

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

UGS 302 (64915)
Fall 2013
CLA 3.106

Difficult Dialogues: HIV/AIDS

Professor: Dr. Shannon Cavanagh
Office: CLA 2.708A
Hours: Monday and Wednesday at 12:15 or by appointment
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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, film, and respectful and engaged discussion.

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. We will discuss the pandemic in the US, 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.

Writing Flag: This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from me to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise assignments, and you will be asked to read and discuss your peers’ work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

I strongly encourage you to use the Undergraduate Writing Center, FAC 211, 1-6222 (www.uwc.utexas.edu). The UWC offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. These services are not just for writing that has “problems”: Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. The UWC’s trained consultants work with you on both academic and non-academic writing. Using methods that preserve the integrity of your work, they help you develop strategies to improve your writing and become a more independent writer. Whether you are writing a lab report, a resume, a term paper, a statement for an application, or your own poetry, UWC consultants will be happy to work with you.

Reading Materials

Required text:

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

Elliot, Sinikka. Not my Kid: What Parents Believe about the Sex Lives of their Teenagers.

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 –15%
2. Responses papers – 20%
 - Blanton response – 10%
 - UGS lecture response – 10%
4. Parade project – 10%
4. Country Profile – 45%
 - Part 1 - 15%
 - Part 2 - 10%
 - Part 3 – 20%
5. Intervention Memo –10%

Class participation. Class participation is measured in a number of ways. First, 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 4. Please bring a hardcopy of your answers to these questions. Save a copy of this, we'll go over it again at the end of the semester.

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. (5% of 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 two other Gems this semester. One is nested in the Arts—we will take a trip to the Blanton Museum on campus; the other in academia—one of three Fall 2013 University Lecture Series discussions.

After attending the Blanton Art museum and on-campus 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 how this event fits or fails to fit with the materials we have discussed in class. The art gem must be turned in by **October 7**; the academic gem is due no later than **October 14**.

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 write an empirical portrait of your country's demographic profile and experience with HIV/AIDS. I will provide a more detailed rubric as the semester progresses. This paper is worth 15% of your final grade and is due on **September 30**. Part 2 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 30** 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 first draft of the paper is due **November 9** and the final draft is due **November 25** 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. This memo is due on **December 9**.

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

Week 2

Basic background on HIV and AIDS

Wednesday

McIntosh: White Privilege: White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack
Whitehouse: Chapter 1-2

Personal Narrative due September 4

Week 3

Monday

Farmer: Rethinking Infectious Disease
Epstein: The Invisible Cure Pp. 41-48

Wednesday

Whiteside: Chapter 3
Pepin: Assembling the Puzzle

Week 4

Monday

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

Wednesday

Whiteside: Chapter 4.

Week 5

Wednesday

Trip to Blanton Museum

Section II. The Response

Week 6

Monday

Cohen, Jon. The Great Funding Surge.
Part 1 Assignment due September 30

University Lecture Series (10/1, 10/2, 10/3)

Wednesday

Whiteside Chapters 7 and 8

Week 7

Monday **Visit from the Undergraduate Writing Center**

Response paper from Blanton due on October 7

Wednesday What folks on the ground are thinking:
Weinrab and Trinitopoli: Chapter 4

Week 8

Monday Shelton, J. D. Ten Myths and One Truth about Generalised HIV Epidemics.
Potts et al. Reassessing HIV Prevention,

Response paper from Lecture Series due on October 14

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.

Wednesday Sex, Sexuality, and Stratification
Ryan and Jetha, Sex at Dawn Chapter 5.
McGruder. Black Sexuality in the US: Presentations as Non-normative.
Elliot, Not My Kid. Intro and Chapter 1-2

AIDS Walk Austin 10/20/2012

Week 9

Keep reading Elliot

Monday **Meet at the PCL 1.339 1**

Wednesday Presentations/papers on AIDS walk

Week 10

Sex and Gender in the West

Discuss Elliot. Not My Kid. Chapters 3-8

Part 2 of Country Profile Due on October 30

Week 11

Gender and Sex in SSA

Monday 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.

Wednesday Homosexuality/Homophobia
Herek, Chopp, and Stroh. Sexual Stigma: Putting Sexual Minority Health
Issues in Context.

Draft of Country Profile paper emailed to me by 11/9

Week 12

One-on-one meetings with me.

Week 13

Monday

Revised draft due of Country Profile - Part 3 on November 18
Peer review exercise

Wednesday

How to Fight a Plague

Week 14

Monday

How to Fight a Plague

Final draft of Country Profile - Part 3 due on November 25

Wednesday

Class Cancelled

Week 15

Monday

Paper presentations

Wednesday

Paper presentations/ wrap up

Intervention memo due December 9