



Course title:	Contemporary Cultures in the United States	
Course #/term:	620-001 S/S 2020	
Time and place:	This is an online class. Monday 8am-noon is the official time slot to be kept open for any synchronous activities.	
Credit hours:	3 (approximately 10 hours of expected work per week)	
Prerequisites:	none	
Instructor:	Laura Yakas, PhD, MSW	
Pronouns:	She/her	
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Office hours:	Please email me for an appointment	

Course Statement

a. Course description

This is one of the CSS courses that meet the advanced HBSE requirement. This course will explore the origins and development of selected social variables characterizing the diversity dimensions (ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation) in contemporary U.S. society. Social and behavioral science theories and research findings on the allocation of different roles, status, and opportunities to these populations will be studied. Students will use a multidimensional, social justice, and multicultural framework to examine power, privilege, discrimination, and oppression. This course will emphasize that effective social work practice with diverse cultural groups involves understanding professional ethics in the context of the values of both the dominant society and the ethnic community.

b. Course content

The course content will include an exploration of historical, social, and political contexts for the study of diverse cultural groups, as gleaned from contemporary social science theories and conceptual frameworks. The current status of these cultural groups will be reviewed, including constructs such as the family, economic and educational attainment, development of informal and formal institutions within the cultural community, and modes of spiritual expression. This course will also explore the impact of multiple social group memberships on social roles, help-seeking and coping behavior, attitudes, and values. In addition, this course will contain a review of the contemporary conceptual frameworks influencing social science knowledge about intergroup relations and conflict, including but not limited to, culturally sensitive, and

ethnoconscious practice. The relationships among privilege, discrimination, and oppression for selected cultural groups, and the implications of these forces for social work practice, the administration of human service organizations, and the formulation of public policies will be covered. Individual and small group activities related to the construction of critical consciousness and praxis in social work will also be included.

c. Course objectives and competencies

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the historical, social, and political forces influencing the social constructions of diverse cultural groups in the United States by: a. evaluating social science frameworks for the discussion of culture; b. applying knowledge about social group memberships and identities, their histories and meanings, how they interact with each other in people's lives and the larger society, and how they are affected by particular social contexts; c. reviewing one's own social group memberships and how they have influenced opportunities and challenges. (Practice Behaviors 4.IP, 4.SPE, 4.CO, 4.MHS, 5.IP, 5.SPE, 5.CO, 5.MHS, 7.IP, 7.SPE, 7.CO, 7.MHS)

2. Discuss the influences of discrimination, oppression, and privilege on life experiences of diverse cultural groups by: a. labeling forms of discrimination, prejudice, and oppression as these differentially affect U.S. cultural groups, including gay/lesbian/bisexual, racial/ethnic, gender, transgender, religious/spiritual, differently abled, and social class groups; b. identifying sources of intragroup and intergroup conflict stemming from cultural group membership; c. describing the forces that create and maintain individual, group, organizational, and community differences in power, privilege, and oppression. d. demonstrating skills in negotiating differences and conflicts at system interfaces. (Practice Behaviors 5.IP, 5.SPE, 5.CO, 5.MHS, 7.IP, 7.SPE, 7.CO, 7.MHS)

3. Review the characteristics of selected ethnic and racial groups in the United States and identify key variables to be considered by social workers attempting to work with these populations by: a. examining historical, social, and political forces influencing the construct of family for these groups; b. locating the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, and ability status for these groups; c. critiquing the social science literature on social identity groups; d. examining variables, such as immigration and migration, cultural norms and roles, acculturation and assimilation, help-seeking behaviors, employment and income, educational attainment, and the establishment of informal and formal institutions within these cultural groups; (Practice Behaviors 4.IP, 4.SPE, 4.CO, 4.MHS, 5.IP, 5.SPE, 5.CO, 5.MHS)

d. Curricular themes

Theme Relation to Multiculturalism & Diversity: Multiculturalism and Diversity issues will be central to this course, which will provide students with a foundation for examining these issues within advanced practice courses.

Theme Relation to Social Justice: Social Justice and Social Change issues will be discussed throughout this course; however, those skills listed under the second course objective are particularly pertinent to this curricular theme. The relationships among injustice, conflict, and social change will also be discussed.

Theme Relation to Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation: Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation approaches will be addressed within the section examining

selected social identity groups in the United States. Students will use a strengths approach which links professional human service delivery systems with those formal and informal systems historically and currently available to these diverse cultural groups.

Theme Relation to Behavioral and Social Science Research: Behavioral and Social Science Research will be used throughout this course and will provide a foundation for evaluating the knowledge base of the diverse dimensions in research and practice.

e. Relationship to social work ethics and values

This course will operationalize the NASW Code of Ethics, as it applies to ethical responsibilities to service consumers (clients), colleagues, and organizations. Other social work codes of ethics will also be examined in the treatment of these ethical responsibilities for selected cultural groups nationally and internationally.

f. Intensive focus on PODS

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self knowledge and self awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

Specific Course Information for SW 620 with Dr. Laura Yakas “Misanthropology 102: Still Exploring Oppression”

Course Description

My version of SW 504 is called “Misanthropology 101: Exploring Oppression,” and this course as an extension of that topic.

Anthropology = the study of humans and humanity

Misanthropy = the fear of, hatred of, or disenchantment with humans and humanity

Misanthropology = a combination of the two words suggesting that the deeper you understand humanity (especially our propensity for violence and oppression), the easier it is to become misanthropic

The purpose of this class is to explore the causes and signs of oppression, or social injustice. Wherever there are (and have been) humans, there are (and have been) signs of injustice based on group identity (e.g. sex/gender, birth place, religion, etc.). Anthropology helps us make sense of this suffering. Anthropologists read oppression from long ago in human fossils: we know the signs of starvation, disease, and violent injury. Anthropologists read oppression in long-abandoned homes and tombs: we know the signs of poverty in many, and

wealth in a few. Anthropologists understand human oppression by understanding how oppression is not *entirely* unique to humans: we know that chimpanzees engage in territorial warfare, that baboon social hierarchies are ruthless, and that sexual violence is a normal part of life for female orangutans). And anthropologists understand the consequences of all this history by observing and connecting with people (including ourselves) now living in a world still scarred by it.

