

Humboldt State University
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
Social Work Program

The Roots of Poverty and Violence

SW 480

Fall Term, 2001
Founders Hall 178
Humboldt State University
Arcata, CA

Thursday, September 6, 5:00pm-7:50pm
Thursday, September 13, 5:00pm-7:50pm
Thursday, October 4, 5:00pm-7:50pm
Thursday, October 25, 5:00pm-7:50pm
Thursday, November 15, 5:00pm-7:50pm

Instructor: Ronnie Swartz
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Office Hours:
Tuesdays, 12:00pm-2:00pm;
Thursdays 12:00pm-2:00pm
(except the 2nd Thursday of the month);
and by appointment

and

Tuesday, October 9, conference planning
meeting (3:00pm-4:30pm)
Friday, October 19, The Roots of Poverty
and Violence Conference (8:30am-4:00pm)

About the class

What do we mean when we talk about the “roots” of poverty and violence? Does this mean that poverty and violence are caused by something that can be unearthed, analyzed, and responded to? What are the implications of varying definitions for poverty and violence? In what ways do ethnicity, age, gender, financial situation, sexual orientation, ability, and other forms of diversity fit in with experiences of poverty and violence? How are poverty and violence linked to local, regional, national, and global institutions and policies? What can be done, is being done, and ought to be done in relation to poverty, violence, and the mutual interactions betwixt and between?

These questions will be the starting point for conversations and explorations in a special class exploring The Roots of Poverty and Violence. As part of the class, students will assist in the facilitation of a local conference called “The Roots of Poverty and Violence: Strategies for Working with Individuals, Families, and Communities”, in conjunction with the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Branch, Domestic Violence Prevention Program and the Humboldt Community NETwork.

Reading

Internet

1. Selections from the Family Support America webpage, www.familysupportamerica.org
2. "Family Resource Training and Technical Assistance Centers," State of California Department of Social Services, Child and Family Services Division, www.childsworld.org/welfare/famre.htm
3. Selections from the Humboldt County Children and Families Commission webpage, www.humkids.org

Text

There Are No Children Here, by Alex Kotlowitz

Note: It probably makes the most sense to read this in the weeks between the last two classes.

Other Note: This book is available on reserve at the library.

Grades and Assignments

I know that grades and assignments and the specifics of each can lead to great worry. I have done, and will continue to do, everything I can to make things clear so you don't experience confusion or concern. I recognize that questions will arise. Please know that we will discuss the assignments at length.

I prefer to have all written assignments be single-spaced, standard 12 point font (e.g., Times New Roman, New York, or Helvetica), standard margins, and double-sided. This format saves paper and is easy for me to read. If you can do this, great. If not, so be it. Please concern yourself more with content than length...a little bit shorter or a little bit longer is just fine if that's what it takes to convey your thoughts. Written assignments can be emailed to me at rjs19@humboldt.edu if you prefer.

Your grade for the course will be based on three assignments and class participation. **There are 100 points possible.** The three assignments for this course are:

Assignment #1: Pick 2 statistics that relate to poverty and/or violence that can be used as public displays for the conference and share in class why you picked these statistics specifically, what is meaningful to you about these statistics, how these statistics might be critically examined, and anything else that suits your fancy. Local statistics are great, and Census information is particularly interesting. Presentations should be about 5 minutes long. Due October 4. **25 points.**

Assignment #2: As part of a small group you will put together a public awareness project related to poverty and/or violence. What you do is your choice (in consultation with me), though I think it would be great if one group chooses to hang flyers around campus and do some sidewalk/stair chalk campaigning (with permission) around campus, and if another group puts together a brochure for the Arcata area. Your group will need to come meet with me to talk about your project twice, once after your group has decided what you will do and once as you are putting the project together. You will hand in a document (about 10 pages) discussing your project as well as share the project with the rest of the class on November 15. **35 points.**

Assignment #3: In a 4-5 page paper, reflect on some questions in relation to *There Are No Children Here*. Think about and discuss the following, as well as anything else you consider relevant:

- What obstacles did Lafayette, Pharoah, and other people in their community face on a regular basis?
- What strengths do you think may be helpful to Lafayette and Pharoah in their lives?
- What resources do Lafayette and Pharoah have available to them?
- Who was helpful in Lafayette and Pharoah’s lives? Why?
- Who wasn’t very helpful in Lafayette and Pharoah’s lives? Why?
- What are some significant “life domain” issues in Lafayette and Pharoah’s lives?
- How do poverty and violence relate to one another in this story?
- How does the story of this part of Lafayette and Pharoah’s lives and the more general issues raised in the telling of their story impact you personally?

Then, after the in-class discussion about the book, write another 2-3 pages discussing any new or changed perspectives you have on the story presented in the book or wider issues raised by the book. Due November 22. **30 points.**

Class Participation: You are expected to have read the required material by the date noted in this syllabus. Sharing your thoughts, ideas, feelings, questions, and concerns in class is welcomed as a sign of class participation. Since the course meets for so few classes, you are expected to attend the full length of every class, the conference, and the conference planning session. **I get to assign 10 points at my discretion in this regard.**

Grades will be calculated as follows:

96 – 100	=	A
91 – 95	=	A-
86 – 90	=	B+
81 – 85	=	B
76 – 80	=	B-
71 – 75	=	C+
66 – 70	=	C
61 – 65	=	C-
≤ 60	=	No credit

All assignments should be completed on time. Except under extenuating circumstances, written assignments will not be accepted after they were due. Extenuating circumstances need to be discussed with me through email, telephone call, or talking at my office—not immediately before or after class.

Class Dates and Topics

September 6

- Introduction to instructor, students, and course
- Some histories of the institutionalization of poverty in the West
- Definitions
- *Violence: An American Tradition* video and discussion

September 13

- *Tough Guise* video and discussion, with special guest, Sheri Johnson, MSW, Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Branch, Domestic Violence Prevention Program and Humboldt State University Sociology Department

October 4

- Discuss statistics selected for public display at conference
- *The Sheenway Experience* video and discussion
- Family Resource Centers

Read the following selections from the Family Support America webpage, www.familysupportamerica.org:

The Learning Center

-About Family Support

-Definition

-Principles

-Premises

-Impact

-What is a Family Support Center

Publications & Products

-Making the case for Family Support (download at the bottom of the page)

and "Family Resource Training and Technical Assistance Centers," State of California Department of Social Services, Child and Family Services Division, www.childsworld.org/welfare/famre.htm by today

Assignment #1 (statistic related to poverty and/or violence) due

October 9 (3:00pm – 4:30pm, 321 Café, Eureka)

- Conference planning meeting

October 19 (8:00am – 5:00pm, The River Lodge, Fortuna)

- The Roots of Poverty and Violence: Strategies for Working with Individuals, Families, and Communities Conference

October 25

- Reflect on conference
- Life domains
- Local responses to poverty and violence

Read the following selections from the Humboldt County Children and Families Commission webpage, www.humkids.org, by today:

Home Page

Our Vision

Mini-Grants

-Mini-Grant Application and Guidelines

Resource Centers

-RWPEDA RFA (Section I and II—pages 5-10)

Funded Projects

-Synopsis Mini Awards

-Synopsis Special Awards

Strategic Plan (Sections I-VI, IX, and X—pages 5-42 and 45-47)

November 15

- Discuss *There Are No Children Here*
- Present public awareness projects

Read There Are No Children Here by today

Assignment #2 (public awareness campaign) due

Assignment #3 (There Are No Children Here papers) due November 22