SOWK 215 / SOC 215: Vulnerable Populations

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Dordt College

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SOCIAL WORK 215
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS
Dordt College
Spring, 2000

Instructors:
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I. Rationale

This course analyzes past and present groups considered economically and socially vulnerable in American society. From a biblical view, it examines causes, consequences, and implications of this vulnerability, emphasizing what these causes and consequences imply for social work practice.

The curriculum of the social work program is built on the general education program of the college. As continuation of that foundation, Social Work 215 uses fiction/nonfiction and film as a way of observing and understanding the human condition.

II. Educational Outcomes

1. Understand the factors involved in the etiology and maintenance of vulnerable populations.
2. Develop an awareness of these populations from the persons-in-environment perspective.
3. Understand practice with these populations within the values and ethics of the social work profession and with an understanding of and respect for the positive value of diversity.
4. Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and the strategies of change that advance social and economic justice.
5. Understand the history of the social work profession and its current structures and issues, particularly related to vulnerable populations.
6. Understand the demonstrate the use of communication skills differentially with a variety of client populations, colleagues, and members of the community.
7. Formulate and understand a Christian response to vulnerable populations.
8. To apply critical thinking skills in relation to at-risk-populations.

This course contributes to learning which enables the beginning Bachelor level social worker to:
1. Identify and assess the relationship between people and social institutions in order to intervene effectively in a manner that benefits all.
2. Promote the effective and humane operations of social systems.
3. Intervene effectively on behalf of vulnerable populations.
4. Work with others to create new, improved or modified social systems that are more responsive, equitable and/or just.
III. **The Liberal Arts Perspective and Prerequisites**

This course builds on the liberal arts perspective. Students will be challenged to think critically and to utilize clear and effective writing skills. Vulnerable populations are also studied within a historical context. Social Work 215 builds on Principles of Sociology, Introduction to Social Work (SOWK 216) and Racial and Ethnic Minorities. Sociology 215 will specifically address value issues related to the identification of vulnerable populations.

Students need either SOC 201, SW 216, or SW 225 as a prerequisite to this course.

IV. **Course Content**

**Human Behavior and the Social Environment**

This course examines various populations at risk in the understanding that people are in dynamic interactive relationships with all aspects of their environment. They shape and are shaped by the systems in which they live. These systems may be both a help and a hindrance to those who are considered vulnerable.

**Social Work Values and Ethics**

Social Work 215 examines vulnerable populations from the person-in-environment or socio-cultural perspective. Issues regarding social justice and personal freedom are addressed. Members of class will be assisted to develop an awareness of their personal values and to clarify conflicting values and ethical dilemmas. Specific values addressed will include regard for individual worth and dignity, the importance of mutual participation, acceptance, confidentiality, honesty and responsible handling of conflict.

**Vulnerable Populations and Diversity**

There are several content areas addressed during this course. The most major is that of the dynamics and issues of diverse populations identified as vulnerable or at risk. These include women, gay and lesbian persons, those distinguished by AIDS, alcoholism and drug abuse, homelessness, and physical or mental ability. Issues related to these groups are closely associated with racism, discrimination and oppression.

**Social and Economic Justice**

We will examine vulnerable populations from the perspective of understanding the dynamics and consequences of social and economic injustice. Theory will also be covered regarding strategies of intervention for achieving social and economic justice and for combating the causes and effects of institutionalized forms of oppression.

**Social Welfare Policy and Services**

We will also cover content regarding historical and current patterns of provision of social welfare services, the role of social policy in helping or deterring people in the maintenance or attainment of optimal health and well-being.
V. **Expectations**

**A. Book Reviews.**
You will choose two works of fiction/nonfiction each involving one of the populations studied in this course. You will research and select your books with the help of the instructor and Ms. Sheryl Taylor, Dordt librarian.

You will write a report on each work that you choose to read. Each of the following must be covered in the report.

2. **Theoretical Concepts** which enable the reader to understand the vulnerable nature of the population covered in the book you have chosen.
3. **The Societal Context.** How is the problem typically dealt with in our culture? How does this provide assistance to, or hinder those who are vulnerable?
4. **Risks and Needs.** Because of the nature of the population you have read about, what special needs does this population face, and what additional risks do they encounter?
5. **Programs and Services.** Which programs and services are mentioned in the book you have read? These may range from policies and provisions of the law.

**Due Dates:** February 10        March 21

These will be worth 50 points each. Papers will be graded on the following: Content relating to social work. The degree to which you have covered the above areas, as well as appropriate use of professional written communication.

**B. Film.**
In the case of each vulnerable population studied in the course, students are expected to view a film chosen by the instructors. Films used in this course will demonstrate and portray a particular way of knowing the life realities of each particular population. Film viewing will take place outside of regularly scheduled class time. Viewing times will be announced prior to each showing. Students are expected to view all films used during the course.

**C. Film Viewing Report.**
You will choose three of the films for the three assignments of film viewing reports. Each of these reports are worth 10 points. Film report due: In each case on the date of film discussion.

**D. Film Analysis.**
You will also complete one film analysis. Guidelines for both the reports and the analysis will be discussed in class. The analysis is worth 50 points. Film analysis due: Thursday, April 6.

