

University of Texas  
Department of Sociology  
TTH 9:30- 11:00

UGS 303 (63725)  
Spring 2011  
Burdine 214

### **Difficult Dialogues: HIV/AIDS**

Professor: Dr. Shannon Cavanagh  
Office: Burdine Hall 582  
Hours: Wednesday 11-12 and Thursday 11-12 or by appointment  
Phone: 232-6327  
Email: scavanagh@austin.utexas.edu

#### **Course Description**

Since the first diagnosed case in 1981, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has dramatically altered the social, political, economic, and demographic landscape of our world today. Understanding the disease and its myriad implications for individuals, families, communities, countries and the world requires insight into the microbiology of the HIV, into addiction and sexuality, into the ways gender systems and race are socially constructed, into international politics, economic, and inequality. Together, these factors shape individual behavior, prevention, and access to treatment and country level responses.

To that end, this Difficult Dialogues course will draw on social theory, biography, biology, and historical accounts to provide an overview of HIV/AIDS today. Moving from the cellular to the population level, this course will address the persistence of the disease as well as the dramatic variability in prevalence within and across populations. Special attention will be placed on social forces like gender, race, migration, and inequality that drive the spread of HIV/AIDS and shape the well-being of those living with HIV/AIDS. These goals will be accomplished through selected readings, respectful and engaged discussion, film, and the contribution of a faculty from across the UT campus who will lead course discussions reflecting their area of expertise.

As a signature course, this class will also seek to enhance your core academic skills through discussions and readings on note taking strategies, approaches to college level reading, and formal writing skills. By the end of the term we should all be better informed about the HIV/AIDS pandemic, familiar with some basic social science theories, and possess an expanded tool box of academic skills.

Specifically, the course has four objectives. By the end of the course you should possess the following:

- 1) A general understanding of HIV/AIDS; of how HIV is transmitted, how it develops into AIDS, and how prevention programs and drug treatments have been used to decrease the transmission of HIV and hinder the development of HIV into AIDS.
- 2) A sociologically informed view of HIV/AIDS. At first pass, this might seem like a course taught by a biologist or a public health professor. A biomedical approach has value but, by the end of the semester, I hope you appreciate the ways social, cultural, and economic forces shape the HIV/AIDS pandemic and can provide important insights towards reducing its spread and impact.
- 3) A broader world view. Although we will discuss the pandemic in the US context, the course emphasizes the world outside our borders.
- 4) An appreciation for evidence-based opinions and views. Given the key modes of transmission (sex and drugs) and the social status of populations most affected by HIV/AIDS (gay men, the poor, prostitutes), a dynamic moral narrative has long surrounded the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We will engage with this narrative and work to use empirical evidence to understand more fully the nature of the pandemic.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- This course is designed to be an active and collaborative learning experience. Knowledge about HIV/AIDS is often controversial and changes rapidly. Understanding what is happening in this epidemic demands that scholars and students be able to research and discuss new developments and ideas intelligently. This course will expose you to fundamental sociological and biological concepts and up-to-date information about HIV/AIDS in an effort to help you become informed social observers of this epidemic.
- As a collaborative learning experience, thoughtful discussion is the cornerstone of the class. You are expected to join the class discussions and share your opinions. All perspectives will be welcomed and discussed. As a student in this class, it is your responsibility to listen closely and respectfully to the viewpoints expressed in the course material and in the remarks of all class participants (including your fellow students and guest speakers). When you have different viewpoints on an issue, you are encouraged to share your views openly and in a courteous manner. Contrasting different views is one of the most effective ways to learn.
- AIDS is a politically charged and emotional topic for most people. A complete understanding of this disease is only possible through the systematic study of a number of controversial and potentially disturbing issues, including: heterosexual/homosexual sexual behavior, illegal drug use, and death and dying. In some cases, films and/or guest speakers may use profane language and/or explicit sexual and medical descriptions in making their points. If your religious, moral, or psychological sensibilities will be offended, you may have some difficulties with this course.
- During the semester, if you find yourself having difficulty with any part of the course material and you do not feel you can share your questions or concerns in class, please talk to me during my office hours, contact me via e-mail, or make an appointment to see me.

