

## **CISS 203: Community Engagement and Social Responsibility**

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*“To participate in the life of Holy Cross is to accept an invitation to join in dialogue about basic human questions: ...What are our obligations to one another? What is our special responsibility to the world's poor and powerless?”*

*“The College is dedicated to forming a community which supports the intellectual growth of all its members while offering them opportunities for spiritual and moral development. ... lead all its members to make the best of their own talents, to work together, to be sensitive to one another, to serve others, and to seek justice within and beyond the Holy Cross community.”*

-Holy Cross Mission Statement

*“The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become.... We must therefore raise our Jesuit educational standard to "educate the whole person of solidarity for the real world." Solidarity is learned through "contact" rather than through "concepts"...When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection.*

*Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed.”*

-Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus

### **Course Description:**

Consistent with the mission of Holy Cross and the vision of Jesuit higher education outlined by Father General Kolvenbach, this course offers students the opportunity to engage in the “gritty reality of the world” in order to reflect meaningfully upon the question of what responsibility each of us has towards creating a more just society and how each of us can use our individual gifts and talents to contribute toward this aim. In order to address these questions effectively, the course will utilize texts, articles, websites, movie excerpts, and community engagement experiences to enable a deeper understanding of social problems; to analyze how social problems directly impact individuals within our society; to consider questions of equity and social justice; and to reflect upon what influence our personal choices have on social problems. It is expected that all participants will seek to build a respectful, open, collaborative community where authentic dialogue about one’s values, beliefs, talents, and personal choices can occur.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. A deeper understanding of social problems, the complexities involved in attempting to “solve” social problems, the societal structures underlying social problems, and the interconnectedness of social problems.
2. A deeper understanding of how the lives of individuals are impacted by social problems.
3. A deeper understanding of oneself and the role that one can play in positively impacting social problems.
4. A deeper understanding of community engagement, social justice, and the mission of Jesuit higher education.
5. A deeper understanding of your role as a CBL Intern or SPUD leader.

### **Texts:**

Alexander, Michelle. (2010). *Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New York: New Press.

- Boyle, Gregory. (2011). *Tatoos on the heart: The power of boundless compassion*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Griffin, John Howard (1960). *Black like me*. New York, NY: Signet.
- Kornblum, William and Julian, Joseph. (2012). *Social problems*, 14<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Kozol, Jonathan. (2012). *Fire in the ashes: Twenty-five years among the poorest children in America*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Lupton, Robert D. (2001). *Toxic charity: How churches and charities hurt those they help (and how to reverse it)*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Martin, J., S.J. (2010). *The Jesuit guide to almost everything: A spirituality for real life*. New York, NY: Harper One.
- Preskill, S., & Brookfield, S.D. (2009). *Learning as a way of leading*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Shipler, David. (2005). *The working poor*. New York: Vintage. (Available through Ebrary)
- Tough, Paul. (2012). *How children succeed: Grit, curiosity, and the hidden power of character*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

### Articles and Essays:

- Henry, M., Cortes, A., Morris, S., & Abt Associates (2013). *The 2013 annual homeless assessment report to Congress*. Retrieved from <https://www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/ahar-2013-part1.pdf>
- Himes, Michael. *Three key questions*. Retrieved from (<http://www.visitationmonasteryminneapolis.org/2010/02/on-discernment-three-key-questions/>)
- Kolvenbach, P.H., S.J. (2000). *The service of faith and the promotion of justice in American Jesuit higher education*.
- Lewis, A., Chesler, M., & Forman, T. (2000). The impact of “colorblind” ideologies on students of color: Intergroup relations at a predominantly white university. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69, 74-92.
- McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack*. Working Paper 189, Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley, MA
- Pitts, L. (2002). Crazy sometimes. In B. Singley (Ed.), *When race becomes real*. (pp. 21-27). Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books.
- Wise, T. (2002). White like me: Race and identity through majority eyes. In B. Singley (Ed.), *When race becomes real*. (pp. 225-240). Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books.

