



GERIATRIC SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVE

TEACHING SOCIAL JUSTICE BY TEACHING LIFE REVIEW

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*ASSIGNMENTS TO TEACH SOCIAL JUSTICE AND AGING
CONCURRENTLY*

*For use in
Social Policy Courses
Social Work Practice Courses
Gerontology Course*

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✿ ***CENTURY IN REVIEW SOCIAL, HISTORICAL, AND PERSONAL TIMELINE***

Teach students to use the Century in Review Timeline (www.umt.sw) to interview elders about their lives from a social and historical context. Incorporate the elders' major life events, Erickson's psychosocial stages of life, or Robert Peck's adult development framework into the timeline. Ask students to describe how social and historical contexts affected the overall development of their elder. Ask students to compare their own world with that of the elder they are interviewing.

✿ ***LIFE REVIEW GUIDE***

Teach students to do a life review with an elder, utilizing the Life Review Guide available at www.umt.sw. Combine the Life Review Guide with the Century in Review Timeline to place the elder's life review and reminiscence into social and historical context.

✿ ***STUDY A DECADE***

Allow students to select a decade to study by examining the historical and social justice context of the decade by studying social policies (or lack of) developed during the decade, societal attitudes toward diversity, or other cross cutting issues. In class, have students compare one decade with another, illustrating how individuals and age cohorts would have been different based on the decade in which they were born, in which they came of age, in which they raised a family, and in which they aged because of the social policies, social problems, and social justice issues they faced.

✿ ***STUDY A SOCIAL ISSUE OVER TIME***

Ask students to study a selected social issue over the century. Examples include women's rights, racial tensions, child maltreatment, battering, mental health, health, adoption, worker's rights, or poverty. As students examine social policies relating to their selected social issue, ask them to demonstrate an understanding of the impact of this social issue on individuals and families, as well as to demonstrate an understanding of the development of social policies designed to address the social issue. Ask them to interview individuals born in various time periods who would have experienced this social issue in various ways.

✿ ***DIVERSITY BY THE DECADE***

Assign students to interview two elders of difference (male / female, heterosexual / lesbian, white / Native American, rural / urban) and examine the differences between their experiences. Ask students to describe how age cohorts may be

similar because of the socio-historical context in which they came of age, and how they are different because of their diversity. Ask students to describe how each interviewee would understand or have experienced social injustices differently.

✿ ***SOCIAL INSTITUTION STUDY***

Allow students to select a social institution such as education, the church, health care, tribal networks, or the family. Ask them to examine the influences of the socio-historical context of the development of this institution over time, including major social policies which either promoted or impeded social justice within this social institution.

✿ ***POPULAR CULTURE***

Ask students to select an aspect of popular culture of interest to them, such as the arts, music, movies, television, or literature. Assign them to trace the history of this choice over the century, asking them to learn about how this aspect of popular culture reflected the social issues of the century (or portion of the century).

✿ ***FASHION SHOW***

Have student organize a fashion show to illustrate changes in clothing and the social attitudes reflected by the evolution of fashion. Invite elders to narrate the fashion show and to add personal anecdotes about various time periods that illustrate how their lives were impacted by societal attitudes and expressed in their dress.

✿ ***PANEL OF ELDERS***

Organize a panel of elders of various ages from the community. Make certain to have elders on the panel in their 60's, their 70's their 80's, and their 90's. Assign students to facilitate the panel discussion, and to prepare questions (given to elders in advance) that would ask elders to reflect on how social issues, social justice and injustice, and social policies have influenced their lives over time.

✿ ***EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION***

Assign students to study the evolution of the social work profession over the century, including issues of social work education, definition of the profession, responses to social issues and social injustice, and social work pioneering efforts to address social injustice through innovative social policy practice. Ask students to critique the social work profession's response to social injustice.

✿ ***INTIMATE INTERVIEWS***

Ask students to interview several generations of their own family, using the Life Review Guide and the Century in Review Timeline. Assign them to draw comparisons between generations' experiences (including their own) in a variety of arenas, including such areas as gender issues, civil rights, labor relations, family development, and governmental responses to poverty.

✿ ***FAMILY HERITAGE GIFT***

Assign students to prepare a Century in Review Timeline by interviewing their parents or grandparents, or both. As a gift for their elders, have students print high quality personal timelines, highlighting the individual milestones in the context of social history. Assign students to also write a letter to their parents or grandparents about the advantages the students enjoy because of the efforts of generations before them, expressing their appreciation for the ways in which their parents or grandparents improved the quality of the students' lives through any formal or informal social action in which their parents or grandparents were involved.

✿ ***SOCIAL JUSTICE ESSAY***

Assign an essay in which students explore the meaning of social justice and social injustice. Ask them to consider whether definitions of the two concepts are universal or dependent upon circumstance, whether perceptions of social justice evolve over time, and whether contemporary views of social justice will endure over time. Ask them to consider the role of internalized oppression on their clients. Ask them to write about why people take their rights for granted and whether this is desirable or regrettable.

✿ ***CUSTOMIZED TIMELINE***

Ask students to revise the Century in Review Timeline to include local or regional events, values, and significant people. Ask them to consider what should be included and what should not be included in order for them to construct an instrument that would be meaningful when used as a life review with elders from their area.

✿ ***RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM***

As a class, compile the results of all the elder interviews done with the use of the Century in Review Timeline and the Life Review Guide. Ask them to summarize the demographic data in terms of ages of interviewees, gender, cultural background, and other factors identified as important by the students and elders. Invite the elders to a research colloquium during which students present the findings of their research. Assist them in developing effective and interesting ways in which to present the findings to the elders who participated in interviews, highlighting how age cohorts are shaped by the socio-historical contexts in which they developed over time. Encourage them to include elders in discussing the meaning of the research, including providing appreciation for the teaching role of the elders.

✿ *CONJOINT CLASSROOMS*

In conjunction with a colleague, organize two concurrently taught social work courses during the same academic term (in which the same students are enrolled) in such a way that social justice and practice skills will be taught and reinforced in each course. For example, teach about social justice in the practice course by using the Century in Review Timeline with elders, and teach practice skills in the social policy course by using the Life Review Guide with the same elders. Coordinate assignments and course presentations between the two courses, highlighting the interaction between individual social functioning of clients and the social justice context of which they are a part.