

## SW 251 – Diversity and Social Problems in Social Work

### Contents

Syllabus.....	2
Course Information.....	2
Instructor Information.....	2
Textbook and Course Materials .....	2
Course Description .....	2
Credit Hours.....	2
Mission of Social Work Program .....	2
Goals of Social Work Program.....	2
Core Competencies Assessed in This Class.....	3
Course Format and Design .....	3
University Mission Statement.....	3
Special Needs and Accommodations .....	4
Honor Code .....	4
Student Handbook.....	4
Technology Requirements .....	4
Instructional Technology .....	4
Learning Center.....	5
Hofheimer Library .....	5
Nondiscrimination Statement .....	5
Diversity Statement .....	5
Collaborative Learning.....	5
Hints for Success in Your Online Course.....	6
Course Policies .....	6
Late or Missing Work Policy .....	6
Netiquette Guide.....	7
Course Grades and Assignments.....	7
Grade Allocation .....	7
Grading Scale .....	8
Assignments .....	8
Papers and Critiques .....	9
Course Schedule.....	9

# Syllabus

## Course Information

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### Instructor Information

See the online course in Blackboard for instructor contact information and availability.

### Textbook and Course Materials

Kornblum, W., Seccombe, K.T. and Julian, J. *Social Problems*. 15<sup>th</sup> edition. Pearson. 2017. ISBN 978-0133974584 (paperback).

Hurst, C.E., Fitz Gibbon, H.M., and Nurse, A.M. *Social Inequality: Forms, Causes, and Consequences*. 9<sup>th</sup> edition. Routledge. 2016. ISBN 9781138688544 (paperback).

Diller, J.V. *Cultural Diversity: A Primer for the Human Services*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Cengage. 2019. ISBN: 9781337563413. **NOTE: You must purchase the MindTap digital platform version.**

Contact the [Scribner Bookstore](#) for ordering information.

### Course Description

This course gives an overview of how diversity influences social work practice and the social problems practitioners try to address. This course is designed to acquaint the beginning student with the history, philosophy, values, ethics, concepts, language, directions, problems, and broad scope of diversity and social problems and how they impact social work practice.

### Credit Hours

4

### Mission of Social Work Program

The mission of the baccalaureate Social Work Program at Virginia Wesleyan College is to prepare students for generalist social work practice and graduate study based on a strong foundation in the liberal arts.

### Goals of Social Work Program

1. To prepare generalist practitioners with a strong social work identity, as critical thinkers who can use their knowledge and skills to effect change in consumer systems at the micro, mezzo and macro levels.
2. To prepare students through the study of the liberal arts with a knowledge of how history, diversity, oppression, injustice and difference are applied to develop research-based interventions in the pursuit of social work goals.
3. To prepare generalist social workers to understand how human behavior is impacted by and impacts physical and mental health in the context of the social and physical environment.

4. To prepare generalist social workers with the skills to shape policy, planning, legislation and access as they strive for equality for all people.
5. To prepare students with a commitment to personal and professional growth and development, as a component of social work practice.
6. To prepare students for ethical and value directed practice guided by the NASW Code of Ethics, using self-reflection and self-correction. Students' educational experience will be guided by the Virginia Wesleyan College Honor Code and departmental policies.

## **Core Competencies Assessed in This Class**

### ***Competency 2 –Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice***

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. Social workers:

- apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
- present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
- apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

## **Course Format and Design**

This course is offered fully online in modular format. The course is designed to provide students with a variety of learning experiences and equip students with learning resources and activities that enable learning outcomes. University Information and Policies

## **University Mission Statement**

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***Prepare each student for a meaningful life and career***

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The mission of Virginia Wesleyan University is to engage students of diverse ages, religions, ethnic origins, and backgrounds in a rigorous liberal arts education that will prepare them to meet the challenges of life and career in a complex and rapidly changing world. In this endeavor, the university employs a wide range of approaches to teaching and learning and provides opportunities to connect the study of the liberal arts with practical learning experiences on campus, in the Hampton Roads region, and throughout the world. In accord with our United

Methodist heritage, Virginia Wesleyan aspires to be a supportive community that is committed to social responsibility, ethical conduct, higher learning, and religious freedom.

## **Special Needs and Accommodations**

Virginia Wesleyan University is committed to giving all students the opportunity of academic success. If you are a student who is requesting accommodations based on the academic impact of a disability, speak to your instructor about your accommodations letter and specific needs. If you do not have an accommodations letter for this course, you will need to visit or call for an appointment with a disability support specialist to coordinate reasonable accommodations. Visit [Virginia Wesleyan University Disability Support Services](#) on the Web.

