

**INSTRUCTOR:**     **Karen D'Angelo, MSW**  
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Urban Semester Alumni (Spring 2003)  
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Office: Doctoral Student Lounge (SSW) Room 319

**CLASS:**            Mondays 6:00pm-8:30pm  
UConn School of Social Work Room 207

### **EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

This seminar is designed to acquaint you with urban problems and issues by using examples from Hartford. A variety of topics will be discussed through lectures, audio-visual materials, guest speakers and possibly field trips. Through this seminar, you will be able to gain a more in-depth and first-hand understanding of the causes and extent of urban problems, as well as a view of what is being done to alleviate these problems. You will also gain a greater insight into the functioning of urban institutions.

### **FORMAT**

We will meet once a week for 2-1/2 hours, or spend the equivalent time at activities in the city. The class will cover one topic each week and important, relevant current events will also be discussed.

### **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES:**

There will be three assignments for this course; the proportion that each counts for your grade is listed below:

- 1)     A mid-semester **research paper**, using library materials (scholarly books and articles), describing an urban problem or issue that you are working on in your placement. If this is not possible, then talk to the instructor about a different topic. The description should first give a general overview (national or regional in scope) and then zero in on how it specifically manifests in Hartford or Connecticut. **LENGTH: 7-8 pages;** References are required. **DUE: OCTOBER 13.** This paper counts for **30%** of your grade.
  
- 2)     A **group paper on an issue or set of issues** that the group wishes to explore based on your collective set of experiences in the program. This paper could involve

taking a class topic or issue and exploring it further by everyone researching one facet of the issue. Alternatively, it could be a set of issues that relate to one another that you explore in twos or threes and bring together in a presentation in class. Class time will be set aside to discuss and plan this project, including some assignments early in the semester to help your explorations. The professor will be available for consultation and referrals to community resources. In the attached page, you will see additional discussion of the project. **DUE: December 1<sup>st</sup> including an in-class presentation** of your work. This project counts for **30%** of your grade.

3) A **group service or action project**, chosen by the group. This involves some type of community service or social action activity that can arise out of your activities in one of your agencies or from your own interests. Past examples include participation in Habitat for Humanity work, attendance at a welfare rights or labor rallies, participation in the walk against hunger, or other service related projects. Please document the project (pictures, video, scrap book or any other appropriate format) and present it at the final class meeting.

**PRESENTED AT THE LAST CLASS SESSION: DECEMBER 8.** This project counts for **20%** of your grade.

4) **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:** An additional **20%** of the grade is based on attendance and constructive participation. Attendance is extremely important. Many of the topics discussed will be useful in your papers and your placements, and it is difficult to obtain similar information elsewhere.

After two absences, your final grade will be reduced by half a grade (A to A- or A- to B+, etc.) unless there are bonafide reasons why you need to miss class and you are granted excused absences. So if it necessary to miss a class, please notify me before hand.

**NOTE: NO CLASS WILL BE HELD ON MON. NOV 24<sup>th</sup>, BECAUSE OF FALL BREAK.**

### **CLASS CONTRACT**

Please turn cellphones off; calls may not be answered until after class unless it is a bonafide emergency. No texting or emailing during class. Failure to observe these courtesies may be result in a reduced grade and you will be requested to excuse yourself from the classroom.

### **ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

Students should be familiar with the various definitions of misconduct particularly plagiarism and misrepresentation. Students should discuss with their instructor any questions or doubts they have in this regard. If they lack appropriate knowledge they should seek help from their instructor, their advisor, and other School resources. Students should be aware of the academic consequences of violations, which can include failure in the course.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you require accommodations for any activities or assignments due to a documented disability, or if you have emergency information to share, please contact the instructor via email as indicated at the top of this syllabus. You may also schedule an in-person meeting. Students needing special accommodations should contact University of Connecticut's Center for Students with Disabilities: <http://www.csd.uconn.edu/>

## **READING MATERIALS**

From time to time, articles will be distributed in class to aid in your understanding of topics to be discussed. You will be informed when you are responsible for any assignment based on the readings.

To fully participate in class, it is suggested that you read the local newspapers, including the *Hartford Courant*, *Hartford Advocate*, *Inquiring News*, *Hartford News*, *West Indian American*, *The North End Agent* and the several local/regional Spanish language newspapers. These will be valuable in your research papers as a source of local information.

There are many websites that have information and reports either dealing with Hartford or Connecticut. If you use them, just make sure to properly reference them in your papers and bibliographies. Here are a few:

Connecticut Voices for Children (a child and family advocacy organization based in New Haven):

[www.ctkidslink.org](http://www.ctkidslink.org)

Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut (materials on welfare, housing and other issues affecting the lives of poor folks and legal aid offices):

[www.larcc.org](http://www.larcc.org)

State of Connecticut website – all the state agencies can be found here, as well as many other links:

[www.state.ct.us/](http://www.state.ct.us/)

City of Hartford website – city departments and links to local groups:

[www.hartford.gov](http://www.hartford.gov)

Connecticut Economic Resource Center – a website with many types of information about towns and regions in Connecticut:

[www.cerc.org](http://www.cerc.org)

Hartford Library's website on information:

[www.hartfordinfo.org](http://www.hartfordinfo.org) (a really good website!)

Connecticut Center for a New Economy -- a statewide community-labor coalition, with offices in Hartford and New Haven:

[www.ctneweconomy.org](http://www.ctneweconomy.org)

Homefront – a Hartford based website of progressive organizing activities and organizations and unions:

[www.homestead.com/homefront/](http://www.homestead.com/homefront/)

**TOPICS COVERED:** A number of topics will be presented which are considered basic to your understanding of urban problems. The order may vary, depending upon availability of speakers and schedule of local events. We may also attend government meetings or other forums in the community and, on occasion, movies of educational value or use appropriate videos in class. They may include:

**CITIES & THEIR PEOPLE – IMMIGRATION:** Urban trends and how Hartford is affected.

**THE FINANCIAL STRUCTURE OF CITIES:** Examination of urban fiscal problems in relation to state and local tax structures and their impact on urban life.