Our SW 620 experience will be scaffolded by two complementary themes. “Violence and Suffering” will be an exploration of violence and oppression, with the goal of deepening our understanding of *why* the world is as it is, *why* we humans are as we are. “Healing and Care” will explore the many ways that we have resisted (and continue to resist) violence and suffering.

My Experience and Teaching Style

As an anthropologist, the “thing” about humans I am most fascinated (and maddened) by is *oppression*. This explains my desire to bridge anthropology (an academic discipline that aims to deeply understand humanity) with social work (a profession that aims to *change* humanity). I have facilitated *critical consciousness* about oppression as well as the *skills* it takes to enact socially just change, and I have done this with many groups – undergraduates (with our office of Intergroup Relations), middle schoolers (at Camp Common Ground in California), international high schoolers (at the UWC USA Global Leadership Forum), and MSW students like yourselves (I have taught SW 504 for the past two years).

I think and feel very deeply, and I practice radical authenticity, and this impacts my teaching style. I bring my full self into our class, and I invite and expect this from you. This is not normative in our culture (so it may feel uncomfortable), but it is necessary for a course like this in which the goal is for our full selves to be transformed. Additionally, *connection* is fundamental to my teaching style. I thrive best as an educator when I feel a human connection with students that goes beyond our titles as professor and student. This also contributes to why I bring and ask for authenticity, and why many assignments and discussion prompts bring and ask for intimacy and vulnerability.

Class Structure

Online courses have a unique structure in comparison to in-person classes. The in-person version of this class would have been a 4-hour meeting first thing on a Monday morning (sounds attractive!). The online version will involve a combination of synchronous (meeting at the same time using Zoom through our Canvas site) and asynchronous activities.

This class demands active engagement and collaboration, and, most importantly, **curiosity, authenticity and vulnerability.**

We will explore a variety of teaching/learning techniques:

- Video lectures/presentations
- Whole-group discussions (on Zoom for “real time” conversations, but primarily using Canvas Discussions)
- Free-writes (e.g. 10 minutes to write down whatever comes to mind when prompted by a concept or question)
- Self-reflective and creative writing assignments
- Group projects
- Collaborative “quote” lists (meaningful quotes from readings and discussions)

There will be assigned readings, videos, and podcasts posted on our Canvas site under “files” (if they are PDFs) or as website links on the syllabus. These materials will be drawn from

the social sciences (e.g. anthropology, psychology, sociology, gender and sexuality studies, Mad and Disability studies) and the humanities (e.g. literature, poetry) as well as from non-academic spaces in our culture (e.g. blogs, music, stand-up comedy, news sources). I intentionally incorporate the arts into our experience, especially the comedic arts, because a fundamental source of healing and empowerment is the act of transforming violence and suffering into mirth and beauty.

Grading and Assignments:

“Good grades” are rarely the goal or priority of a student who chooses to undertake a consciousness-raising class, and for me in the role of educator, evaluating/grading a student’s journey toward critical consciousness feels absurd (awakening is *not* a competitive sport!). Therefore, I want to make this explicit right away: the assignments for this class are **not designed to test, judge, or evaluate you**. They are designed to be useful, healing, energizing projects that **invite you** to explore your paths to deepened awareness and compassion.

After I receive your assignments, this is what you can expect: 1) I will engage with your work by providing extensive written feedback and validation. This dialogue is the primary goal of each assignment. 2) I will provide a letter grade for your assignments. I will be grading only the **content**. Specifically, for the criteria of **thoughtfulness, depth, and vulnerability**. I will not grade formatting or grammar (though I will correct any errors I notice, for the sake of your learning). All assignments will be graded using the same rubric:

A+ = if you receive an A+ on an assignment, it means that I experienced a “wow” moment when I was reading (or watching) your work. Perhaps because of something very beautifully written (i.e. to recognize your talent), perhaps because you pulled off something intellectually impressive in your analysis (i.e. to recognize your novel and productive ways of connecting ideas), or perhaps because of the depth of insight and vulnerability you express (i.e. to recognize your emotional depth and bravery).

A = if you receive an A on an assignment, it means you did everything I asked you to do/answered the question fully. It means that your work conveyed thoughtfulness, depth, and vulnerability.

A- = if you receive an A- on an assignment, it means that you answered the question/followed the instructions adequately, but your response was not as nuanced or vulnerable as the assignment called for, which would come through in my written feedback.

B+ = if you receive a B+ on an assignment, it means that you did an adequate job with the points you made, but that you missed something specific that I asked for, which would come through in my written feedback.

In the unlikely event that your work does not meet the criteria for a B+, I will check in with you by email and see what the barriers are.

The key takeaway: **you do not need to worry about getting a good grade in this course. I am making it as close to “pass/fail” as is possible, and I will not let any of you fail.**

The assignments for this course will be as follows:

a. Discussion Posts: 40% of your course grade

Each week there will be a Canvas “Discussion” with questions or prompts that ask you to reflect on the materials (the assigned readings, videos, podcasts, etc.). Everyone is expected to;

- 1) Make a post each week, **due by 5pm the day before we meet**. For example, you will post about the materials for our class on May 18th by 5pm on May 17th. There is no word limit. You are trusted to write the amount that is right for you, though I offer the advice to be concise (if everyone writes 1000 words, it would be hard to read it all!). Note: **due to the pandemic difficulties we are all experiencing, you may miss two weekly discussion posts without the need to inform me of your absence.**
- 2) Read your classmates posts. This means you are expected to read the whole thread. For example, if you post early in the week, you are expected to return to the thread later in the week to read what was posted after you.
- 3) Try to make the Discussion thread flow like a conversation. Offer validation (a simple “thanks for sharing” or “YASSS!”). Respond meaningfully to your classmate’s posts. Ask questions. If someone before you wrote something that overlaps with what you want to say, acknowledge them in your post, just as you would in a classroom. Avoid repeating points that others have made without acknowledging them and adding something new, just as you would in a classroom.