### Films:

- Cheng, J., Stark, D., & Griffin-Destra, J. (2006). *What's race got to do with it?* Berkeley, CA: California Newsreel.
- Guggenheim, D., Kimball, B., Chilcott, L., Strickland, B., & Canada, G. (2011). *Waiting for superman*. [Motion Picture] Hollywood, CA: Paramount Home Entertainment.
- Hampton, Henry, Judith Vecchione, Steve Fayer, Orlando Bagwell, Callie Crossley, James A. DeVinney, Madison D. Lacy, Paul J. Stekler, Jacqueline Shearer, Sam Pollard, Sheila C. Bernard, Terry K. Rockefeller, Thomas Ott, Louis Massiah, and Julian Bond (2006). *Eyes on the prize: Keys to the kingdom, volume 7*. Alexandria, Va.: PBS Video.

Silverbush, L. and Jacobson, K. (2013). *A Place at the Table*. Los Angeles, CA: Magnolia Home Entertainment.

**Reading Reflections** (15 points)

Each week, students will be asked to submit 4-5 written questions or insights gained through the reading(s) at least 3 hours before class begins. Whenever possible, students should connect the readings to the work at their CBL site that week. Reading reflections should be at least 1 single-spaced page in length. These will be evaluated based upon the level of complexity, depth, and/or understanding exhibited.

**Group Presentation** (15 points)

Groups of 2-3 students will introduce and provide a context for one of the following social problems we will study: 1)Homelessness 2)Inequity in Education 3)Refugees and Immigration 4)Racism or 5) Crime & Punishment.

The presentation will include an overview of the following:

- a) Statistics related to the prevalence of the problem (or a specific aspect of the problem) and who is most impacted by the problem.
- b) A discussion of how this problem is a social justice issue.
- c) The opinions of national experts (i.e. academics, political leaders, non-profit leaders) on how best to address the problem? An overview of how this dialogue might have changed in recent decades.
- d) An analysis of how effective the approaches to “solving” the problem have been.
- e) An analysis of the greatest challenges/complexities in solving the problem.
- f) Integration of the week’s class readings as appropriate.

Teams will be given approximately 50 minutes to present the introduction/overview and lead a dialogue to enable further understanding of the complexities related to the social problem. Documentaries, handouts, Power Point slides, Prezi, etc. may be used. Please think creatively about how to present the information in an interactive and engaging manner that maximizes the possibility your fellow students will learn effectively. One week prior to the presentation, team members will submit an outline of the presentation plan. This plan will be reviewed by the instructor and additional suggestions may be offered. Within one week after the presentation, any relevant presentation materials should be shared with the class.

**Written Reflection Papers (Approximately 4 pages each):**

#1 Personal reflection on your background (10 points)

Briefly describe your background (socioeconomically, educationally, ethnically, etc.). Include demographic data about your town/city and school to provide context on how this compares to national averages. What were the prevalent cultural norms (i.e., within your school culture, your community’s culture, your family’s culture, etc.) as you developed your view of the world? How has your background influenced your experience with and your perception of social problems? How might the backgrounds of those being served at your CBL placement(s) be different from your own in a way that might cause the world to be viewed differently? (Use class readings to back up your assertions as appropriate.)

*Due by 11:59 pm on September 16th*

## #2 Interview with a community partner (10 points)

Interview a person at your CBL site that has chosen to build his/her career around positively impacting a social problem. Why did this person originally make this choice? What inspires this person to continue to make this choice? What philosophical approach does this person have in relating to clients of the organization? How does this person sustain him or herself on this journey and avoid burnout? In what ways does this person's life serve as a model for you to follow?

*Due by 11:59 pm on October 21st*

## #3 Integration of Class and Community Engagement (10 points)

Choose 2-3 specific class readings to analyze for this reflection paper. In what ways did these class readings help you to better understand experiences you have had in the community? How have your community engagement experiences this semester illustrated topics addressed in these readings?