### **Difficult Dialogues: A Ford Foundation Program ([www.difficultdialogues.org](http://www.difficultdialogues.org))**

This course is a “Difficult Dialogues” course that has been created to help promote open scholarly inquiry, academic freedom, and respect for different cultures and beliefs on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin. The development of this course has been partially funded through a grant from the Ford Foundation to the University of Texas at Austin. The grant was initiated by Prof. Lucia Gilbert, while she was Vice-Provost and director of the Connexus/ Bridging Disciplines program.

The Difficult Dialogues initiative of the Ford Foundation was created in the spring of 2005 “in response to reports of growing intolerance and efforts to curb academic freedom on U.S. campuses” (O’Neil, Robert M., 2006, “The Difficult Dialogues Initiative.” *Academe* [July-August], pages 29-30). Upon issuing a call for proposals, the Ford Foundation received nearly 700 pre-proposals from institutions of higher education. Our team at the University of Texas wrote one such pre-proposal, after which time we were invited – along with 135 other institutions – to compete in the final round. In the end, just 27 institutions received full funding, of which we were one, and we set out to create new courses in this important initiative. Thus, this course is an effort that, while new, has benefited from excellent UT-based resources, great discussion among the faculty and staff involved in the overall project, and financial support from the Ford Foundation.

### **Reading Materials**

Required text:

Whiteside, Alan. HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction

Nolan, Stephanie. 28 Stories of AIDS in Africa.

Lyon, Maureen and Lawrence D’Angelo. Teenagers, HIV, and AIDS. \*\*

#### Other Readings:

Reading assignments, marked with an [EL] in the syllabus, can be found in External Links section of the class Blackboard site.

The hyperlinks for other readings are embedded in the syllabus. Be sure to check the syllabus and blackboard before each class to be up to date with the readings.

<http://courses.utexas.edu>

To access the class home page, go to this link and log into the Blackboard system with your UT EID. You will find a link to this course under the heading “My Courses”. All course material will be posted on this web page, including announcements and grades. In addition, some readings can be accessed through this web page.

#### Course Requirements

1. Attendance and Participation –20%
2. Two-part Personal Narrative – 10%
3. Responses papers – 20%
  - Arts response – 10%
  - Academic response – 10%
4. Country Profile – 50%
  - Part 1 - 10%
  - Part 2 - 10%
  - Part 3 - 30%

*Class attendance and participation.* As suggested by the course title, dialogue is a central component of this course. In this context, dialogue does not mean that we should be out to win debates with our fellow students or throw out uninformed opinions, nor does it mean that we will strive to come together as a one-view-for-all group. Instead, what we would like to achieve is an **ACADEMICALLY INFORMED** dialogue regarding the issues that are being discussed, using the readings, faculty member guests, each other, and previous class discussion as the tools to help us discuss these issues in a civil manner. Thus, you are expected to a) show up and b) complete all readings for the day's class before coming to class. Read as actively as possible. Class time will be an opportunity to discuss and further explore the readings, so it is essential that everyone comes prepared. This is not to say that our personal experiences, backgrounds, and opinions are not important. They are, but our personal experiences and backgrounds are also (very) limited. In short, you are expected to be academically informed, full prepared participants in the discussions that take place. And, of course, a significant part of a good dialogue involves good listening...not just talking! (20%).

*Personal narrative.* A really good way for me to get to know you is by having you write up your responses to a set of questions that provide me a window into who you are and how I can help you be as strong a student as you can be. For example, where are you from? why are you taking this course – are you particularly interested in the topic or did it fulfill a requirement? what parts of the syllabus look most and least interesting to you? what do you find most exciting and most challenging about the transition to UT? The complete list of questions is available on Blackboard. By **Thursday, January 27**, I would like you to email me your answers to these questions (5% of your grade). Save a copy of this, we'll go over it again at the end of the semester (5%).

