



INST 2550: Creative Approaches to Social Issues
Fall 2023
Mondays 6:30-8:00 pm
Hereford Hub Multipurpose Room

Instructor

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Description

Hereford Fellows, faculty, and staff will lead students in an exploration of social issues through provocative questions and creative approaches to possible solutions. The topics will encourage students to think critically about what the world of tomorrow may be like. Most importantly, students will leave the class at the end of the session with a fuller understanding of what it means to exist and be a full participant in the modern world.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course you will:

- Identify and describe social issues and potential solutions introduced in the course
- Investigate a social issue of interest, propose and present a creative approach to address the issue.
- Deconstruct and critique conventional approaches to issues presented.
- Critically reflect on developing perspectives and interest in social issues.

Course Outline

1. September 11: Food Insecurity (guest: Shelby Gibson)
2. September 18: Incarceration & Race
3. September 25: Incarceration & Race
4. October 9: DEI, Identity, & Student Counterspaces (Guest: James Bland)
5. October 16: Environmental Issues (Guest: Cale Jaffe)
6. October 23: Creating a Sustainable Campus (Guest Lela Garner)
7. October 30: Political Controversy and Civil Discussion (Guest, Dr. Rachel Wahl)
8. November 6: Student Led Topics
9. November:13: Student Led Topics

Grading: This course is graded on a credit/no credit basis. Credit for the course is based on student attendance and engagement including:

Active Participation: Given the nature of this course, active participation is expected of all students. By active participation, I mean critically reading or viewing materials provided, reflecting on the authors' arguments, critiquing the authors' ideas, asking questions, contributing in small groups, and being engaged in class discussions. While I expect that all students will participate, there are multiple and varied ways to demonstrate active engagement in the course. It is important that we all strive to stretch ourselves beyond our preferred methods of learning and our comfort zones, as dissonance can promote new learning.

Active engagement and participation are important; however, participation does not mean merely verbal interaction or taking up airtime. I recognize that a range of factors, including learning style, influences individual participation. Participation, therefore, is not based on the frequency of participation but the quality. However, I encourage each of

you to challenge yourself as fully as possible as your preparation, attentiveness, and willingness to share and disclose in smaller groups are essential.

Some good general questions to consider while reading, viewing, listening, or in discussions are:

- What ideas were new to you - eye openers. How and why did they make you think differently about the topic?
- Which points in the chapter/article were well substantiated, questionable, or wrong. You may agree with a point the author made but believe they did not make a strong enough case. Strive at times to examine the logical development.
- What are the implications of this reading/video/podcast for inspiring solutions?
- Did the material introduce you to anything about which you want to learn more?
- How does a particular reading/video/podcast shed light on an issue you are concerned with?

Leading One Class Discussion: At the end of the semester students (in groups) will be responsible for facilitating a group discussion of a topic of their choice (to be approved). We will select our weeks early in the semester and your group will select your reading/video/podcast for that week.

On the day your group leads the discussion only a quick overview of the reading/video/podcast should be presented (as all students should have already read/viewed/listened to it). Your task is to lead the class into a deeper discussion/understanding of the material and assist the class in making connections to the larger ideas. Leading class discussions are intended to serve as opportunities for each student to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and contribute to their larger understanding of the issue presented. Discussion leaders should have 2-3 questions that facilitate discussion. Students have the flexibility to lead the class as they see fit; exercises, activities, media, and/or PowerPoint are encouraged. Required presentation time will be dependent on the number of students in the course.