## **Honor Code**

As a liberal arts university, Virginia Wesleyan is committed to values of citizenship and social responsibility fundamental to a community of scholars. People who join this academic community agree to maintain academic honesty and, therefore, not to cheat, lie, falsify data, or commit plagiarism or academic theft. Refer to the [Virginia Wesleyan Honor Code](#) for definitions, rights, responsibilities, and procedures.

## **Student Handbook**

All students are expected to uphold the university's mission statement and abide by the university's honor code, the Virginia Wesleyan Creed, and all other standards that govern the conduct and behavior of students. For more information, refer to the [student handbook](#).

## **Technology Requirements**

Online courses require that you have access to a computer with a reliable Internet connection (high-speed access recommended). A backup plan is recommended in the event of an Internet outage.

You will need to have access to and be able to use the following:

- A Web browser (Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox is recommended.)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader ([Get Adobe Acrobat Reader free.](#))
- Microsoft Office 365 ([Get Office 365 free.](#))
- A Virginia Wesleyan e-mail account to use when submitting assignments

For assistance with passwords and user IDs, contact the [Virginia Wesleyan Help Desk](#).

For assistance with Blackboard, please contact [the Learning House Help Center](#).

## **Instructional Technology**

For information, support, and training in the academic software of the university, refer to the university's department of [Instructional Technology](#).

## Learning Center

Contact the [Learning Center](#) for the following services:

- Academic advocacy and communication
- Academic planning and workshops
- Academic tutoring
- Computers and assistive technology
- Disability support services
- Individualized writing assistance
- Speech lab

## Hofheimer Library

The Hofheimer Library supports the Virginia Wesleyan community by providing services, resources, and facilities that advance the academic program. Visit the [Hofheimer Library](#) on the Web for information, resources, services, and hours.

## Nondiscrimination Statement

Virginia Wesleyan University does not discriminate against students of any race, religion, color, creed, gender, national and ethnic origin, age, marital status, covered veteran status, handicap, sexual orientation, or any other legally protected status in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other university-administered programs and facilities.

## Diversity Statement

Virginia Wesleyan University values the benefits of its diversity. We are committed to educating the campus community about issues of diversity. The campus promotes freedom of thought and opinion in the spirit of mutual respect. Our campus community is enriched through programs, activities, and interactions by celebrating our uniqueness as well as our commonalities.

This commitment to diversity links programs and services that support the distinctiveness of individuals regardless of racial and ethnic backgrounds, physical and cognitive abilities, family status, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, age, and religious and spiritual values.

An essential feature of this community is an environment in which all students, faculty, administrators, and staff are able to study and work free from bias and harassment. Such an environment contributes to the growth and development of each member of the community.

## Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning, through engagement of other students, is a key ingredient of participatory learning. Students can expect each online course to have some degree of collaborative learning. The type of collaboration may be minimal and take the form of weekly small group discussions.

Alternatively, the type of collaboration may be a major virtual team project that requires weekly and substantive participation from all members. Regardless of the type of collaborative learning, all students are expected to participate in a timely, substantive, on-subject, professional, and complete manner.

## Hints for Success in Your Online Course

1. Be sure you have access to proper computer equipment, Internet service, and software as listed above.
2. Designate certain times each week to work on your course. Plan ahead, avoid procrastination, even out your workload, and absorb material before moving on.
3. Have a specific achievement goal for each log-on session to help you accomplish what you need to get done and avoid distractions
4. Actively participate in discussions. Meaningful interchange will lead to better understanding of various aspects of the course and also contribute to the personality and warmth of the online class community.
5. If assigned to an online team or study group, work with your team members actively from the start. Thus, team members will benefit from the other group members' ideas and experiences and can depend on one another to complete assigned tasks.
6. Practice an informal but organized, concise, and clear writing style that aids online communication.
7. Venture beyond the classroom. The Internet medium of the online classroom gives ready access to electronic libraries and to pertinent websites that offer a significant advantage in understanding graduate-level material.
8. Your class may occasionally use short multimedia components to enrich the learning environment. Follow the instructions provided.

## Course Policies

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### Late or Missing Work Policy

No work may be made up. Missed work will be recorded as a "0." Due to the nature of this course, there will be no reason for work to be made up. If there is a serious family emergency, I will allow for make-up work to be done on a case-by case basis. Only serious family emergencies (including your own health) will be considered for make-up work

Everything must be handed in on time. You have been given the due dates at the beginning of the semester, so plan accordingly. Any assignment that are handed in late will drop one letter grade PER DAY (*not* class period). After the third day, it will not be accepted. However, Module work will not be accepted late at all. Once Modules are closed, they will not be re-opened. **Any assignments due the last day of class will not be accepted late.**

