**SOCIAL WORK 512: Knowledge and Inquiry**

**THIS IS A SAMPLE OUTLINE. ACTUAL COURSE OUTLINE MAY VARY IN STRUCTURE, REQUIRED READINGS, TEXTS AND ASSIGNMENTS.**

**Calendar Description:** This course takes as its starting point the idea that responsible and effective professional and scholarly practice begins with a critical examination of how relations of power shape knowledge production. Over the term, we will explore assumptions underlying the creation of knowledge and different approaches to knowing authoritatively. Questions of ‘how we come to know’ and ‘how we go about asking’ are explored through a poststructural lens.

**Course Objectives:**
- Underpinning the course readings and class discussions is a key question: What explanatory frameworks do we draw on to explain our practice and our professional/personal identity?
- Students will be introduced to the notion of criticism and to methods of critical analysis and scholarly writing as a basis for conducting research and evaluating research findings in social services, health, and social justice.
- Students will be introduced to postmodern, feminist, and critical race theories and reflect on their implications for professional practice and scholarly research
- Students will explore the role of politics and power associated with the creation of knowledge
- Students will develop an understanding of poststructural theories of discourse, subjectivity and knowledge and implications of these theories for political practice, experience, knowledge and power
- Students will consider ethical concerns related to the production of knowledge

**Weekly Topics with readings:**
  - **Week 1** January 6 Introduction to course
  - **Week 2** January 13 Critical thinking, theory
  - **Week 3** January 20 Claiming Truths; Exposing Constructions
  - **Week 4** January 27 A Postmodern Frame (Theorizing Power)

Week 5  Feb. 3  Theorizing the Subject (who is the subject of knowledge? Who is the knower/asker?)

Week 6  Feb. 10  Theorizing the Body – Embodied Knowledge

Week 7  Feb. 17  Reading week
Week 8  Feb.24  Knowledge as Relational
• Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack. 1998. The Race to Innocence: Confronting Hierarchical Relations Among Women. The Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice 1(2): 335-352

Week 9  Mar.3  Theorizing Experience


Week 10  Mar.10  Racialized Knowledge Production


Jeffery, D. 2005. ‘What good is anti-racist social work if you can’t master it’?: Exploring a paradox in anti-racist social work education. Race, Ethnicity and Education 8 (4), December: 409-425

Week 11  March 17

FILM (TBA) + discussion

Week 12  March 24  Knowing and Asking from a Range of Sites


Week 13  March 31  LAST CLASS

Assignments/Learning Activities & Due Dates:
There will be three (3) assignments for this course.
   1. Six (6) Critical Reflection Papers
For six of the classes, students will produce a three page critical reflection on some aspects of the week’s assigned readings. Each Reflection Paper is due the day the topic is discussed in class.

**Some Guidelines for Writing Critical Reflection Papers**

Content: A critical reflection paper is a three (3) page response (do not exceed three pages) to one or two of the ideas that you encounter in the week’s reading. No outside materials are required. However you should include a full reference for the reading that you draw on. While it might include the briefest of summaries of the ideas at hand, it is not a summary paper. Rather, it should show evidence of critical engagement with the topic. What argument is the author putting forward? What evidence, if any, do they use to support their argument? What is your response to the reading? Try to choose concepts that you find compelling or which are of particular salience to the area/s you hope to pursue/are pursuing in your studies or in which you are engaged outside of the classroom. You do not necessarily have to arrive at conclusions; sometimes the most useful work that one can do in a critical reflection is to raise important questions. As you write, imagine your audience to be the instructor, the other class members, people you might be working with, or perhaps the author of the work to which you are responding.

Papers should consist of three components:

1. a brief summary of the article (1-2 paragraphs)
2. the main arguments and theoretical perspectives made by the author. This should be in your own words if possible or properly attributed quotations (1-1½ pages)
3. an account of your own response to the article (at least 1 page) including how ideas or concepts may be connected to other readings and/or how the author’s argument enlarges or challenges your previously held beliefs, ideas, and positions.

Form: Writing should be clear, direct, and grammatically correct. Papers should be typed double-spaced and in an easy-to-read font and size (nothing below 10 pt. please). Always include page numbers for citations or quotes from the assigned reading. Please use any conventional academic referencing format such as APA, MLA, etc. It doesn’t matter which one you choose – just be consistent. Your ideas will enjoy a better reception if they are expressed with clarity and elegance.

**Evaluation Criteria:**

- Success of your summary of the author’s argument
- Your analysis of the author’s argument
- Ability to communicate insights gained through the reading
- Overall presentation and attention to grammar and writing style

**NOTE:** Students are asked to bring copies of their reflection papers for each member of the class on the day the readings are scheduled.

**Due Date:** On-going
2. **Class Facilitation**

For one of the classes, each student will be responsible for facilitating class discussion on ONE article from the weekly readings. These presentations are the oral equivalent of a reflection paper although they do not comprise the same readings. The purpose of this exercise is to facilitate, stimulate, and focus class discussion with the (at least) dual goals of: providing students with an opportunity to develop their ideas and insights into the readings of the week and to generate discussion; and balancing the force of the instructors’ own visions of what is important in the readings.

The expectation is that your presentation will be brief (approximately 20 minutes) and succinct.

For your presentation, I suggest that you begin by outlining what you believe to be the major arguments in the article. It would be helpful to spend some time talking about your process of reading the article. What personal resources did you bring to your reading? What outside resources did you consult? What parts of the article require further clarification for you? Beyond this, try to discuss your own critical engagement with the piece you have chosen. How did the article influence your own thinking? How can you apply the author’s insights to your academic work/workplace/activism? How would you challenge the author’s conclusions? Finally, pose a few questions to the class that you believe will stimulate further discussion of the article’s major themes.

**Evaluation Criteria:**
- same as for reflection papers

**Due Date:** On-going (sign-up at beginning of term)

3. **Final Paper**

Each student is asked to prepare a 8-10 page paper (approximately 2300 - 3000 words) on one of the themes in the course. The purpose of this paper is to give students an opportunity to apply the theoretical tools and concepts related to how and what we know and practices of inquiry as developed in the course to a topic or question of interest to them. The paper may be a more substantial treatment of a theme that you have addressed in an earlier assignment for this course. Draw on at least 3 outside references and use the references from class readings extensively. This assignment will be discussed further in class

**Due Date:**