Implicit in this assignment is the following advice: try not to make a habit of leaving the reading/watching/thinking/feeling until the last minute, as it will be much harder to engage with each other’s ideas if everyone posts at the last minute. My role as “facilitator” will be to 1) create the discussion questions/prompts, and 2) to read, respond, and synthesize or debrief what you all share. Note: as the semester progresses, I may share the responsibility of synthesizing and debriefing by assigning students the role of reading and responding to what is shared.

In the context of online learning, Canvas Discussions are our main way of exchanging ideas and developing relationships with one another, so they are very important! And although we lose the spontaneity that is possible in face-to-face discussions, from what I have read about online education, we gain something just as precious: the opportunity to **take our time, to slow down our thoughts and feelings**. This can lead to deeper and more robust conversations.

b. Attendance at our weekly “Zoom Hour”: 10% of your course grade

We will meet each week at **8am*** on Zoom for an hour (or two, depending on whether it feels useful to us), to supplement the discussions we are having online, and to strengthen our sense of community. You are expected to 1) be there, with your camera on (unless technology prevents it), and 2) respond appropriately to the discussion. Note: “responding appropriately” does not mean you *have* to speak. It is an invitation to speak if you feel inspired to, but also an invitation to let me/us know that you currently don’t have anything insightful to say. For example: I plan to use our Zoom Hour for a group gratitude practice, where we each share something (or somethings) that we are grateful for. This would work like a talking circle, where each person in the group is offered a chance to speak, one by one. If you did not wish to share, your appropriate response would be to say, “I’ll pass today, thank you.” Note: **due to the pandemic difficulties we are all experiencing, you may miss two Zoom Hours without the need to inform me of your absence.**

*I would have *gladly* scheduled our weekly Zoom meeting for later in the morning. However, our window of time is 8am-12pm on a Monday, and for me, that is midnight-4am on a Tuesday. I am sorry you must get up early so I don’t have to stay up all night.

c. “Your 620 Autoethnography”: 30% of your course grade

Note: there will be more information about this on the Canvas Assignment

Throughout our semester, you are expected to keep a journal, for a very important purpose. I recommend doing this on a Word document (or Google document) rather than writing on paper, as it will be easier to use later (i.e. no need to type what you had written on paper). I also recommend giving the document a personalized name, like “Laura’s 620 Musings” or “The Brilliant Ruminations of a 620 Student.” And make sure that each entry includes the date, so that you can keep track of your growth over time.

What is the very important purpose of this journal? They are “field notes”! You will learn more about autoethnography in time, but for now, in brief: your assignment is to write an autoethnography of your experience taking this class. An autoethnography is a piece of work in which a person explores themselves and their experiences and puts that into a broader social context. It is similar to a memoir or autobiography, however, what makes it “ethnographic” is the addition of broader social context and social theory. For example, I wrote an autoethnography about my experience as an inpatient in an emergency psychiatric ward. And it is not only a description of my experience, but a piece about saneism, the inherent harms of the mental health system, and Mad Pride (don’t worry if “Mad Pride” is a new term, you will soon learn!).

Your autoethnography will reflect upon your journey of taking this class, and connect your experience to something broader in the world. Perhaps you have done a lot of consciousness-raising already, and have had positive and negative experiences. In this case, you might choose to write about how this class was different from other consciousness-raising activities, what you have learned are the best strategies for raising consciousness, and about consciousness-raising in general (what it is, why it is necessary for social workers, etc.).

What are “field notes”? Field notes are the “data” that an ethnographer collects and then analyzes at the end of their project. The reason I called this a “journal” is because that is essentially what field notes are. Like a ship Captain’s Log. “Today, April 18th, we discussed sexual violence. I felt X at first, and after a while, I felt Y. When someone said X, I felt Y. I wish I had said “X”, but instead I said “Y.”” The following are ideas of things to include in your journal/field notes/Captain’s log:

- your notes and responses to the course materials (e.g. “I’m reading Sick Woman Theory, and it is making me feel/remember/think about X”)
- meaningful quotes from course materials
- your “free-writes” from each class
- your Discussion posts
- your epiphanies (the “highs”) and your challenging moments (the “lows”)

As an experienced ethnographer, my advice is to **write everything down**. Even something that seems like boring minutiae (such as “four people were wearing the same color shirt today”). You never know what will turn out to be interesting or meaningful later on!

On Week 8, July 6th, I will encourage you to begin reflecting on what you have written so far, and to look for themes and begin thinking of what you will write about. (Here is another goal of this assignment: the opportunity to re-read what you have written over a period of time and notice your growth). Maybe you notice that your field notes mention “shame” a lot, and decide to make your theme “Shame: a difficult but necessary part of consciousness-raising.” Whatever it is, I will support you in choosing your topic, and we will discuss it over email or in a G-Chat “office hours” meeting.

The finished product will be **due by midnight on July 27th**, the final day of class. There is no minimum page number, but the maximum is 25 double-spaced pages (for my sake, as I will have many to read and respond to). My responsibilities for this writing assignment include: supporting you in choosing a topic; reading and responding to any drafts (unfinished versions)

you may wish to share; engaging with your work by providing extensive written feedback on your final product.