## Netiquette Guide

- **Ask questions**  
If you find something confusing or want to know more, do not hesitate to ask questions. Make sure to post your questions in the appropriate thread.
- **Participate**  
Do not hide in the background; it is not fair to lurk and let others do all the work. Contribute to discussions to get as much as possible from the course and to maintain your participation grade.
- **Do not dominate a discussion**  
Share your knowledge, but not to the point of excluding others. If you have something to offer, please share it, but allow everyone to contribute equally to a discussion.
- **Be intellectually rigorous**  
Do not excuse sloppy or illogical thinking. Challenge yourself and one another.
- **Be tactful**  
Be critical of ideas but remember there are other people involved. Be tactful and kind. You can hurt the feelings of a person reading your post.
- **Forgive other students' mistakes**  
Do not correct others, even if you follow the rules of netiquette and use good manners. Just because you do not agree with a student's post does not mean that he or she is wrong. Instead, offer a different perspective to encourage further discussion.
- **Read the whole thread before posting**  
Read all the posts in a thread before responding so you don't repeat what others have already said. Try to contribute clarifying information or a new idea to a discussion.
- **Be concise**  
Do not waste people's time by posting basic, repetitive information. Make your point clearly and quickly.
- **Reread and check your posts**  
Practice professionalism. Be mindful of how you look online; others will likely judge the tone and quality of your writing. Reread your posts and edit for clarity and mechanics.
- **Cite your sources**  
If you use a source, cite it properly. Give credit where credit is due. Include links where appropriate.
- **Maintain confidentiality**  
Respect your classmates' privacy. Do not repeat the personal information that others share.
- **Report technical problems**  
If the platform is not working properly, please let your instructor know as soon as possible

## Course Grades and Assignments

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### Grade Allocation

Assignment Type	Percent of Grade	Due
Module Assignments: MindTap	17.5	Assigned Modules
Module Assignments: Kornblum Quizzes	17.5	Assigned Modules

Assignment Type	Percent of Grade	Due
Module Assignments: Hurst Discussions	10	Assigned Modules
Diversity Term Paper	15	Last Day of Class
Social Problems Term Paper	15	Last Day of Class
Article Critique 1	5	Last Day of Class
Article Critique 2	5	Last Day of Class
Self-Analysis Assignment 1	5	Last Day of Class
Self-Analysis Assignment 2	5	Last Day of Class
Self-Analysis Assignment 3	5	Last Day of Class
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	

## Grading Scale

A	92–100
A-	90–91
B+	88–89
B	82–87
B-	80–81
C+	78–79
C	72–77
C-	70–71
D+	68–69
D	62–67
D-	60–61
F	Below 60

## Major Assignment Descriptions

### *Diversity Term Paper*

Each student will study a culture different than his/her own. This will include internet, journal articles, and book readings, as well as immersion in this culture. **You must have real-life contact with the culture.** Attend funerals, church services, eat in restaurants, etc. Have fun but learn. Include a section on how your learning about this culture changed the way you would interact professionally with members of this culture. Include issues of race, class, oppression how this culture might be marginalized from the mainstream. 5-8 pages. Competency 2.

### *Social Problems Term Paper*

Each student will research a social problem area and develop a viable solution (costs must be addressed, political viability, resources needed, etc.) and tie in at least one already existing social work agency to your solution. 5-8 pages minimum. You must use at least 5 sources (wiki-anything is not a credible source). You must use a combination of journals, books, and -- where applicable -- interviews.



## **Article Critiques**

Each student will critique two relevant (to the course) SW research articles. The critiques must be done in the format given to the student (see attachment). One critique must be about a social work and diversity issue. One critique must be a social work and social problem issue. These articles must be from a social work research journal, and not from popular media. The University has access to many online databases with appropriate research journals.

## **Self-Analysis Assignments**

1. **Prompt 1:** What race are you? What ethnicity are you? To what extent does your culture's structures and values oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power. Or not?
2. **Prompt 2:** What are my biases? How do I feel about \_\_\_\_? Would that influence how you work directly with that/those groups? What could you do to overcome that bias?
3. **Prompt 3:** How is being me, make me, me? Do I understand the importance of difference and uniqueness? How do I strive to eliminate my bias?

## **Papers and Critiques**

- Cite all references using the latest [American Psychological Association style](#) standards.
- Make sure that you give credit when credit is due.
- All assignments are to be submitted on-time. Late materials may not be accepted.
- All written work should be college-level, typed, proofread, properly formatted and referenced. Do not play font/margin games. Times New Roman 12. First page (title page) does not count in page count, nor does bibliography. Page count refers to the number of pages of text.

## **Course Schedule**

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Refer to the [academic calendar](#) for important university dates.

The instructor reserves the right to make necessary changes, additions, deletions, and revisions to the course schedule as needed.