Course Description

This course is designed to assist professionals who may encounter lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender individuals as clients. Students in the course will be encouraged to openly deal with their feelings and attitudes about homosexuality/sexual diversity. Class members will be allowed to explore their motivations and resistance to working with this client group and those hostile to them. Participants will also be helped, where possible, to resolve blocks to effective service provision to the particular group.

The course is designed to educate and suggest counseling approaches that might be most helpful to gays/lesbians/bisexuals/transgender persons and to explore available support systems. Issues that will receive special attention include, but are not limited to: the impact of historical oppression on sexual minorities; “coming out” as a process and its impact on self and significant others; as well as, ways in which we can make society more responsive to the needs of this population.

The course in the past has been open to individuals who are wanting to have a deeper understanding of what the population being addressed experiences. Consequently, persons dealing with their own coming out issues and/or those of their significant others as well as individuals interested in learning how to more effectively overcome their feelings of homophobia and encouraged to enroll.

Course Goals and Objectives

By the end of the course, students should have acquired the following:

1. An understanding of how society and its various institutions have historically viewed gay men and lesbian women and the oppressive situations to which they have been subjected.

2. The ability to identify the situations for which gay/lesbian/bisexual/and transgender individuals may seek help at various periods of their lives.

3. An understanding of the special stresses experienced by individual subgroups within this particular population (i.e., in their roles as parents, children, youth,
college students, married individuals, couples, etc.) as well as stresses experienced by their significant others (i.e., family and friends).

4. An understanding of intervention strategies which are appropriate to problem solving with gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender persons.

5. Knowledge and understanding of available informal support systems effective in affirming the needs of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender individuals.

6. An understanding of the responsibility of the social work profession to eradicate oppression of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender population and specific strategies to achieve this.

Required Texts.


Additional Suggested Texts.


These texts will be in my office and are my personal copies. If you want access to them, please see me in my office at Isle Hall.

Course Requirements, Assignments, Grading

This elective course will be taught on the assumption that participants are adult learners. Students are expected to conduct themselves as responsible adult learners and to have read required and supplementary materials prior to class. In addition, given the sensitive nature of the topic, students will be expected to conduct themselves ethically and appropriately and to maintain confidentiality when indicated. Many of our panelists
agree to come to class knowing of the confidentiality requirement. Students failing to comply with this requirement will automatically earn an F.

A. **Assignments:** There will be three major assignments in this course.

1. A **paper** on a topic of the student’s choice relevant to course content. The paper, between 10 and 12 pages typewritten and double-spaced, should cover the state of knowledge about the topical area; the issues of policy/service delivery that are raised; future directions (i.e., what needs to be done in terms of policy formulation, treatment approaches, program planning, future research, education, and training.)

I would suggest that you check with me on your topic. **Paper will be due on Week 9 of the quarter.**

2. You have an option of
   
a. Keeping a **journal** of your thoughts and reactions to your readings, class discussions, films, speakers, or

   b. Doing a **book review** on a current book dealing with gay/lesbian issues which might enhance your understanding in this area as future practitioner.

   If you chose to review a specific book, you will be required to share your impressions with your fellow classmates on our last class period.

   **This assignment is due Week 10, the last day of class.**

3. **Coming Out Exercise (due Week 6 )** -- This exercise will hopefully further sensitize the student to issues/concerns/stresses/gains of coming out. The student is pursing this assignment needs to assume that at this time in his/her life he/she no longer can remain closeted as a gay/lesbian/bisexual person. His/her sense of personal integrity requires that he/she not only come out to himself/herself, but also to key significant others. In doing so, the student needs to determine to whom she/he will come/not come out to and the reasons why. Students also need to identify anticipated reactions on the part of those individuals they have chosen to disclose/not disclose his/her sexual orientation. In addition, students should also reflect on anticipated losses/gains (personal/professional/otherwise) which may result from coming out. This paper should be no longer than six pages typewritten.

B. **Grading**
I personally do not like to give letter grades. However, since it is a requirement of the University, your grade will be based on the following: Paper (35%); Journal or Book Review (25%); Class Attendance/Participation (10%); Coming Out Exercise (30%).

Students will be required to submit a statement along with their final paper as to grade they have earned for class attendance and participation. This should be based on the student’s active engagement in the learning process and involvement in the class.

Written assignments, particularly your paper and book review, will be assessed/evaluated on organization (clarity of points, support for main points, coherent and logical flow of ideas) as well as technical details (spelling, grammar, syntax, footnotes, and bibliography). In addition, your papers should reflect appropriate use of the literature.