*Due by 11:59 pm on November 18th*

## **Institutional Analysis (25 points)**

The Institutional Analysis will be an in-depth examination of how your community-based organization functions, the social problem(s) it is intending to address, and how you have been impacted through your work with the organization. (Please note that it will be necessary to discuss the topics in bold with employees at your CBL site in order to adequately answer the questions). The written portion of your institutional analysis should address the following questions in approximately 12-16 pages (approximate guidelines for how to allocate these pages are included below). A ten minute overview of your analysis will be presented in class and should focus on sections a, c (italicized questions only), and e.

a) What is the mission of the organization. What social problem(s) is the organization involved in addressing? **Who and how many are being served by the organization?** (1 page)

b) What do national experts (i.e. academics, political leaders, non-profit/educational leaders) say about how to best approach the social problem(s) the organization is addressing? (This should include numerous citations from our class readings/presentations as well as other relevant sources). (5-6 pages)

My intention in using the word "best" is that you will not simply report all possible approaches that exist, but that you will critically analyze those approaches to determine which you think are among the best. This will require that you read and learn about many potential approaches--some of which will never make it into your final paper. Your assertions about which approach(es) are the best should be backed up with citations and/or your experience. Citations can be from a variety of potential sources (i.e., class readings, class presentations, policy websites, research articles that we did not read in class, but you discovered, etc.). The point is that I want to give you the chance to develop "expertise" in one specific social problem so that you can, hopefully, use this expertise in your future career/service.

Please know that this part of the assignment will likely be challenging. As you've seen throughout the semester, many of these problems do not have widely-agreed upon solutions. There are many possible solutions and many critiques of almost any solution you will find. Your job will be to make the case about why you think one or more approaches is best--despite potential flaws.

c) **Who are the key leaders within the organization and what is their vision for how to address the problem(s)?** *What are the concrete approaches (i.e., programs) through which the organization attempts to address the social problem(s) of its focus? In what ways is the organization effective in its efforts to "solve" the social problem(s) it is attempting to address? In what ways could it be more effective?* (Responses to these questions should be a combination of staff opinions and your own

analysis). Are the opinions of national experts (from section b) consistent with the vision and daily work of the organization? Why or why not? (3-5 pages)

d) How do you think the theoretical perspectives (i.e. functionalist, conflict, and interactionist) fit with this vision and these concrete approaches? (1 page)

e) What have you learned about yourself through your work with the organization? This can be in reference to whatever you find most relevant (i.e., career goals, greater awareness of unique skills you possess, further development of personal values/life vision, personal perspective on the causes of social problems, etc.). (2-3 pages)

### **Course Expectations:**

1. Regular class attendance. Because the class only meets once a week, any unexcused absences will negatively impact the class participation grade (which is a significant proportion of the overall grade). Foreseen absences must be approved prior to class meeting time. The instructor should be notified of unforeseen absences (i.e., illness) before class meeting time whenever possible
2. Punctuality.
3. Full participation in class and discussions. Phones and computers should not be used in class unless prior approval is given by the instructor. Any unapproved use of technology during class will result in the student being considered absent.
4. Timely completion of all assignments. Students are expected to read each required text before the respective class meeting and be prepared to discuss details of the text. Unless prior permission is obtained by the instructor, grades on written assignments will be lowered by one-half letter for each day late.
5. Community engagement of two hours each week throughout the semester. Failure to abide by this will negatively impact your overall class grade as written assignments and class participation depend upon your engagement in the community.
6. Respect and care for your classmates, your instructor, and those at your service site as we engage in this learning journey with one another.

### **Grading:**

Reading Questions/Insights: 15%

Written Reflections: 30%

Group Presentation: 15%

Institutional Analysis: 25%

Class Participation: 15%

### **Grading Scale:**

A 95-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69
A- 90-94	B 84-86	C 74-76	D 60-66
	B- 80-83	C- 70-73	F 0-59

### **Academic Honesty Policy:**

All education is a cooperative enterprise between teachers and students. This cooperation requires trust and mutual respect, which are only possible in an environment governed by the principles of academic honesty. As an institution devoted to teaching, learning, and intellectual inquiry, Holy Cross expects all members of the College community to abide by the highest standards of academic integrity. Any violation of academic honesty undermines the student-teacher relationship, thereby wounding the whole community. The principal violations of academic honesty are plagiarism, cheating, and collusion.

### **Reading and Assignments Schedule:**

## **September 4- Introduction, Service, and Jesuit Higher Education**

*Readings:*

Martin, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-28). Kolvenbach (pp. 1-12). Holy Cross Mission Statement. Lupton, (pp. 31-37).

## **September 11 & September 18- Inequality in America**

*Readings September 11:*

Kornblum & Julian, Chapter 1(pp. 2-27) & Chapter 6 (pp. 186-220). Begin reading Kozol for next class.

