in today's reading

In-class computer lab assignment: *The Trail of Tears: A Virtual Walk with the Cherokee*

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Anderson & Collins, pp. 270-327 (Effects of Racial and Ethnic Oppression on Families)

**Class 6: September 25, 2002- Ethnic oppression**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)  
Discussion of the contribution of various immigration processes to oppression  
Completion of in-class computer lab assignment  
Guest speaker from the Hispanic community  
Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Qoyawayma, In Cyrus, *To Be Hopi or American?*, pp. 23-25.

Novak, In Cyrus, *Neither WASP nor Jew nor Black*, pp. 25-30.

Alvarez, In Cyrus, *El Hilo Que Nos Une: Becoming a Puerto Rican Woman*, pp. 30-33.

Wu, In Cyrus, *In Search of Bruce Lee's Grave*, pp. 33-35.

Henry, In Cyrus, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, pp. 53-57.

Dorris, In Cyrus, *Native Americans v. the U.S. Government*, pp. 188-193

**Class 7: October 2, 2002- Ethnic oppression**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)  
*Eyes on the Prize 3*  
Discussion of *Eyes on the Prize 3* with an emphasis on the characteristics of oppression from today's reading  
Social work ethics and immigration issues

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Anderson & Collins, pp. 126-174 (Class and Inequality)

**Class 8: October 9, 2002- Class oppression**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

Guest speaker

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Sanchez, In Cyrus, *Sex, Class, and Race Intersections: Visions of Women of Color*, pp. 194-197..

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, In Cyrus, *Historical Discrimination in Immigration Laws*, pp. 171-176.

Zandy, In Cyrus, *Decloaking class: Why class identity and consciousness count*, pp. 103-112.

Greer, In Cyrus, *Something is robbing our children of their future*, pp. 141-146.

Sweet, In Cyrus, *We're not Bums*, pp. 147-149.

**Class 9: October 16, 2002- Class oppression**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)

*Eyes on the Prize 4*

Discussion of *Eyes on the Prize 4*

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Anderson & Collins, pp. 175-269 (Gender and Sexism)

**Class 10: October 23, 2002- Gender oppression**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)

Guest Speaker

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Phillips, In Cyrus, *In the Beginning there are Babies*, pp. 61-65

Reifler, In Cyrus, *Time Warp in A Toy Store*, pp. 65-67

Hyde, In Cyrus, *How Women are Treated in Language*, pp. 67-70

Chafetz, In Cyrus, *Some Individual Costs of Gender Role Conformity*, pp. 70-74

Hyde, In Cyrus, *Gender Roles and Ethnicity*, pp. 75-78

Gunn, In Cyrus, *Where I Come from is Like This*, pp. 78-83

Thompson, In Cyrus, *The Male Role Stereotype*, pp. 85-87

**Class 11: November 6, 2002- Gender oppression**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)

*Eyes on the Prize 5*

Discussion of *Eyes on the Prize 5*

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Altman, In Cyrus, *Why are Gay Men so Feared?*, p. 91

Pharr, In Cyrus, *Homophobia and Sexism*, pp. 303-307

Levine, In Cyrus, *The Life and Death of Gay Clones*, pp. 55-67

Katz, In Ore, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, pp.137-149

Rust, In Ore, *Sexual Identity and Bisexual Identities: The Struggle for Self-Description in a Changing Landscape*, pp. 160-177.

**Class 12: November 13, 2002- Sexual orientation-based oppression**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)

Guest speaker

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Anderson & Collins, pp. 328-402 (Disabilities and Oppression)

**Class 13: November 20, 2002- Oppression of the physically, mentally, and psychologically challenged**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)

*Eyes on the Prize 6*

Discussion of *Eyes on the Prize 6*

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

**Readings for next class:**

Anderson & Collins, pp. 507-562 (Policy and Intervention)

**Class 14: November 27, 2002- Mechanisms for change**

Oppression in the news (class discussion)

Exercises and group discussion of today's readings

Social work ethics and social change

Student presentations

**Assignments for next class:**

Oppression in the news