**E. Three tests covering lecture material, films, case studies and guest speakers.**
VI. **Text:**


VII. **Methods of Instruction**

A. Lecture  
B. Small group discussion  
C. Films/videos  
D. Speakers  
E. Case Studies

VIII. **Evaluation**

A. Class attendance is expected. Grades may be lowered in the event of unexplained or excessive absences at the discretion of the instructor.  
B. Three tests throughout the semester.  
C. Two book reports.  
D. Grading:  
   
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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>3 tests @ 100 points each</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 book reports @ 50 pts. each</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 film analysis @ 50 pts. each</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 film viewing reports @ 10 pts. each</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>60%</td>
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Total: 480
Tentative Class Schedule
Soc/SW 215
Vulnerable Populations
Spring 2000

Tuesday, January 11-
Introduction to the course.

Thursday, January 13-
Introduction to film component of the course.

Tuesday, January 18-
Domestic Violence - Lecture
Theoretical Understandings
Societal Context
Risks and Needs of the Population
Programs and Services
(Meeting Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)

Thursday, January 20-
Speaker from Family Crisis Center (Objectives 3, and 7)

Tuesday, January 25-
Review and discussion of case study of domestic violence (Objectives 1, 2, 7, and 8).

Thursday, January 27-
Review and discussion of Affliction, (meeting objective #2)

Tuesday, February 1-
Women, children and poverty - Lecture
Theoretical Understandings
Societal Context
Risks and Needs of the Population
Programs and Services
(Meeting Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Thursday, February 3-
Speaker From (Department of Human Services?)
(Meeting Objectives 3 and 7)

Tuesday, February 8-
Review and discussion of Little Man Tate (meeting objective #2)

Thursday, February 10-
Case Study of Women, children and poverty (Objectives 1, 2, 7, and 8)
First book review due. (Demonstrating and assessing course objective 6.)
Thursday, March 23
Test #2
Over Lecture Content, Films, Guest Speakers, and Case Studies
Format is Objective as well as Essay/Short Answer
Testing over Course Objectives 1-5, 7, and 8.

Tuesday, March 28-
No Class - Campus Wide Assessment Day

Thursday, March 30
Mood disorders - Lecture
   Theoretical Understandings
   Societal Context
   Risks and Needs of the Population
   Programs and Services
   (Meeting Course objectives 1-5)

Tuesday, April 4
Review and discussion of Fisher King

Thursday, April 6
Suicide - Lecture
   Theoretical Understandings
   Societal Context
   Risks and Needs of the Population
   Programs and Services
   (Meeting Course Objectives 1-5)
Film Analysis due

Tuesday, April 11
Review and discussion of Sophie's Choice

Tuesday, April 13
Case study of Mood Disorders and Suicide (Meeting objectives 3, 7 and 8)

Thursday, April 20
AIDS - Lecture
   Theoretical Understandings
   Societal Context
   Risks and Needs of the Population
   Programs and Services
   (Meeting Course Objectives 1-5)

Tuesday, April 25
Review and Discussion of Philadelphia

Thursday, April 27
Guest speaker on Aids in the 3rd world.

Final Exam-
May 4, 2000 at 8:00 - 10:00
(Assessing the meeting of Course Objectives 1-6, 7, and 8)
Format to be Objective, and Short Answer/Essay


Social Work 215
Reading List

Bach, Alice, *Waiting For Johnny Miracle*
Barrile Jackie, *Confessions of A Closet Eater*
Blackstone, Terri, *Never Say Goodbye.*
Chase, Trudi, *When Rabbit Howls*
Conroy, Randy, *The Prince of Tides*
Coret, Harriet, *In and Out The Windows.*
Cox, Elizabeth, *Thanksgiving: An AIDS Journal*
Curlin, Charlotte, *Cages of Glass, Flowers of Time*
Doherty, Berlie, *Dear Nobody*
Dragon-wagon, Cresent, *The Year It Rained*
Endler, Norman, *Holiday of Darkness*
Eyerly, Jeanette, *See Dave Run*
Family Services of America, *Rose's Story.*
Fedders, Charlotte, and Elliot, Laura, *Shattered Dreams*
Gilmore, Charlotte Perkins, *The Yellow Wallpaper*
Green, Rosemary, *The Diary Of A Fat Housewife.*
Greenburg, Joanne, *I Never Promised You A Rose Garden*
Grissen, Lillian V., *A Path Through The Sea*
Hunt, Nigel, *The World of Nigel Hunt.*
Jones, Adrienne, *Street Family*
Kozol, Jonathan, *Amazing Grace*
Macleod, Sheila, *The Art Of Starvation*
Morrison, Toni, *The Bluest Eye.*
Nuefeld, John, *Lisa Bright and Dark*
Pelzer, David, *A Child Called It*
Rapoport, Judith, *The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Washing*
Roles, Patricia, *Facing Teenage Pregnancy,*
Rubin, Theodore I., *Jordi, David and Lisa.*
Schneidman, Edwin S., *The Suicidal Mind*
Schoenewolf, Gerald, *Jennifer and Her selves.*
Schreiber, Flora Rheta, *Sybil.*
Shilts, Randy, *And the Band Played On*
Swados, Elizabeth, *The Four of Us.*
Wexler, Susan Stanhope, *The Story of Sandy.*
Whitt, Anne Hall, *The Suitcases*