OR

“Free Choice Project”: because I want to honor your freedom of expression, and because there may be topics you want to share with the class that haven’t been otherwise covered, I am providing an alternative to the autoethnographic writing project. You may instead choose *any* topic (related to oppression) to explore in *any* format you wish, to share with the class. Perhaps you want to create a video presentation about the consequences of ICE (Immigration and Custom’s Enforcement) raiding undocumented communities. Perhaps you want to share music you have written (as I will be sharing mine with you). Perhaps you want to try stand-up comedy, and record a video of yourself telling jokes that make us laugh at how absurd our world is. Show us something you have made. Teach us something. Have fun. These would be shared with the class during our final week, **due July 27th**.

d. “Woke Folks Film Night!”: 20% of course grade

Note: there will be more information about this on the Canvas Assignment

Get excited! This group assignment was inspired by a silly BuzzFeed article I read recently (attached below), written by a woman who was rewatching the 1998 teen flick “All I wanna do” as an adult. I often rewatch films and TV shows I enjoyed in my youth. And like the author of the BuzzFeed article, I am often struck by moments that are deeply problematic, but which I failed to notice when I was younger and more blissfully ignorant. For example: when I was a teenager, I loved the movie “Clueless.” And as an adult, I have rewatched it, and noticed many problematic things; the protagonist repeatedly makes fatphobic comments about her body, such as calling herself a “heifer” though she has thin privilege; she also quite racistly mistakes the national identity of the woman who cleans her house in an awkward “I don’t speak Mexican!” situation; the students who use cannabis are stigmatized as “burnouts”; a gay student is referred to as a “Cake Boy”; etc.

For this assignment, we will brainstorm and choose a mainstream movie from the past. We will use doodle to find a time when we can all meet synchronously (and if this does not work, we can do it asynchronously). We will watch the movie together. And we will create a shared list of the things we noticed while watching (or rewatching) it.

This assignment is not an invitation to tear something down and discredit or “cancel” it for being oppressive. I am looking for more nuance than that. By now, you should be aware that EVERYTHING that comes out of an oppressive society – its laws, its institutions, its people, and most certainly its movies and books – is oppressive. And especially in the case of movies and books from the past, there is the “absurdity of anachronism” to be mindful of (i.e. that it is absurd to hold a movie from 1998 to the same standards of political correctness that we expect today). **The point is to show me that you can deconstruct something that appears harmless (like a coming of age movie about fashionable girls) and find the evidence of oppression/harm within it, while also being aware of the positive, beautiful, and progressive elements within it.**

We live in a very oppressive world, and one of the hardest things for a young, woke person to do, is to learn how to love and accept the products of this very oppressive world in spite of their oppressiveness. How can I love my father, in all his imperfect bigoted pain? How can I love this movie for its beauty, while also being aware of its harmfulness? (I still love the movie “Clueless,” by the way). How can I still love this *world*, while also being aware of and resisting its harmfulness?

Referenced BuzzFeed article:<https://www.buzzfeed.com/jennaguillaume/the-hairy-bird-all-i-wanna-do-adult-rewatch>

Final note on assignments: As I wrote at the beginning of this section, all of the assignments for this course are designed to be useful, healing, energizing projects that invite you to explore your paths to deepened awareness and compassion. **If you discover that these assignments are *not* meeting that goal for you, please don't hesitate to talk to me about it.** We can redesign any assignment to suit your needs. For me, the most important part of emergency remote teaching during a global pandemic is to be **trauma-informed and flexible!**

Course Policies:

1. Email

I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours, but please feel free to send me a reminder if you are feeling any urgency or anxiety.

2. Late Submissions

Late assignments will be addressed on a case by case basis because these assignments are super personal, and your reasons for doing or not doing them on time are also going to be personal. Also... there *is* a pandemic happening! So, if you are struggling with managing the assignments for this class, please email me. Trust that I am here to support you, and you do not need to hesitate, or obsess over how to word your email perfectly. We are all in this together.

University Policies:

1. Academic integrity

Though unlikely to be an issue in this course (due to the personal assignments), cheating and plagiarism are grave offenses, and I am required to direct you to the university policy: http://www.umich.edu/~hcouncil/home/LSA_Standards_of_Academic_Integrity.html

2. Accommodations for students with disabilities

If you require an accommodation for a disability/different ability, please let me know as soon as the semester starts. Many assignments and teaching approaches can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work together, and include the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (SSD: 734-763-3000; <http://ssd.umich.edu>), to determine appropriate accommodations. SSD typically recommends accommodations using a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide there is confidential. If you are struggling and unsure whether SSD might be a good resource, please email me to discuss this.

3. Student mental health and wellbeing

Graduate school is a tumultuous experience. But this class in particular, because of the subject matter, can incite existential malaise, [weltschmerz](#), and other kinds of pain. I have had this quote by James Baldwin on my wall for years: *"The world is scarcely habitable for the conscious young."* This course is designed to raise your consciousness, and therefore make the

world we inhabit feel uninhabitable. This is part of growing in depth, awareness, and strength, and *we need to do this work in order to be good social workers*. As we embark on this journey, I will be available for counseling and mentorship. Please come to me with any and everything. I don't rattle easily.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Recall what I wrote in the course description above: Our SW 620 experience will be scaffolded by two complementary themes. “Violence and Suffering” will be an exploration of violence and oppression, with the goal of deepening our understanding of *why* the world is as it is, *why* we humans are as we are. “Healing and Care” will explore the many ways that we have resisted (and continue to resist) violence and suffering. In the course schedule below, the weekly topics are highlighted to demonstrate which of these themes is the primary focus. Weeks with a “Violence and Suffering” focus are highlighted in blue, and weeks with a “Healing and Care” focus are highlighted in green.

