



COURSE TITLE/SECTION: SOCW 7350/17824 Overrepresentation of Minority Males in Criminal Justice System

TIME: Wednesday 9:00am – 12:00pm Room SW229

FACULTY: Rev. William Lawson and Larry E. Hill, Ph.D. **OFFICE HOURS:** By appointment

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I. Course

A. Catalog Description

Selected topics in social work as they relate to minority males in the Criminal Justice System with emphasis on the Texas criminal justice system.

B. Purpose

This course is designed to provide the student with an understanding of the oppression of minority males in the United States and specifically in Texas with emphasis on their over-representation in the criminal justice system. This course is built on the assumption that social workers need to understand the economic, political, social and cultural forces that impact our clients and society. This course examines these forces as they generate and maintain oppression based on race and ethnicity in the U. S. Strategies for change are developed and are critically examined.

II. Course Objectives

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

1. demonstrate an understanding of demographic trends and forces that influence and shape a diverse U. S. society.
2. identify and describe selected theories of oppression and apply them to the experience of minority males.
3. describe the U. S. criminal justice system and articulate the extent to which minority males are over-represented in prison systems, particularly in Texas.
4. reflect on the growth and maturation of their personal attitudes related to understanding oppression, as well as to their commitment to social justice.
5. demonstrate the ability to assess strengths and limitations of selected

action strategies to combat aggression

III. Course Structure

A variety of teaching methods will be used during the course of the semester, including lecture, guest speakers, class discussion, individual assignments and group/class activities. In addition, there will be a required field trip. This course will require active participation and interaction, with the goal of stimulating critical thinking, in-depth understanding of the material, and an appreciation of the criminal justice system as it relates to social work practice. A mutually respectful and professional environment is expected.

**The instructors reserve the right to change the course schedule or due dates as necessary during the semester.

IV. Textbooks

Required:

Alexander, M. (2012). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. The New Press.

All other required readings will be available on Blackboard.

Supplemental Readings:

Archer, D. (2009). Introduction: challenging the school to prison pipeline. *New York Law School Law Review*, 54, 867-872.

Clear, T. R. (2007). *Imprisoning communities: How mass incarceration makes disadvantaged neighborhoods worse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Coyne, S.M. (2007). Does media violence cause violent crime? *European journal of criminal policy*, 3, 205-211.

Curry, T. R. & Corral-Comacho, G. (2008). Sentencing young minority males for drug offenses: testing for conditional effects between race/ethnicity, gender and age during the war on drugs. *Punishment and Society*, 10(3), 253-275.

Deutsch, M. (2006). A framework for thinking about oppression and its change. *Social Justice Research*, 19(1), 7-41.

Flavin, J, Barak, G., Leighton, P., &. (2010). *Class, race, gender, and crime*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield.

MacDonald, H. (2008). Is the criminal justice system racist?. *City Journal*, 2008, 15-19.

Mesman, J., IJzendoorn, M., & Bakurmans-Kranenburg, M. (2011). Unequal in opportunity, equal in process: parental sensitivity promotes positive child development in ethnic minority families. *Child Development Perspective*, 0, 1-12.

Munoz, E.A. & Freng, A.B. (2007). Age, racial/ethnic minority status, gender and

- misdemeanor sentencing. *Journal of ethnicity and criminal justice*, 5(4), 29-54.
- Robinson, P. (2007). How psychology is changing the punishment theory debate. *University of Pennsylvania public law working paper*, 07-01, 95-104.
- Stevens-Watkins, D., & Graves, S. (2011). Risk and protective factors among African American adolescent males that predict involvement in the criminal justice system. *Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice*, 9, 136-151.
- Strayhorn, T. (2010). When race and gender collide: Social and cultural capital influence on the academic achievement of African American and Latino males.. *The Review of Higher Education*, 33(3), 307-332.
- Urbina, M. (2007). Latino/as in the criminal justice system. *Critical Criminology*, 15, 41-99.
- Walker, S., Spohn, C. & Delone, M. (2012). *The color of justice: race, ethnicity and crime in America*. Belmont, CA; Wadsworth.
- Warren, P., Tomaskovic-Devey, D., Smith, W., Zingraff, M., & Mason, M. (2006). Driving while black: Bias processes and racial disparity in police stops. *Criminology*, 44(3), 709-738.
- Weigand, H. (2008). Rebuilding a life: The wrongfully convicted and exonerated. *Public Interest Law Journal*, 18, 427-437.
- Wice, P. B. (2005). *Public defenders and the American justice system*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

V. Course Requirements

This section should identify the course assignments, including written assignments, projects, and exams, as well as due dates. It is suggested that any stipulations regarding late submissions be included here.

A. Attendance and Participation (10pts):

Class participation includes participating in class/group discussions, Blackboard discussions, class exercises, and assignments. Attendance is not only expected, but is necessary for you to be successful in this class. You should not be working on other course work or personal matters during class (including using cell phones or computers), and you must be consistently attending and being on time to class. It is disrespectful to our guests if you arrive late to class. However, we understand that sometimes morning traffic in Houston can make a 30 minute commute take almost 2 hours so try to factor in this issue when estimating your morning commute time. **Only two absences will be permitted. Two percentage points will then be deducted from your final grade for each class absence after two absences in the semester. An absence is defined as missing more than 30 minutes of any class period or not attending the field trip.**

Each student will sign up to meet and direct guest(s) to the classroom each Wednesday.

A mutually respectful and professional environment is expected at all times. This includes silencing cell phones before class and not using laptops for personal use during class. Cell phone rings, text messaging, and the use of laptops can be very distracting to others who are trying to learn and to our guest speakers, and for this reason, we do not tolerate it. For students for whom laptops are an essential tool for note taking, please sit in the back row of class (where the use of computers is less likely to distract others), and restrict computer use solely to note taking.

