

# Study Guide

SASS 484. Theories of Oppression and Social Justice

## Course Description

This course provides students with theoretical understanding of how oppression operates to restrict the life chances of members of minority and disenfranchised groups (EPAS 2). Increasing knowledge is one component of valuing a diverse world; internalizing knowledge about the nature and dynamics of oppression is a fundamental dimension of the ability to value a diverse world and requires self-assessment and reflection on discrimination, oppression, and privilege as components of individual insight (EPAS 2). Such insight will help students become better practitioners so they can work with clients without discrimination and with respect, knowledge and skills related to race, ethnicity, class, culture, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religion, ability and age (EPAS 2).

The emphasis, in this course, is on how oppression manifests at the individual, institutional and social/cultural levels. It highlights the pervasive nature of inequality and bias woven throughout social, cultural, political, and economic institutional and interpersonal systems. Multiple theories will be presented to explicate how structures of dominance, privilege and subordination are manifested, paralleled, and interconnected. Major attention will be focused on structures of oppression and privilege related to racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, transgenderism, religious bigotry, xenophobia, ableism and ageism. Strong consideration will also be given to how intersectionality, memberships in multiple marginalized social groups, negatively impact life chances.

As a foundational course for developing the ability to value a diverse world, this course also provides students with an opportunity to enhance self-awareness and critical thinking through a systematic reflection of their own experiences with oppression and privilege. Students also will be challenged to understand and value the worldviews of persons different from themselves and develop the ability to take different perspectives in their work. This course elevates students' skills to interview and participate in dialogue with persons different from themselves.

The final focus will be on developing plans for continued learning, leadership, and advocacy to promote a society that is inclusive and affirming of human, similarities, differences, abilities, and capacities.

# Course Objectives

1. Enhance skills for self-reflection on socialization and other experiences with oppression and privilege.
2. Highlight histories of oppression to provide a context for understanding current issues and grievances of oppressed and targeted groups.
3. Examine multiple models, theories, and key concepts of oppression and privilege.
4. Analyze manifestations of oppression based on race, class, gender sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, and ability.
5. Understand the concept of privilege and who benefits from it.
6. Recognize intersectionality (memberships in multiple marginalized groups) and examine impacts.
7. Engage in cultural interviews with persons from different backgrounds around experiences with oppression and privilege.
8. Develop plans for continued learning, leadership, and advocacy to empower groups marginalized and exploited by society and promote their affirmation and inclusion in a just society.

# Readings

Coates, T. (2015). *Between the world and me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.