Week 1, May 11	What is Oppression? This week will include introductions and welcomes, and an opening lecture about the “other and oppress propensity”, which explains the mechanics of oppression.
Week 2, May 18	The Nature and Nurture of Violence: This week will deepen our social scientific understandings of violent human behavior.
Week 3, June 1	From Pain to Purpose: This week will explore the potential for thriving in the face of violence, including the work of Auschwitz survivor (and psychiatrist) Dr. Victor Frankl and torture survivor (and theater of the oppressed practitioner) Hector Aristizábal.
Week 4, June 8	Justice, Part 1 – Shame and Punishment: This week we begin exploring theories of justice in our society, starting with retributive (punishment) justice and the use of shame as social control.
Week 5, June 15	Justice, Part 2 – Transformative: This week we continue exploring theories of justice by diving into Restorative Justice, Transformative Justice, and Healing Justice movements.
Week 6, June 22	Disability Culture: This week we will explore the Disability justice movements that seek to challenge ableism, fatphobia, and ageism.
Week 7, June 29	Mad Oppression: This week we will explore saneism in depth, relying on literature from Mad Studies activists and scholars.
Week 8, July 6	Mad Pride, Mad Care: This week we will learn about Emotional CPR and Cognitive Liberty, radical anti-oppressive suicide prevention tools.
Week 9, July 13	Let’s Talk About Sex: This week we will talk about sex and patriarchy! Including non-monogamy, sexual violence, non-human primates, orgasms, whorephobia, and pleasure activism.
Week 10, July 20	Colonialism and Globalization: This week we will explore the historical impact of colonialism on the world today, including discussions of genocide, environmental racism, and climate change.
Week 11, July 27	Wrapping Up: This week we will wrap up our journey together.

Below is the week by week breakdown of the materials (readings, videos, podcasts, etc.) required for each week. **Bear in mind that these are subject to change as we approach this**

emergency remote learning experience with flexibility. PLEASE always refer our Canvas weekly module for the up to date assigned materials for each week!

WEEK BY WEEK SCHEDULE

Week 1, May 11: What is Oppression?

No required materials, besides reading the syllabus

Week 2, May 18: The Nature and Nurture of Violence

Read:

Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2003, *Making Sense of Violence* (PDF in "Files")

Moving book chapter describing and digesting violence through an anthropological and humanistic lens. Parts of this piece will be difficult for non-anthropologists to follow (e.g. the authors drop a lot of names and trends in the discipline that an audience of anthropologists would understand), so don't worry about that. Just focus on the powerful stories and the theories of violence that are shared.

Jessica Brown, 2017, *The Powerful way that "Normalization" Shapes our World*

<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20170314-how-do-we-determine-when-a-behaviour-is-normal>

Defines normalization and connects this to society and politics, revealing how normalization can lead to oppression [i.e. how sexually aggressive behavior became normalized], as well as justice [i.e. how homosexuality became normalized]).

Maria Popova, "Hannah Arendt on Loneliness as the Common Ground for Terror and How Tyrannical Regimes Use Isolation as a Weapon of Oppression"

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/12/20/hannah-arendt-origins-of-totalitarianism-loneliness-isolation/>

Brief well-framed blog entry about Hannah Arendt's political theory of totalitarianism

Thomas White, 2018, *What did Hannah Arendt really mean by the banality of evil?*

<https://aeon.co/ideas/what-did-hannah-arendt-really-mean-by-the-banality-of-evil>

This essay reviewing Hannah Arendt's theory of the "banality of evil" pairs well with the piece above (this article has a "listen" option).

Each of these "concepts" helps us make sense of violence (if you find these helpful, I invite you to check out the rest of the concepts in this series)

<https://conceptually.org/concepts/overton-window>

<https://conceptually.org/moral-foundations-theory>

<https://conceptually.org/concepts/cognitive-biases>

Watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORthzIOEf30>

"The biology of our best and worst selves" – TED talk by anthropologist and neuroscientist Robert Sapolsky (16 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZcTvFqzxA0>

Robert Sapolsky reviews his discovery that hierarchical violence amongst baboons is a learned behavior (rather than an innate/biologically determined behavior) (3.30 min)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aWE0K_DGrY

Robert Sapolsky explains that oppressive violence (genocide, warfare, border patrolling) is not unique to humans (10 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrzXE5XttOE>

Robert Sapolsky explains the biology behind “us versus them” thinking (6 min)

Enjoy:

This poem about violence

<https://poets.org/poem/september-1-1939>

Feel free to share any poems you know of that talk about violence and the human condition!

If you want more:

A longer talk by Robert Sapolsky on his book about “Behave: The biology of our best and worst selves”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGJD0P2r8YQ>

Read these useful Wikipedia definitions:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_inertia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internalized_oppression

Week 3, June 1: From Pain to Purpose

Read:

Diane Lefer, 2005, *The Blessing Is Next To The Wound: A Conversation With Hector Aristizábal About Torture And Transformation*

<https://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/358/the-blessing-is-next-to-the-wound>

This beautiful article reviews the life, work, art, and philosophy of Hector Aristizábal, a “theater of the oppressed” practitioner and psychotherapist.

Victor Frankl, 1984, *The Case for a Tragic Optimism* (PDF in “Files”)

This is the concise post-script to his best-seller “Man’s Search for Meaning.”

Maria Popova, *Victor Frankl on the Human Search for Meaning*

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/03/26/viktor-frankl-mans-search-for-meaning/>

A nice blog post to supplement Frankl’s post-script.

Laura van Dernoot, 2009, *Trauma Stewardship, Chapter One* (PDF in “Files”)

This book helps us to understand what it means to be “trauma stewards” (people who witness and tend to trauma), including important concepts like “vicarious trauma” and “compassion fatigue.” Note: this whole book is also available online through our library website.

Amitha Kalaichandran, 2020, *We’re Not Ready for This Kind of Grief*

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/were-not-ready-for-this-kind-of-grief/609856/>

This recent article pairs well with “Trauma Stewardship” by presenting our current pandemic life through the framing of collective trauma and collective grief.

Watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okJ3KQ4S-ts>

Viktor Frankl: Logotherapy and Man's Search for Meaning (7 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrtRIO0byFk>

Comedian Russel Brand offers some reflections on the search for meaning (interesting in tandem with Victor Frankl's more formal tone!) (4 min)

Enjoy:

<https://www.davidwhyte.com/poetry-2>

David Whyte's poem "the Well of Grief" (in the middle of this page)

If you want more:

This is a [brief interview with Dr. Caty Borum Chattoo](#), author of "A Comedian and An Activist Into a Bar: The (Serious) Role of Comedy in Social Justice."

This page links to an interesting NPR interview and a stand-up comedy TED talk by Negin Farsad, titled "[Can humor fight prejudice](#)"?

A beautiful and famous [letter from Hunter S. Thompson](#) with advice on how to find your purpose

"[The Coronation](#)," a heady article by Charles Eisenstein about the many meanings and possibilities of the coronavirus pandemic

Week 4, June 8: Justice, Part 1 – Shame and Punishment

Read:

Mikhail Lyubansky, 2019, [A Brief History of Punitive Justice](#)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/nz/blog/between-the-lines/201908/brief-history-punitive-justice>

An article (based on a book) with a brief history on punitive (or "retributive" justice)

Pair with the [Wikipedia entry on Retributive Justice](#)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retributive_justice

Jennifer Loubriel, 2016, [Why Our Punitive Justice System Doesn't Work – And 3 Alternatives to Prisons](#)

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2016/05/punitive-justice-alternatives/>

Among many things, this piece reinforces what we know about prisons as tools of oppression – that the US criminal justice system is *not* just.

Oriel Feldman-Hall and Peter Sokol-Hessner, 2014, [Is the Justice System Overly Punitive?](#)

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/is-the-justice-system-overly-punitive/>

This article reviews experimental results that suggest that humans prefer restorative justice strategies, suggesting that our cultural preoccupation with punishment/retribution is a more of a learned behavior than an innate behavior (nurture not nature).

[Wikipedia entry on the "guilt-shame-fear spectrum" of cultures](#)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guilt-shame-fear_spectrum_of_cultures

Alicia Simmonds, 2019, review of "See what you made me do."

<https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/review/see-what-you-made-me-do-jess-hill/>

A powerful review of a book about gender-based violence, in which the author implicates shame in her explanation of male violence.

Read this page about cognitive-dissonance theory

<https://conceptually.org/concepts/cognitive-dissonance-theory>

And this Wikipedia entry on the Internal Family Systems Model

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_Family_Systems_Model

It is useful to pair the theory of cognitive dissonance with the Internal Family Systems Model. Cognitive dissonance theory helps us understand how we can end up with very different and conflicting beliefs, and how over-identification with our beliefs can lead to difficulty in changing our minds when presented with new information. IFS theory helps us understand that it is normal for there to be conflicting “parts” of ourselves. Together, these theories help explain internalized oppression, and how truly difficult it is to surmount. Especially when you consider the video (below) about “How shame can block accountability.”

Watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58nAd6gDZKA>

“How Shame Can Block Accountability,” by the Barnard Center for Research on Women (4 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0CTHVCkm90>

What Is Justice? Crash Course Philosophy – a crash course on philosophical theories of justice (10 min)

If you want more:

This is a free introduction to self-compassion (in 3 short videos) by Kristen Neff and Chris Germer (they’re both very big deals in the world of self-compassion research and training)

<https://power-of-self-compassion-sfm.soundstrue.com/why-self-compassion-is-important>

These are some guided self-compassion meditations, narrated by Kristen Neff

<https://self-compassion.org/guided-self-compassion-meditations-mp3-2/>

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justice-retributive/>

a more detailed philosophical encyclopedia entry on retributive justice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq7Eh6JTKIq>

an interesting segment of John Oliver’s TV show “Last Week Tonight” about public shaming

Week 5, June 15: Justice Part 2 – Transformative

Read:

Mia Mingus, Transformative Justice: a Brief Description

<https://transformharm.org/transformative-justice-a-brief-description/>

This page about the Prison Industrial Complex from “Critical Resistance”

<http://criticalresistance.org/about/not-so-common-language/>

Mia Mingus, 2016, Pods and Pod Mapping Worksheet

<https://batjc.wordpress.com/pods-and-pod-mapping-worksheet/>

You are expected to read this piece and complete the activity it describes.

adrienne maree brown, What is/isn't transformative justice?
<https://transformharm.org/what-is-isnt-transformative-justice/>

Bonny Ibhawoh, 2019, Do truth and reconciliation commissions heal divided nations?
<https://theconversation.com/do-truth-and-reconciliation-commissions-heal-divided-nations-109925>
Please also watch the video embedded in this article

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, A Not-So-Brief Personal History of the Healing Justice Movement, 2010–2016
<http://micemagazine.ca/issue-two/not-so-brief-personal-history-healing-justice-movement-2010–2016>

Watch:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-_BOFz5TXo

“What is transformative justice?” by the Barnard Center for Research on Women (10 min)

Enjoy:

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2018/05/09/a-brave-and-startling-truth-maya-angelou/>

Maya Angelou's poem “A Brave and Startling Truth” (scroll down to the page to find it)

If you want more:

<https://transformharm.org/the-rapist-next-door/>

This is a powerful (and beautifully written) story of transformative justice principles being used in the community rehabilitation of indigenous sex offenders in Alaska

Week 6, June 22: Disability Culture

Read:

Johanna Hedva, 2016, Sick Woman Theory

<http://www.maskmagazine.com/not-again/struggle/sick-woman-theory>

This is scholarship and art, a critical disability studies piece in which the author, a chronically ill woman, muses about how the ill/disabled are often depoliticized [“How do you throw a brick through the window of a bank if you can't get out of bed?”], and envisions the ‘sick woman’ as a universal oppressed subject that anyone can connect to, and “caring” for the self and others as a political/anti-capitalist act

Mia Mingus, 2017: Access intimacy, interdependence, and disability justice

<https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2017/04/12/access-intimacy-interdependence-and-disability-justice/>

Mia Mingus articulates the importance of an intersectional liberation movement.