B. Field Trip (Mandatory)

February 25 Harris County Juvenile Detention Center
1200 Congress St.
Houston, TX 77002

<http://www.hcjpd.org>

Directions from GCSW: <http://goo.gl/maps/eiq8B>

Tour starts promptly at 9:30 A.M.

***Details regarding tour will be discussed later and any pertinent materials will be posted on BlackBoard.**

C. Monitoring Current Trends w/ 5 Questions (1pt each, 10pts)

Monitoring Current Trends is brief yet powerful process that encourages students to strengthen their solution-making skills. The world has enough problem focused discussions. Therefore, monitoring current trends process is designed to move the individual and group from stubborn problematic social issues into solution-focused discussions. Effective social change agents have a habit of monitoring current social trends with the express purpose of staying ahead of the issues. This is done by reading items themselves or being briefed by their staff. MCT will help students develop this habit. Students will submit a monitoring current trend **each Wednesday by the end of class**. Up to 10 MCTs will be accepted. Only one submission per class. See handout for more detailed instructions.

D. Reflection & Reaction Papers (10pts each, 100pts)

In each paper you will be required to incorporate the required readings, guest speakers, classroom discussion, current events (if applicable) and your individual processing of all materials. The purpose of these papers is for you to exhibit your understanding of all of the materials. They are **due by every Sunday 11:59pm**. See handout for an example and detailed instructions.

E. Community Engagement Project (50pts)

The group will be assigned a Tier One Community Engagement project.

Over the course of the semester your group will lead an effort to **mobilize resources** (e.g. volunteers, facilities, networks, etc.) to execute a comprehensive and co-created plan that addresses issues related to the **Cradle to Prison Pipeline**. The group is expected to incorporate the knowledge gained from the guest lectures, book readings, supplemental readings, and class discussions into their community engagement project. The group will target an institution within the criminal justice system to focus their solution. After execution of the project, the group will provide a group presentation of their project.

F. Extra Credit

Extra credit may be earned in this course and details will be posted on BlackBoard.

VI. Evaluation and Grading

Class attendance and participation	10pts
Monitoring Current Trends w/ 5 Questions	10pts
Reflection & Reaction Papers	100pts
Community Engagement Project	50pts

Late policy: No late assignments will be accepted.

The following standard grading scale has been adopted for all courses taught in the college.

A = 96-100% of the points	C+ = 76-79.9%
A- = 92-95.9%	C = 72-75.9%
B+= 88-91.9%	C- = 68-71.9%
B = 84-87.9%	D = 64-67.9%
B- = 80-83.9%	F = Below 64%

VII. Policy on grades of I (Incomplete):

The grade of "I" (Incomplete) is a conditional and temporary grade given when students are either **(a)** passing a course or **(b)** still have a reasonable chance of passing in the judgment of the instructor but, for non-academic reasons beyond their control have not completed a relatively small part of all requirements. Students are responsible for informing the instructor immediately of the reasons for not submitting an assignment on time or not taking an examination. Students must contact the instructor of the course in which they receive an "I" grade to make arrangements to complete the course requirements. Students should be instructed not to re-register for the same course in a following semester in order to complete the incomplete requirements.

The grade of "I" must be changed by fulfillment of course requirements within one year of the date awarded or it will be changed automatically to an "F" (or to a "U" [Unsatisfactory] in S/U graded courses). The instructor may require a time

period of less than one year to fulfill course requirements, and the grade may be changed by the instructor at any time to reflect work completed in the course. The grade of "I" may not be changed to a grade of **W**.

VIII. Policy on academic dishonesty and plagiarism

Students are expected to demonstrate and maintain a professional standard of writing in all courses, do one's own work, give credit for the ideas of others, and provide proper citation of source materials. **Any student who plagiarizes any part of a paper or assignment or engages in any form of academic dishonesty will receive an "I" for the class with a recommendation that a grade of F be assigned, subsequent to a College hearing, in accordance with the University policy on academic dishonesty.** Other actions may also be recommended and/or taken by the College to suspend or expel a student who engages in academic dishonesty.

All papers and written assignments must be fully and properly referenced using APA style format (or as approved by the instructor), with credit given to the authors whose ideas you have used. If you are using direct quotes from a specific author (or authors), you must set the quote in quotation marks or use an indented quotation form. For all direct quotes, you must include the page number(s) in your text or references. Any time that you use more than four or five consecutive words taken from another author, you must clearly indicate that this is a direct quotation. Please consult the current APA manual for further information.

Academic dishonesty includes using any other person's work and representing it as your own. This includes (but is not limited to) using graded papers from students who have previously taken this course as the basis for your work. It also includes, but is not limited to submitting the same paper to more than one class. Also, as we will re-emphasize when on the day exams are given, **cell phones or "smart" phones of any kind are not allowed during the time an in-class exam is given.** If a student is observed using an electronic device during an in-class exam, the student will be asked to leave the exam and will receive a score of zero. If you have any specific questions about plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please raise these questions in class or make an appointment to see instructor. This statement is consistent with the University Policy on Academic Dishonesty that can be found in your UH Student Handbook.

IX. Americans with Disabilities Statement

Whenever possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, the University of Houston will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Please call 713-743-5400 for more assistance. Instructors may not provide accommodations without supporting documentation from the UH Center for Students with Disabilities.

X. Modifications to Syllabus

The purpose of this syllabus is to provide an overview of the objectives and requirements of the course. Any portion of this syllabus or attachments is subject to modification by the instructor according to the learning needs of the class. All modifications will be discussed in class or disseminated by e-mail prior to their implementation.