*Gem visits and response papers.* Signature courses are designed to draw on university “gems”, the unique resources (e.g., collections, museums) of the University that are available to students. In this class, the Country Profile project will have you take advantage of the exceptional research resources

available at the UT libraries. You are also required to attend at least two other Gems this semester. One is nested in the Arts; the other in academia (see assignments for more details).

Beginning with the Arts Gem, the Visual Arts Center (VAC) in the College of Fine Arts is presenting an exhibit titled *Womanscape: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in African Art* that explores, through images, many of the themes we will discuss this semester. We will attend this exhibit as a class. Turning to academic gems, the university is brimming with possibilities here. A list of academic gems will continue to be updated as the semester progresses. These presentations should complement course material in meaningful ways.

After attending at least ONE art and at least ONE academic event, you are expected to write TWO 2-3 page (double spaced) response paper. These papers should describe the event you observed and provide a critical discussion of who this event fits or fails to fit with the materials we have discussed in class. The academic gem must be turned in no later than April 1; the Arts gem by March 10. These papers should be completed within 5 days of attendance at the event. When deciding which events to attend, be sure to look over your exam and assignment calendar for all class and see which of these works best for you in terms of your schedule and your interest.

*Country Profile.* This is a multistage project that you will work on throughout the semester. Broken into three parts, this assignment will seek to expand your understanding of the global nature of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and enhance your ability to critically assess the reliability and validity of information available at UT and on the web. Finally, this assignment will enhance your ability to use the data you have collected to write up a compelling, evidence-based discussion of HIV/AIDS in your country of choice.

*In Part 1 of the assignment, you will provide a brief demographic overview of your country. Part 1 is due **February 10** and is worth 10% of your final grade. Part 2 requires that you collect and compare HIV/AIDS data on your country from two reputable data sources. Part 2 is due on **March 4** and is worth 10% of your final grade. The third part of the assignment requires that you “sift” through the data collected in Parts 1 and 2 and select the piece of the story that is most compelling to you. The final paper will be 4-5 pages long. This paper is due **April 29** and is worth 25% of your final grade. You must submit a paper topic to me by **March 25**. I strongly encourage a visit to my office hours to discuss your progress on this paper.*

## **University Notices and Policies**

*University of Texas Honor Code.* The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

In this course, that means we will all work to ensure that the discussion space is shared relatively equally among the participants, and to maintain an atmosphere of respect for each other’s perspectives and arguments, especially when there are strong disagreements.

*Students with disabilities.* Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329- 3986 (video phone). Please contact me as early in the semester as possible to let me know if you need anything to participate fully.

*Religious Holy Days.* By UT Austin policy, students are required to notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will certainly give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

## Grading

A	(95 – 100)	Excellent grasp of subject matter; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear and interesting connections, exceptionally original, coherent and well-organized; explains concepts clearly; ideas clearly written/stated, outstanding classroom participation
A-	(90 – 94)	Very good grasp of subject matter; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear connections; explains concepts clearly; ideas clearly written/stated
B+	(86 – 89)	Good grasp of some elements above, others need work
B	(83 – 85)	Satisfactory grasp of some elements above
B-	(80 – 82)	Uneven, spotty grasp of the elements above
C+	(76 – 79)	Limited grasp of the above
C	(73 – 75)	Poor grasp of the above
C-	(70 – 72)	Very poor grasp of the above
D	(60 – 69)	Little evidence of grasp of material, having done readings, attended class, or completed assignments
F	(0 – 59)	Insignificant evidence of having done readings, attended class, or completing assignments

## Internet Accessibility

It is assumed that all students have access to the internet, the ability to go to various websites as needed, and the routine use of email. Some assignments will require the use of various websites.

Announcements, exercises, and other information will sometimes be sent to students over email or posted on the course webpage, so it's important that you check your email and the webpage at least once a week. If you need any help in the basics of email, word processing, or web browsing, please let me know immediately, and suitable help will be arranged.

## Course Outline and Assigned Readings

### Section I. The Big Picture

This section is largely organized around the Whiteside book, *HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction*. It also places the pandemic within the broader, historical pattern of health and mortality and provides a more in depth introduction to the biology of HIV/AIDS.

