

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

UGS 303 (63505)
Fall 2012
Main 220E

Difficult Dialogues: HIV/AIDS

Professor: Dr. Shannon Cavanagh
Office: Burdine Hall 582
Hours: Wednesday 11-12 and Thursday 11-12 or by appointment
Phone: 232-6327/471-8319
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)

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
Schalet, Amy. Not Under My Roof:

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. Participation –20%
2. Responses papers – 20%
 - Blanton response – 10%
 - UGS lecture response – 10%
4. Country Profile – 47%
 - Part 1 - 12%
 - Part 2 - 15%
 - Part 3 – 20%
5. Intervention Memo –13%

Class participation. Class participation is measured in a number of ways. Firsts, 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 (10%).

Second, you will complete a 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. It is due on **Wednesday, September 5**. I would like you to email me your answers to these questions. Save a copy of this, we'll go over it again at the end of the semester (4% of your grade).

Third, you will share 2 current newspaper or other media stories on HIV/AIDS. Stories in the press are common and bring a 'real world' dimension to our conversations. Please print out what you find (or send me the url) and write up a brief description about what you read/saw. Be prepared to talk about it in class. (6% of your grade).

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).

After attending the Blanton Art museum and the UGS lecture, 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 art gem must be turned in by **; the academic gem is due no later than **October 3**.

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 and a classmate will present an empirical portrait of your country’s demographic profile and experience with HIV/AIDS. You will present your country during **Week 6**; this presentation is worth 12% of your final grade. Part 2 will be completed independently and requires you to identify academic papers and other relevant written material regarding HIV/AIDS in your country. The goal of this assignment is to exposure you to the vast resources at UT libraries as you sketch out your ideas for your final paper. Part 2 is due on **October 24** and is worth 12% 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 first draft of the paper is due **November 7** and the final draft is due **November 26** and is worth 25% of your final grade. I strongly encourage a visit to my office hours to discuss your progress on this paper.

Intervention Memo. The final assignment is a detailed memo on an HIV intervention (prevention, treatment, or care) or your choice, written as an expert to your Congressperson, school board, or parent.

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

Global picture of HIV/AIDS

http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/unaidspublication/2011/JC2216_WorldAIDSday_report_2011_en.pdf

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/factsheets/PDF/us.pdf>

Week 2

Basic background on HIV and AIDS

Monday

Whitehouse: Chapter 1-3

Personal Narrative due September 3

Wednesday

Chambliss, The Mundanity of Excellence

Week 3

Monday

Epstein: The Invisible Cure Pp. 41-48

<http://lightbox.time.com/2011/12/27/nikas-journey-growing-up-with-hiv/#31>

Wednesday

Whiteside: Chapter 4

Week 4

Monday

Read: Fiala, Christian. 2008. "AIDS: Are We Being Deceived?" *NRC Handelsblad*

Tuesday

Election 2012: History, Rhetoric, Politics
7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Bass Concert Hall.

Wednesday

Group work – bring laptops to class.

Week 5

Group Presentations

Visual/oral presentation with peer

Section II. The Response

Week 6

Monday

Whiteside Chapters 7 and 8

Cohen, Jon. 2008. "The Great Funding Surge."

PEPFAR.2011. Celebrating Life: Report to Congress.

Wednesday

Nolen, 28 Stories. Chapter 14

Richey, Lisa Ann. Representation of African women and AIDS in Bono's (PRODUCT) RED

Week 7

Monday

Meet at the Library: PCL 1.339

October 8

Wednesday

Prevention

Shelton, J. D. 2007. Ten Myths and One Truth about Generalised HIV Epidemics.

Potts et al. 2008. "Reassessing HIV Prevention," *Science* 320 (5877): 749–750.

An H.I.V. Strategy Invites Addicts In Russia

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/08/health/08vancouver.html?emc=eta1>

Section III. 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 8

Monday

Sex, Sexuality, and Stratification

Ryan and Jetha, Sex at Dawn Chapter 5.

McGruder. Black Sexuality in the US: Presentations as Non-normative.

Schalet, Not Under My Roof. Chapter 1-2

Wednesday

Sex and Gender in the West

Schalet. Not Under My Roof. Chapters 3-6

AIDS Walk Austin 10/21/2012

Week 9

Monday

Schalet. Not Under My Roof. Chapter 7-9

Wednesday

Gender and Sex in SSA

Smith, Daniel J. Modern Marriage, Men's Extramarital Sex, and HIV Risk in Southeastern Nigeria
Swindler, Ann and Susan Cotts Watkins. 2007. Ties of Dependence: AIDS and Transactional Sex in Rural Malawi.

Part 2 of Country Profile Due

Week 10

Monday

Homosexuality/Homophobia

Herek, Chopp, and Strohl. Sexual Stigma: Putting Sexual Minority Health Issues in Context.

[U.S. to Aid Gay Rights Abroad, Obama and Clinton Say](#)

Wednesday

Speaker from Center for Gender and Sexuality

Week 11

Monday

Speaker from the Writing Center

Wednesday

Catch up day

Week 12

One-on-one meetings with me.

Week 13

Monday

Draft due of Country Profile - Part 3

November 19

Peer review exercise

Wednesday

Class cancelled

Week 14

Monday

Trip to the Blanton

Final draft of Country Profile - Part 3

November 26

Wednesday

Paper presentation

Week 15

Monday Paper presentations

Wednesday **Wrap up**

**Intervention memo due
December 7**