Harriett McBryde Johnson, 2013, Unspeakable Conversations (PDF in “files”)

This is one of the most famous pieces within the disability studies literature.

Rep. Jim Langevin and Jay Ruderman, 2020, People with disabilities are the forgotten vulnerable community in the age of COVID-19

<https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/healthcare/491616-people-with-disabilities-are-the-forgotten-vulnerable>

A current piece written by the first person with quadriplegia to be in the U.S. House of representatives.

Samuelle Voltaire, 2019, What every social worker needs to know about the “health at every size” framework

<https://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/practice/feel-the-haes-what-every-social-worker-needs-know-about-health-at-every-size/>

This addresses the importance of resisting fatphobia (which is a form of ableism) within social work

Evette Dionne, 2019, Here’s What Fat Acceptance Is and Isn’t

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2019/06/24/fat-acceptance-movement/>

A review of the fat acceptance movement in relation to fatphobia

Enjoy:

<https://poets.org/poem/translating-crip>

poem by crip artist Laura Hershey

If you want to know more about her: <https://medium.com/@micheleleavitt/laura-hershey-criplit-goddess-d84ef8160470>

If you want more:

Check out this beautiful project:

<https://48hills.org/2016/10/crip-wisdom-sensual-dynamic/>

“Our performance work explores the themes of sexuality, embodiment, and the disabled body,” is how the Sins Invalid project defines itself. “Conceived and led by disabled people of color, we develop and present cutting-edge work where normative paradigms of ‘normal’ and ‘sexy’ are challenged, offering instead a vision of beauty and sexuality inclusive of all individuals and communities.”

More information on the fat acceptance movement:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fat_acceptance_movement

<https://www.healthline.com/health/fat-acceptance-vs-body-positivity#8>

A recent essay connecting the coronavirus pandemic to the social model of disability

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dnancydoyle/2020/04/29/we-have-been-disabled-how-the-pandemic-has-proven-the-social-model-of-disability/#22ac7bb62b1d>

Week 7, June 29: Mad Oppression

Read:

Lewis, B. (2013). A Mad Fight: Psychiatry and Disability Activism. In *The Disability Studies Reader* (pp. 115–131), book available online:

<https://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=1125176>

Overviews the history of Mad Pride activism and explains the social model of disability/madness.

Liegghio, M. (2013). A Denial of Being: Psychiatrization as Epistemic Violence, in *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies* (PDF in “files”)

Describes how psychiatric violence is similar to colonial violence in terms of being “epistemic”.

O’Hagan, M. (2016). Responses to a legacy of harm. In *Searching for a Rose Garden: Challenging Psychiatry, Fostering Mad Studies* (pp. 9–13), book available online:

<http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=5900077>

A powerful piece that claims that the mainstream mental health system is inherently harmful

Shaw, C. (2016). Deciding to be alive: self-injury and survival. In J. Russo & A. Sweeney (Eds.), *Searching for a Rose Garden: Challenging Psychiatry, Fostering Mad Studies* (pp. 77–85). book available online:

<http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=5900077>

A piece that explores person-centered narratives of self-injury and challenges the mainstream narrative about self-injury.

Webb, D. (2016). Thinking (differently) about suicide. In J. Russo & A. Sweeney (Eds.), *Searching for a Rose Garden: Challenging Psychiatry, Fostering Mad Studies* (pp. 86–96), book available online:

<http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=5900077>

A piece that reconceives of suicidal feelings as a crisis of meaning rather than a symptom of “disease”

Filson, B. (2016). The haunting can end: trauma-informed approaches in healing from abuse and adversity. In *Searching for a Rose Garden: Challenging Psychiatry, Fostering Mad Studies* (pp. 20–24). book available online:

<http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=5900077>

Describes the importance of a trauma-informed approach to mental health treatment

Optional to watch:

This is a 23 minute “Mad Pride” concept album I made in 2018. It features 12 video “postcards from hell.” (The YouTube playlist has a “Description” on the left side of the screen that serves as a written introduction, so you can read about the album before deciding to watch it). I am sharing it so that you are exposed to Mad Culture art, and because I am proud of what I created. However, I acknowledge that it is an intimate piece of work, and I take no offense if you would rather not see me so vulnerably.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUrjUAR9YBMndepIpf5eTvw7XIU7fnKn>

If you want more:

Anna Borges, 2019, I am not always very attached to being alive

https://theoutline.com/post/7267/living-with-passive-suicidal-ideation?fbclid=IwAR0WQ346WmGgZzngnQakX8mQ-2RI2EUhL6s3z_I0hV9ZMjy_Vx2tXRT7hE8&zd=5&zi=4pfb4y7p

This is an interesting piece about chronic passive suicidal ideation and the importance of creating a culture that can hold space for and normalize suicidal feelings.

Gorman, R. (2013). Mad Nation? Thinking through Race, Class, and Mad Identity Politics. In *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies* (PDF in “files”)

Menzies, R., LeFrançois, B. A., & Reaume, G. (2013). Introducing Mad Studies. In *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies* (PDF in “files”)

Week 8, July 6: Mad Pride, Mad Care

Read:

DeWolfe et al. 2019, *28 Ways to Make the World Less Hostile to Mad, Neurodivergent, and Psychiatrically Disabled People*

<https://www.radicalabolitionist.org/radical-abolitionist/2019/2/15/26-ways-to-make-the-world-less-hostile-to-mad-neurodivergent-and-psychiatrically-disabled-people>

Review this piece. You have most likely have encountered this already, as it was assigned to most sections of SW 504 in your first semester.