#### Week 1

Introduction

Whitehouse: *HIV/AIDS a Very Short Introduction* Chapter 1

Chambliss, The Mundanity of Excellence [EL]

#### Week 2

Historical Perspective of Health and Mortality/Basic background on HIV and AIDS

Tuesday

Read: <http://www.milbank.org/quarterly/830418omran.pdf>

Thursday

Infections and Inequalities: Chapter 2 [EL]

**Personal Narrative due**

### **Week 3**

#### The Biology of HIV

Tuesday

Read: Whitehouse: *HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction* Chapter 2

*Guest Speaker: Dr. Barbara Moore, Department of Biology*

Factors that shape different epidemics

Thursday

Read: Whitehouse: *HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction* Chapters 3

Hunter, M. 2002. "The Materiality of Everyday Sex: Thinking Beyond 'Prostitution'." *African Studies*, 61(1): 99-120

[www.ingentaconnect.com/content/routledg/cast/2002/00000061/00000001/art00006](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/routledg/cast/2002/00000061/00000001/art00006)

### **Week 4**

#### Illness, Death, and Populations

Tuesday

Read: Whiteside, 2008. *HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction*. Chapters 4

Fiala, Christian. 2008. "AIDS: Are We Being Deceived?" *NRC Handelsblad*  
[http://vorige.nrc.nl/international/Opinion/article1984104.ece/AIDS\\_are\\_we\\_being\\_deceiv](http://vorige.nrc.nl/international/Opinion/article1984104.ece/AIDS_are_we_being_deceiv)

Impact of HIV on Production and People and the Politics of HIV.

Thursday

Read: Whiteside, 2008. *HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction*. Chapter 5 and 6

Nolen, S. 2008. "Regine Mamba" Chapter 5 in 28 Stories of AIDS in Africa. 67-72.

Nolen, S. 2008. "Tigist Haile Michael" Chapter 2 in 28 Stories of AIDS in Africa, pg: 31-40.

### **Week 5**

Tuesday

#### Politics of AIDS

Read: Whiteside, 2008. *HIV/AIDS a Very Short Introduction*. Chapter 6

Nolen, S. 2008. "Pontiano Kaleebu" Chapter 16 in 28 Stories of AIDS in Africa, pg: 197-210.

Thursday

### **Country Profile Part 1 Due February 17**

Responding to AIDS and What Comes Next

Read: Whiteside, 2008. *HIV/AIDS a Very Short Introduction*. Chapters 7 and 8

Nolen, S. 2008. "Zackie Achment" Chapter 14 in 28 Stories of AIDS in Africa, pg: 167-188.

PEPFAR. 2009. Partnering in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS  
<http://www.pepfar.gov/press/121652.htm> (1 page)  
 PEPFAR. 2009. Celebrating Life: Fifth Report to Congress. (approx. 5 pages)  
[http://www.pepfar.gov/press/fifth\\_annual\\_report/113720.htm](http://www.pepfar.gov/press/fifth_annual_report/113720.htm)  
 Physicians for Human Rights. 2006. Problems with PEPFAR 1 (2 pages)  
<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/hiv-aids/issues/problems-with-pepfar-1.html>

## Section II. Social Forces and HIV/AIDS

This next section introduces a sociological understanding of key statuses that shape risk and exposure to HIV/AIDS. We also discuss the sociology of stigma.

### Week 6

Tuesday

Sociology of Shame

Read: Goffman, Stigma: Notes on Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity [EL]

Sexuality and HIV/AIDS

Katz, 'Homosexual' and 'Heterosexual': Questioning the Terms. [EL]  
 Parker, Sexuality, Culture, and Power in HIV/AIDS Research. [EL]

Thursday

Gender and HIV

Men are Missing from African Family Planning (Contexts)  
 US HIV Transmission Routes, by Gender (2 pages)  
<http://www.avert.org/usa-transmission-gender.htm>

