SW467 uses narrative to explore the relationship between women’s personal biographies and the social, historic, and economic context of their lives. To this end we enter—via poetry, art, literature, film, music, and personal narrative—the lives of a wide range of women, both US and international, whose stories help us explore issues of poverty, war, health, migration, religion, and sexual orientation. We pay particular attention to women (and men) who—in Marge Piercy’s words—“strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward” and use their lives to struggle for justice and dignity. We also explore narrative—the telling and hearing of stories—as a practice tool for social workers, psychologists, counselors, and others; and as a tool for finding our common humanity and the strengths we need to heal ourselves and together build a better world. A major focus of the course is the development of students’ own narratives, especially during the final assignment, “The Dinner Party,” which is based on Judy Chicago’s historic art installation of the same name.

Context

SW467 is an upper-level capstone and diversity course which also serves as a social work elective. Capstone courses, which are limited to 35 students, are “intensive experiences in critical analysis, designed to broaden students’ perspectives beyond their culture or discipline and provide an opportunity for integration of previous courses in the major and in the core curriculum.” They require students to examine complex issues in substantial pieces of writing. Diversity courses, which also include a rigorous writing requirement, must have as their central focus or theme (not as a peripheral interest) a topic pertaining to non-western culture or to excluded groups within western culture.

Objectives

By the conclusion of this class, students will demonstrate:

- An understanding of “sociological imagination” (Mills, 1959), that is, the intersection of personal biography and social/economic context;
- An ability to put women at the center of analysis in order to map women’s consciousness, illuminate women’s experience, and explore women’s culture;
- The habit of diversity, that is, the determination to explore a wide range of women’s (and men’s) experience across class, race, religion, age, country of origin, immigration
status, ability and disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and political belief;

- An ability to analyze how women’s experience has been socially constructed;
- Familiarity with the women on whose shoulders we stand, that is, women who have contributed to human progress through their work as social workers, activists, writers, artists, scientists, etc.
- Familiarity with the use of narrative in therapy, group work, and social movements.

**Course Policies and Requirements**

The course will be taught through lectures, films, group discussions, and guest presentations. The class meets once a week (see “Schedule” for week-by-week topics and dates of assignments). It is important to attend and participate in the class, do the required readings, and complete all the assignments on time. The emphasis in this course is on critical analysis, not rote learning or memorization. There will be a considerable amount of reading and writing, plus a great deal of hard thinking.

Two required books, Nicholas Kristof & Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, and Susan Chandler & Jill Jones, *Casino Women: Courage in Unexpected Places*, are available in the bookstore. Other readings will be available on library e-reserve or from the instructor.

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:**
The School of Social Work supports providing equal access for students with disabilities. If you have a disability and require assistance, please contact the instructor or the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The Disability Resource Center is located in the Thompson Building, Suite 100, and can be reached at 775-784-6000. If there are any reasons that might interfere with your ability to complete the class requirements, please see me.

If you are a veteran, you might consider the UNR Office of Veterans Services, Office for Admissions and Records, 682-5935.

Finally, your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (784-4433 or www.unr.edu/mathcenter/), Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or www.unr.edu/writing_center). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services.

**REMEMBER:**
“Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses” constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonest is a serious offense and penalties can include canceling a student’s enrollment without a grade or giving an F for the course or assignment. For more details, see http://www.cis.unr.edu/ecatolog/Default.aspx?article_list_id=11076.