1. **Course Description:**

   This course explores the origins and development of selected social variables characterizing racial, ethnic, religious, class and other cultural groups in contemporary U.S. society. Social and behavioral science theories and research findings on the allocation of different roles, status and opportunities to these populations are studied. A multidimensional, social justice and multicultural framework is established to examine privilege, discrimination and oppression. The course will emphasize that effective social work practice with diverse cultural groups involves understanding professional ethics in the context of the values of both the dominant society and the cultural community.

2. **Course Content:**

   The course content includes an exploration of historical, social, and political contexts for the study of diverse cultural groups, as gleaned from contemporary social science theories and conceptual frameworks. The various components that make up a culture will be examined in conjunction with a survey of selected racial, physical or mental ability, ethnic, class, immigrant, sexual orientation, and gender groups in the United States. The status of these cultural groups is studied, including constructs such as the family, economic and educational attainment, development of informal and formal institutions within the cultural community, and modes of spiritual expression. The course also explores the impact of multiple social group memberships on social roles, help seeking and coping behavior, attitudes and values. In addition, the course contains a review of the contemporary conceptual frameworks influencing social science knowledge about intergroup relations and conflict including, but not limited to, culturally sensitive, culturally competent, and ethnoconscious practice. The course examines the relationships among privilege, discrimination and oppression for selected cultural groups, and the implications of these forces for social work practice, the administration of human service organizations, and the formulation of public policies. Individual and small group activities related to the construction of critical consciousness in social work are also included.
3. Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to perform the following skills:

1. Identify the historical, social, and political forces influencing the social constructions of diverse cultural groups in the United States by:
   a. Evaluating social science frameworks for the discussion of culture
   b. Distinguishing differences among culturally sensitive, culturally competent, multicultural and ethnoconscious frameworks in social work;
   c. Differentiating the experiences of indigenous and immigrant populations;
   d. Reviewing one’s own social group memberships and how they have influenced students’ opportunities and challenges.

2. Discuss the influences of discrimination, oppression and privilege on life experiences of diverse cultural groups by:
   a. Labeling forms of discrimination, prejudice and oppression as these differentially affect U.S. cultural groups including the poor, gay/lesbian/bisexual, ethnic, gender, racial, physical and mental ability, and social class groups;
   b. Identifying sources of intragroup and intergroup conflict stemming from cultural group membership;
   c. Describing social welfare policies and programs designed to address issues of differential treatment of cultural groups. Contrast these social welfare policies with those of other countries.
   d. Testing ones group participation and conflict management skills in an educational setting.

3. Review the potential between- and within-group similarities and differences among ethnic and racial groups in the United States and identify key variables to be considered by individuals attempting to work with these populations by:
   a. Examining historical, social and political forces influencing the current contexts these groups;
   b. Locating the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, ability, and sexual orientation for these groups;
   c. Critiquing the social science literature on ethnic and racial groups;
   d. Examining such variables as immigration and migration, cultural norms and roles, acculturation and assimilation, help-seeking behaviors, spirituality, employment and income, educational attainment, and the establishment of informal and formal institutions within these cultural groups;
   e. Comparing and contrasting the experiences of at least two different racial and/or ethnic groups discussed in class, using an ethnoconscious framework.

4. Course Design:

This course uses various pedagogical strategies, including lecture, video, group work and guest presentations. Unique to this course is the use of co-instructors. Models of co-instruction have been found to be successful with courses that promote diversity and social justice. Both instructors will provide lectures and facilitate exercises throughout the
term. Both instructors will also be responsible for grading and providing feedback to students. We look forward to your feedback on how you feel co-instruction has made a difference in your learning this semester!

5. Source Materials:
Required Texts:

All Books Are Available at Common Language Bookstore near the corner of 4th Street and Liberty in Ann Arbor.