Race/ethnicity and HIV

Dilger, 'African Sexualities' Revisited: The Morality of Sexuality and Gender in the Era of Globalization and AIDS in Tanzania. [EL]  
 McGruder. Black Sexuality in the US: Presentations as Non-normative.  
 CDC. 2007. "HIV/AIDS Among Hispanics", MMW. [EL]

Visit to the East Gallery to view *Womanscape: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in African Art*

### Week 7

Tuesday

Discuss gender, race, and HIV readings and museum experience

Thursday

Poverty and Inequality

UN Commission for Africa. 2002. Global Inequality and HIV/AIDS Pp. 1-14.  
<http://www.uneca.org/CHGA/doc/globilized.pdf>

Gillespie, Stuart, Suneetha Kadiyala and Robert Greener. 2007. "Is Poverty or Wealth Driving HIV Transmission?" *AIDS*, 21(suppl 7): S5-S16.  
[http://journals.lww.com/aidsonline/Fulltext/2007/11007/Is\\_poverty\\_or\\_wealth\\_driving\\_HIV\\_transmission\\_.2.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/aidsonline/Fulltext/2007/11007/Is_poverty_or_wealth_driving_HIV_transmission_.2.aspx)

Nolen, S. 2008. "Cynthia Leshomo" Chapter 10 in 28 Stories of AIDS in Africa, 125-36

## **Week 8**

Is all this focus on social forces and inequality misplaced?

Tuesday

Pisani, Garnett, Grassly, Brown, Stover, Harkins, Walker, Ghys. 2003. "Back to Basics in HIV Prevention: Focus on exposure," *British Medical Journal*. 326. Pp. 1384-1387. **(EL)**

Open Society Institute. 2004. *Evidence for harm reduction*. Pp 1-7.

Thursday

Human Rights Watch. 2005. Harm Reduction or Harm Maintenance: Is There Such a Thing as Safe Drug Abuse? Pp. 1-3.

*Guest Speaker: Dr. Neville Hoad, Department of English*

### **Reflection Essay on Arts Event Due March 10**

## **Week 9: Spring Break**

### **Section III. Personal Perspectives on the Global Pandemic**

Over our next meetings, our discussions will focus on the individual narratives provided by Stephanie Nolan in her book, *28 Stories*. These narratives will be supplemented by lectures and discussions with guest speakers.

## **Week 10**

Tuesday

**Meet at the Library: PCL 1.339 (on the bottom floor of the PCL, past the Map Room)**

Thursday

Read: Nolan. 2007. *28: Stories of AIDS in Africa*. Pp 1-112 (expect for chapters we've already read).

## **Week 11**

Read: Nolan. 2007. *28: Stories of AIDS in Africa*. Pp 113-224

### **Country Profile Part 2 Due March 31**

## **Week 12**

Read: Nolan. 2007. *28: Stories of AIDS in Africa*. Pp 225-354

*Guest Speaker: Dr. Alex Weinreb, Department of Sociology*

### **Section III. HIV in the US**

This final section will focus on HIV in the US in general and among teens and young adults in particular.



## Week 13

Tuesday

HIV in the US

Read: Cases of HIV Infection and AIDS in the United States and Dependent Areas, 2007 (Read Commentary; review tables).

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/2007report/pdf/2007SurveillanceReport.pdf>

Ryan White Care Act: Texas State Profile

<http://www.careacttarget.org/community/StateProfiles/Texas.pdf> (14 pages)

Phillips, “Deconstructing Down Low Discourse: The Politics of Sexuality, Gender, Race, AIDS.” <http://www.springerlink.com/content/0we6hpa0bgj6ffaa/fulltext.pdf>

*Guest Speaker: AIDS Services of Austin*

### **Reflection Essay on Academic Event Due April 13**

Thursday

HIV and Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Read: Furstenberg et al. Growing up is Harder to Do. [EL]

Trends in HIV-Related Risk Behaviors Among High School Students. 2006. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly*. 55 (31). 851-54.

## Week 14 and 15

HIV and Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Read: Lyon, Maureen and Lawrence D’Angelo. Teenagers, HIV, and AIDS. Select Chapters.

### **Final Paper Due: Thursday, April 28**

## Week 16

Presentations and Wrap Up