Will Hall, *Living with suicidal Feelings*

<https://bipolarblast.wordpress.com/2013/04/24/living-with-suicidal-feelings/>

This brief and powerful piece references Dr. David Webb, whose work we read last week.

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2019, *Care as Pleasure (from *Pleasure Activism*)* – PDF in “Files”

A short and to-the-point piece about how care (for ourselves and others) can be reframed as a source of pleasure, rather than a source of burden

Read the one-page document titled “Mad terminology” – PDF in “Files”

This page is from the edited volume *Mad Matters* (that we read chapters from last week). It describes the reclaimed terminology used by people affiliated with Mad Pride.

Watch:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xv1ORFHtsMw&feature=share&app=desktop&fbclid=IwAR1zP2_bZBnbqV37fTKHR77Zf7aG1IsA88M0Q3gl81vjy0QIsyNARxTS_Ew

This video is a training in E-CPR from a Mad Pride perspective. E-CPR, or “Emotional CPR” is a form of emotional crisis intervention (usually marketed specifically as suicide prevention). The woman facilitating this training is a friend of mine from the Mad Pride community. I highly recommend watching the Q and A, because there are some very common questions asked, and she handles them amazingly.

Note: I know this is a longer video, and I will adjust for this time appropriately (for example, by shortening our in-class activities)

Week 9, July 13: Let’s Talk About Sex!

Read:

adrienne maree brown, 2019, *On Nonmonogamy (from *Pleasure Activism*)* – PDF in “Files”

A piece about monogamy and alternative (and oppressed) forms of romantic relating (such as polyamory, relationship anarchy)

Justin J. Lehmler, 2019, *Is BDSM/Kink a Hobby or a Sexual Orientation?*

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/nz/blog/the-myths-sex/201905/is-bdsmkink-hobby-or-sexual-orientation>

A brief review of research about BDSM and Kink, in which the difference between a “sexual orientation” and a “sexual leisure activity/hobby” are explored.

adrienne maree brown, 2017, *Love as Political Resistance*

<https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/love-time-political-resistance/transform-valentines-day-lessons-audre-lorde-and-octavia>

This piece overviews the role of love (and pleasure) in healing and social justice

adrienne maree brown, 2019, Introduction (from *Pleasure Activism*) – PDF in “Files”

The introduction to *Pleasure Activism* describes this powerful and radical new philosophy of justice.

adrienne maree brown, 2019, Fuck You, Pay Me (from *Pleasure Activism*) – PDF in “Files”

A glorious piece decrying whorephobia and insisting that sex work *is* work.

Enjoy:

This is a comic strip that explores and validates the (often oppressed) choice not to have children

<https://www.boredpanda.com/i-dont-want-kids-comic-kate-mcdonough/>

If you want more:

The book *Sex, Power, Money* is a hilariously written book about human sexuality, highly recommended for those who do not have a background in human sexuality studies: https://www.amazon.com/Sex-Power-Money-Sara-Pascoe/dp/0571356834/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=

The stand-up comedy show *Nannette* is a beautiful exploration of gender, sexuality, oppression, and mental health <https://www.netflix.com/title/80233611>

Check out this website about the recent research into female sexual pleasure: <https://www.omgyes.com>

Week 10, July 20: Colonialism and Globalization

Read:

2018, Daniel Voskoboynik, “To fix the climate crisis we must acknowledge our imperial past.”

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/to-fix-climate-crisis-we-must-acknowledge-our-imperial-past/>

2019, Lauren Kent, “European colonizers killed so many Native Americans that it changed the global climate, researchers say”

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/01/world/european-colonization-climate-change-trnd/index.html>

2019, Dr. Robert Bullard: Lessons From 40 Years of Documenting Environmental Racism:

<https://therevelator.org/bullard-environmental-justice/>

A brief and brilliant interview with the “father” of environmental justice in the US

Wikipedia page on “Toxic Colonialism” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toxic_colonialism

2019, Vandana Shiva, “Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest”

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/nature/2019/05/03/vandana-shiva-seed-saving-forest-biodiversity/>

Dr. Shiva is a powerhouse champion of ecofeminism and the anti-globalization movement

See also the Wikipedia Page about Vandana Shiva: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandana_Shiva

Skim this Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice entry about the “anti-globalization” movement/s

<https://democracyuprising.com/2007/04/01/anti-globalization-movement/>

Yvette Cabrera, 2020, Coronavirus is not just a health crisis — it’s an environmental justice crisis

<https://grist.org/justice/coronavirus-is-not-just-a-health-crisis-its-an-environmental-justice-crisis/>

Watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30xLg2HHg8Q>

“A Brief History of Environmental Justice”, by ProPublica (3.30 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ER5Zzk5atIE>

“Solutions to the food and ecological crisis facing us today,” a 2010 TED talk by Dr. Vandana Shiva (11.40 min)

Enjoy:

decolonization
requires
acknowledging.
that your
needs and desires
should
never
come at the expense of another's
life energy.
it is being honest
that
you have been spoiled
by a machine
that
is not feeding you freedom
but
feeding
you
the milk of pain.

- the release

From Nayyirah Waheed's book of poetry, “Salt.”

If you want more:

Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) is a book my friend (who specializes in this area) recommended: <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674072343>

An article about Toxic Colonialism that focuses on plastics: <https://thedieline.com/blog/2019/4/15/toxic-colonialism>

This book chapter by Vandana Shiva touches on biodiversity, IP rights and globalisation:
[http://www.boaventuradesousasantos.pt/media/Chapter%2010\(2\).pdf](http://www.boaventuradesousasantos.pt/media/Chapter%2010(2).pdf)

Week 11, July 27: Wrapping Up!