Assignments and Grading:

Attendance and participation is required and will consist of 25% of your final grade. You will be assigned to a small group during the second week of class, and this group work will count as 20 percent of this portion of your grade. Attendance will be taken at every class, and include presence for small group discussions. Participation includes being present, on time, active, and prepared for class and group discussions. Active discussion includes asking questions or providing critical perspectives on the readings, but may also include e-mail contact with the class CourseTools discussion group (which will be created the first week of class). Refer to your student manual for further criteria.

Assignments must be typed, double-spaced, use a clear, readable 12 point font, one-inch margin, page numbered, and edited for spelling and grammatical errors. Points will be deducted from a paper that is difficult to read or one containing numerous spelling or grammatical errors. In addition to the stated criteria, papers will be graded for quality and clarity. Refer to “General Requirements for Class Papers in the School of Social Work” section of your Student Guide.

ALL PAPERS ARE TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE COURSETOOLS SITE.

Late papers will be reduced two points per day. Papers not received at the beginning of class are considered late. If you have any concerns about your paper, you should see the instructor before the paper is due.

COMMENTARIES (40% of final Grade)

Commentaries. Reading the assigned materials prior to class is required. In order to facilitate your reading and to promote the integration of praxis (critical self-reflection) into your personal and professional lives, you will be required to complete four commentaries. Each commentary will be worth ten points for 40% of your final grade. Your commentary should be no more than five pages and should address the questions outlined below and utilize the readings to illustrate your points. For example, a fully credited commentary would critically and succinctly cover all of the points outlined below, use readings to demonstrate understanding of the points, as well as personal reflections on the integration of this material in courses, professional practicum or any other spheres of influence. If there are critical topics that arise from class that require further reflection, we may substitute an alternate assignment for a commentary. You will be notified ahead of time if this were to occur. The five-page
limit will be enforced and will require you to choose your words carefully. Your commentary must be typed, double-spaced, and not smaller than 12-point font, with no less than 1-inch margins around all edges.

Commentary #1 - This first commentary invites you to integrate personal experiences and course content. How have historical, social, and political forces influenced your extended family’s opportunities and challenges? How have the interactions of multiple social group memberships differently affected outcomes for family members? What specific family influences are currently present in your own interactions with others? When did you learn that you were not “just an individual”? When completing this assignment, please go back to at least two generations behind your own and consider migration, immigration, and class issues explicitly. Due: September 20, 2002

Commentary #2 is designed to help you integrate the themes of the course with a professional area of interest. First, select a social work content area of interest to you (i.e., social problem, policy issue, specialization, practice population, etc.). Present a brief and introductory literature review of the field of service area and why it is of interest to you. You will need to provide academic references to substantiate any claims (minimum of 3 books or journal articles using APA style). Describe the roles of culture and intersectionality as defined broadly in the course (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, spirituality, nation) as it relates to your area of interest. What kind of research has been done? What hypotheses have been offered? What evidence exists for the knowledge generated in this area? In what ways does culture affect your culturally competent social work practice? In what way is culture critically important? Are there instances when it is less important? While it is impossible to provide the necessary coverage, it is important to demonstrate thoughtfulness of how different cultural groups play a critical role in your interest area. Due: October 4, 2002

Commentary #3: Oppression—Critically analyze and reflect on the ways in which oppression and oppressive practices impinge upon your interest area and the environment of the individuals with whom you hope to work with as a social worker or other professional. What roles are available to you as a social worker intent on reducing or eliminating oppression? How do the interactions between your personal multiple identities, professional roles and oppression potentially affect your practice? Specifically, what does this mean for your weakest content area? Due: October 18, 2002

Commentary #4: Social Change/Social Justice—Present how the terms social change and social justice relate to your interest area. Describe at least two ways in which you feel you will be able to promote social change and social justice in your specific area of interest. Describe a detailed and specific plan of action, including at least two short term and two long-term goals, which will allow you to promote social change and social justice in your area of interest. Include in this plan, goals for your own continued personal growth and promotion of social change/action after the course. Prevention and Promotion – Address the potential for your interest area to focus on primary, secondary and tertiary prevention strategies. How might promotion be achieved for service consumers, particularly those for whom a “disability” is a significant social group membership? How might promotion be achieved for service consumers whose significant religious or spiritual social group memberships must be integrated into your intervention planning? Due November 8, 2002