**EMPLOYMENT:** Employment/unemployment/underemployment issues relevant to urban populations and Hartford.

**EDUCATION:** Issues of concern to urban educational systems; funding issues, racial and economic segregation/de-segregation and others.

**WELFARE:** The welfare system, how it functions/malfunctions and the ideology and history upon which it is based.

**CULTURAL EXPERIENCE AND COMMUNITY EVENTS:** Attendance at events and cultural events in the community as they are available. These may include plays, talks by well-known scholars, events at other local colleges, movies of educational value, etc.

**HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS:** Lack of affordable, safe housing is a particular concern in urban areas.

**HIV/AIDS:** This health disparity issue disproportionately affects urban centers, and is correlated with systemic oppression, along with IV drug use.

**PUBLIC SAFETY:** Current issues around the country have sparked a crises regarding public safety and the criminal justice system.

**HEALTH & HEALTHCARE:** Urban environments and urban challenges often make it harder for people to stay healthy and to access care

## **INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

For the individual research paper, select a topic that is related to your internship. For example, if you are working in a youth shelter, you may want to investigate some of the problems of the child welfare system. Or, if you are working on issues related to welfare, you might want to investigate how some of the features of the welfare reform have impacted people you come in contact with. Try to narrow the topic so it is something manageable for you to work on in the paper.

A suggested format of the paper is as follows:

1) Take the **first page or two** to outline why you chose the topic and how it came to be of interest to you (issues you see in the internship, in the community, etc.). This should be written in the first person (e.g., "The reason I chose this topic is.....").

2) Then, **provide an overview** of the problem or issue. Use scholarly sources such as books, academic journals, newspaper articles, etc. -- the standard things you use in a term paper, and make sure to use appropriate reference systems (footnotes, author citations, etc.). While I suggest using American Psychological Association formatting, you may use the system you are most comfortable with as long as it is a recognized reference system (i.e. Chicago Style, Modern Language Association, etc.). There are many useful materials in the library on the West Hartford Campus. Also, the following website is useful:

**<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>**

3) Next try to investigate **the local dimensions** of the problem. If applicable, you may also addresses statewide or regional dimensions of the problem and/or interview local service providers, advocacy organizations, local experts, or other sources about the problem and the solutions or methods to address the problem. You can also use local newspapers such as *The Hartford Courant*, the *Hartford Advocate*, or other local papers.

4) **For a conclusion**, talk about how you see this problem or issue being addressed or not being addressed. So, for example, if you talk about school desegregation, perhaps you might want to discuss whether or not any progress is taking place, and whether legislative bodies are able to address this issue or not. Or, if you are talking about domestic violence, perhaps you might comment on why (based on your research) the problems still persists and what seem to be the most effective things to combat it.

5) Provide a **References** page at the end of the paper.

If you want help in finding local resources, feel free to ask the instructor (or Ms. Dyton in the other class). Also, people in your placement will also have good suggestions as to where to go to get information.

On **October 6<sup>th</sup>**, please provide the opening page and a list of at least two or three sources you plan to use. **Paper is due OCTOBER 13.**

## **ACTIVITIES & DISCUSSION TOPICS**

The first weeks' activities below are to help you get oriented to Hartford and then to move into defining your group project.

- **During Week 2 (9/8/14-9/14/14)**

**Assignment:** Intentionally visit a place/institution/agency/cultural outlet in Hartford that you have never been to before (try to find something free or low-cost). **FOOD STORES, NIGHTCLUBS, NAIL SALONS, RESTAURANTS DO NOT COUNT.** Places like the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Artists Collective, Real Art Ways, the Bushnell, the Charter Oak Cultural Center, etc., do count.

- **For Week 2 (9/15/14):**

**Draft a one page summary of your experience.** Where did you go? What did you learn or experience? Was it a positive experience? What happened? **Be prepared to discuss this in class.**

- **For Week 3 (9/22/14)**

Choose one current events article related to Hartford that interests you. Draft a one page summary highlighting the main points of the article, along with your immediate reflections. **Be prepared to discuss this in class.**

- **In Class During Week 4 (9/29/14) and Week 5 (10/6/14)**

Begin to discuss the group research paper and the various pieces that each of you can contribute and respective responsibilities. We will set time aside in the remaining sessions for discussion and coordination of your project.

- **For Week 3 (10/6/14)**

Come to class with an idea for a group action project. Ideas will be presented to other students.

- **In Class During Week 5 (10/6/14)**

Discuss ideas for a group action project. Decided on group project and begin to consider how responsibilities may be divided.

- **In Class During Week 10 (11/10/14)**

Discuss the progress on your project and be working on a written draft by November 10<sup>th</sup>.

## **Hints for Successful Group Projects:**

1. Make sure that everyone has some investment in the topic(s); strive to develop respect and trust for each other and your respective points of view. It's important to be proactive with voicing your concerns as they arise during the project, and not simply complain afterwards.
2. Everyone should do their part to make for a successful project, but this does not mean that everyone has to do exactly the same thing. As long as you all think that the work is divided equitably, different individuals can do different tasks. Some may prefer to lead discussions, others may want to do work in the library; others may want to work on the "production" aspects of putting the end product together. Just make sure you agree on the division of labor.
3. Have some fun doing this. Use it as a time to explore, talk to interesting people in the community, and visit interesting places. Be creative and keep a sense of humor!