SW 600  CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Fall 2003  Wednesdays  9:00 am-12:00 pm
Instructor:  Robin Axelrod
Phone:  763-6583  E-mail:  raxelrod@umich.edu
Office Hours:  Wednesdays 12:00-1:00 pm and by appointment

The 20th Century witnessed extraordinary changes in the American Jewish community—changes that parallel those in other ethnic and sectarian groups in America’s multicultural society. Whereas a century ago a significant number of Jewish Americans were impoverished immigrants, today many are among society’s most well-educated, affluent and influential. The vast Jewish communal infrastructure serves not only the Jewish community but the community at large. Some observers suggest that these gains are illusory. They cite the dangers of assimilation, loss of identity and a shrinking membership: problems endemic to many voluntary communities. How the Jewish community addresses the challenges of the 21st Century may have strategic implications for other voluntary communities.

Learning Objectives
On completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Define the central trends and issues the American Jewish community confronted in the 20th Century;
2. Define the central trends and issues American Jewish community faces in the early 21st Century;
3. Describe the processes whereby American Jews and other ethnic/sectarian minorities address their often contradictory aspirations of maintaining a distinctive communal identity while integrating into the larger society;
4. Demonstrate proficiency in locating and transmitting information of value on the Internet and from other sources to professional and lay community leaders concerned with contemporary issues in the American Jewish community.

Course Design
SW 600 instruction includes lectures and in-class exercises. The course also includes seminar-style learning with students responsible for comprehending and incorporating required readings into class discussions. Students are encouraged to invite resource persons from the lay and professional communities to participate in class sessions, and to attend community conferences at which issues relevant to the course are addressed.

Relationship of This Course to Four Curriculum Themes
This course will explore the origins and development of social variables characterizing ethnic, religious, class and other cultural groups in the contemporary Jewish community and the general North American community. Social and behavioral science theories and research findings on the allocation of different roles, status and opportunities to these populations will be studied. Students will use a multidimensional, social justice and multicultural framework to examine
privilege, discrimination and oppression. This course will emphasize that effective social work practice within the American Jewish community involves understanding professional ethics in the context of values of both the dominant society and the ethnic community.

**Source Materials**
1. Course pack
2. Other assigned readings as indicated throughout the course.

**Housekeeping**
**Special Circumstances:** If there are any circumstances that require me and/or the class to adapt to your special needs, please consult with me about them.

**Religious Observances:** Please notify me if religious observances conflict with class attendance or assignment due dates so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

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### ASSIGNMENT

**ASSIGNMENT**
(See Assignment Sheets) | **DATE DUE** | **POINTS**
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Family Ethnogram | Planning form due 9/24/03 Presentation dates to be assigned | Total: 50
· Material gathered from family interviews and documents, Internet, other sources | | 15
· Analyses related to contemporary issues | | 20
· Presentation of material | | 15

**Group Seminar**

Planning form due 10/22/03 Presentation dates to be assigned Total: 50

· In-class presentation | | 22
· Seminar materials (see assignment description): content, relevance, clarity, relevance to course, usefulness to intended audience, format and written presentation | | 28

**Class attendance and participation is required for successful completion of the course.**

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**Grading scale:**

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<td>Failing Grade</td>
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*courses/SW 600/Fall 2003/Course Outline Fall 2003*