*Homework Activity, September 11:* Review the 2012 American Community Survey and 2010 Census Statistics from the U.S. Census website (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>) to gather statistics about the most affluent neighborhood in your home region, the least affluent neighborhood in your home region, and Worcester (use 01610 zip code for Worcester). Review and record data on ethnicity, educational attainment rates (population 25+ with a bachelor's or graduate degree), mean household income, percent unemployed, percent of individuals living in poverty, and median house value.

Review Harvard's Equality of Opportunity Project to consider odds of social mobility from various geographic regions: <http://equality-of-opportunity.org/>

Be prepared to discuss these data in class and incorporate data into Reflection #1 as relevant.

*Written Reflection #1 due September 16*

*Reading September 18:* Kozol, (pp. 3-106; 143-190; 301-319).

## **September 25- The Working Poor and Hunger**

*Reading:* Shipler, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 8 (pp. 3-76; 201-218).

*Homework Activity:* Review Project Bread website to look at hunger statistics in the state. Look at CNN article about budgets of real McDonald's employees:

<http://money.cnn.com/gallery/news/economy/2013/07/17/mcdonalds-worker-budget/index.html>

Be prepared to discuss these in class.

Watch excerpts from a *A Place at the Table* in class.

## **October 2- Homelessness**

*Reading:* Henry, et al. pages 1-58.

Review website with selected writings from Dennis Culhane at the University of Pennsylvania ([http://works.bepress.com/dennis\\_culhane/](http://works.bepress.com/dennis_culhane/)). Choose one of greatest interest to you and be prepared to summarize key points (in approximately 3-5 minutes) for others in class. Instead of the weekly reading reflection, write a brief overview of the article (please provide citation) you selected.

## **October 9 & October 23- Inequity in Education**

*Reading/Homework October 9:*

Kornblum & Julian, Chapter 11 (pp. 354-369; 376-378).

Watch *Waiting for Superman* outside of class before October 9

Begin reading Tough for next class.

*Written Reflection # 2 due October 21*

*October 23:*

Tough, *How Children Succeed* (pp. 9-14; 16-21 28-34; 37-40).

Review the websites for the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University (<http://www.agi.harvard.edu/>) and the Education Week Achievement Gap Report (<http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/achievement-gap/>). Choose one scholarly article or research report from these websites to read. Include a 4-5 sentence overview of the article (please provide citation) with your weekly questions/insights.

Read the BPS plan for Eliminating the Achievement Gap Policy Plan (pp. 1-10) at: <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib07/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/111/GapPolicy.pdf>

### **October 30 & November 6 – Racism**

*Readings October 30:*

Griffin (pp.14 -143); Pitts (pp. 21-27).

Watch first section of *Eyes on the Prize, Volume 7: Keys to the Kingdom* documentary about the integration of schools in Boston in class.

*Readings November 6:*

McIntosh (pp. 1-4). Kornblum & Julian, Chapter 7 (pp. 236-248). Wise, (pp. 225-240). Lewis, Chesler, & Forman (pp. 74-92).

Watch excerpts from *What's Race Got to Do with It?* in class. Before class, review transcript from the film available at: <http://www.whatsrace.org/>

### **November 13– Crime & Punishment**

*Readings:* Kornblum & Julian, Chapter 5 (160-178). Alexander (pp. 58-60; 83-101; 139-162).

Spend 30-45 minutes reviewing the Sentencing Project website [www.sentencingproject.org](http://www.sentencingproject.org) and the Equal Justice Initiative website <http://www.eji.org/>

*Written Reflection # 3 due November 18*

### **November 20– Refugees & Immigration**

*Readings:* Kornblum & Julian, Chapter 13 (pp. 429-445). Shipler, Chapters 3&4 (pp. 77-120) Kozol (pp. 191-198).

Review the latest status of the immigration reform debate in congress and be prepared to discuss in class.

### **December 4 – Institutional Analysis Class Presentations**

*Reading:* Preskill & Brookfield, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-20). Begin reading Boyle.

### **December 11– Living the Jesuit Mission**

*Readings:* Himes, *Three Key Questions*. Boyle, (pp. 1-217). Lupton (pp. 37-42; 127-132).

**Institutional Analysis due by midnight on day of final.**