SW 620 - Contemporary Cultures in the United States
page 4
620syl fall 2002.doc
8/21/2002
**Strengthening Your Overall Knowledge Base (10% of final grade).** During your first class period, you identified at least one social group membership or intersection that you knew very little about and wished to expand your knowledge. Choosing your “weakest” area of knowledge, construct a ten-item bibliography and commit yourself to reviewing each citation before the end of the term. **The list is Due October 11, 2002.** You will submit a brief annotated bibliography for each of citation. The annotated bibliography is **Due November 22, 2002.**

**Taping Assignment (25% of final grade).** See attached. This assignment is designed to critically analyze how your participation in the course and outside of class this term has promoted the process of better understanding the role of culture in your interest area, in others, and in yourself. Describe your personal struggles and accomplishments this term regarding self-reflection.  
First Tape **Due: September 13, 2002**  
Five page limit for final paper, **Due: December 6, 2002**

**ALTERNATIVE ASSIGNMENTS:** I view all students as responsible for their learning experience. As a part of the community of learners, I contribute to the experience, but the student is ultimately responsible for the depth, challenge, and enjoyment of learning. If you are interested in discussing alternative or additional assignments, I welcome you to speak with me about the ideas you have. I must approve all alternative assignments. If you choose to do an alternate in place of one of the assignments listed above, a written proposal must be presented for approval at least three weeks prior to the date the above assignment is due. No alternative assignments will be given for missed or late assignments.

**Evaluation:**

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Schedule of Topics and Readings for the Term:

Week 1. September 6, 2002

Beginnings
- Information Sheets
- Introductions
- Syllabus overview
- Ground rules
- Hopes and fears

Readings:

Andersen and Hill-Collins: Ch. 1, Missing people and others; Ch. 2, La Guera; Ch. 3, Report from the Bahamas; Ch. 6, A different mirror

Zinn: Ch. 1 and 2

Week 2. September 13, 2002

Culture: An Historical, Social and Political Perspective
- Film collage
- Read around of Slaveowners article
- Submit First Tape for Taping Assignment

Andersen and Hill-Collins: Ch. 8, White privilege and male privilege; Ch 9, Of race and risk; Ch. 10, The other Americans; Seeing more than black & white: Latinos, racism, and the cultural divides

Zinn: Ch. 3 and 4

Week 3. September 20, 2002

Contemporary Culture: Multiple Identities, Power & Privilege
- Culture box exercise
- Privilege read around
- I am exercise
- Levels of Power and Privilege
- Preliminary List of Citations for Independent Reading Due

Andersen and Hill-Collins. Ch. 11, What white supremacists taught a Jewish scholar; Ch. 23, J.A.P. Slapping; Ch. 37, Media magic; Ch. 47, Is this a white country, or what?:; Ch. 48, Black Hispanics: the ties that bind; Ch. 49, Optional ethnicities; Ch. 50, Crimes against humanity; Ch. 51, You're short, besides!; Ch. 52, Time to look and listen; Ch. 60, More power than we want

Zinn: Ch. 5 and 6
Week 4. September 27, 2002

Racism and oppression
☑ Video: The Color of Fear
☑ Class Discussion
☑ Commentary 1 is due

Readings:
Andersen and Hill-Collins: Ch. 4, Angry women are building; Ch. 5, Oppression; Ch. 7 Something about the subject makes it hard to name; Ch. 12, Race matters; Ch. 36, Racist stereotyping in the English language; Ch. 62, Korean Americans vs. African Americans: conflict and construction.

Zinn: Ch. 7 and 8

Week 5. October 4, 2002

Classism: Understanding the relationship between race and socioeconomic status
☑ Cross the Line Exercise
☑ Video: People Like Us

Readings:
Andersen and Hill-Collins: Ch. 13, Tired of playing monopoly; Ch. 14, Wealth matters; Ch. 15, Poverty as race, power, and wealth; Ch. 17 The plight of black men; Ch. 18, Moving up with kin and community; Ch. 25 Economic restructuring and systems of inequality; Ch. 26, Race, class, gender, and women’s works; Ch. 28, The Latino population: the importance of economic restructuring; Ch. 29, Working poor, working hard

Zinn: 13 and 14

Week 6. October 11, 2002

Ableism: Visible and invisible privilege
☑ Disability defined
☑ Markers of “ability privilege”
☑ U.S. social and political responses
☑ International responses
☑ Commentary 2 Due

Readings:
http://www/c-c-d.org/doors.html (Disability and Housing)

http://www.mpas.org (Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc.)


Zinn: 15 and 16

Week 7. October 18, 2002

Religion and spirituality: A source of strength, privilege, and oppression
- Definition of terms
- Video: All God’s Children and discussion
- Dimensions of Spiritual Wellness
- Rituals
- Practitioner Self-Awareness

Readings:


Zinn: 17 and 18

Week 8. October 25, 2002

Heterosexism and the politics of sexuality
- Act like a man/woman activity
- Pink button assignment
- Commentary 3 is due

Andersen and Hill-Collins: Ch. 24, A new vision of masculinity; Ch. 53, The gender of sexuality; Ch. 54, New politics of sexuality; Ch. 55, Where has gay liberation gone?; Ch. 56, The beauty myth; Ch. 57, Maiden voyage; Ch. 58, Getting off on feminism.

Zinn: Ch. 11 and 12

**Week 9. November 1, 2002**

Sexism and the female identity
- Body image exercise
- Male/Female caucus groups

Andersen and Hill-Collins: Ch. 19, Gender through the prism of difference; Ch. 20, Age, race, class, and sex; Ch. 21, Understanding and fighting sexism; Ch. 22, Ideological racism and cultural difference; Ch. 27, The gap between striving and achieving; Ch. 33, Countering the conspiracy to ignore black girls; Ch. 38, The myth of the Latin woman; Ch. 41, If men could menstruate; Ch. 59, The harm that has no name.

Zinn: Ch. 9 and 10

**Week 10. November 8, 2002**

Models of Change and the Promotion of Justice
- Action Continuum, Sphere of Influence and Being an Effective Ally
- Guest Peer Facilitators

Andersen and Hill-Collins: Ch. 43, Can education eliminate race, class, and gender inequality?; Ch. 64, Coalition politics; Ch. 65, The boys and girls of (union) summer; Ch. 66, From the ground up; Ch. 67, Taking multicultural, antiracist education seriously; Ch. 68, Women of Color on the front line; Ch. 69, Having the tools in hand.

Zinn: 19 and 20

**Week 11. November 15, 2002**

Social Justice and Public Policy
- Special issue: Affirmative Action
- Guest peer-facilitators
- Commentary 4 due.

Andersen and Hill-Collins: Ch. 42, The first Americans: American Indians; Ch. 44, The shredded net: the end of welfare as we knew it; Ch. 45 Aid to dependent corporations; Ch. 46, Thoughts on class, race, and prison; Ch. 61, The police and the black male; Ch. 63, Where race and gender meet: racism, hate crimes, and pornography.
Zinn: Ch. 21 and 22

Week 12. November 22, 2002

Social Justice and Social Work Practice
- Annotated Bibliography Due

Andersen and Hill-Collins: Ch. 30, The Armstrongs: an oral history of a homeless American family; Ch. 31, Our mother’s grief; Ch. 32, The diversity of the American families; Ch. 35 Migration and Vietnamese American women.

Zinn: Ch. 23

Week 13. December 6, 2002

Overview of Semester and Evaluation
- Final Taping Project Due
- Speak out exercise
- Evaluation
Recommended Reading List: Books and Articles


Berman, Gary (2002). A spiritually sensitive social work response following a traumatic event. Reflections, 8 (2), 14-17.


