

English (and IDIS) 390 Domestic Violence – Fall 2009

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### *Domestic Violence*

Domestic violence seems to be one of the greatest plagues of our times. It transcends ethnicities, countries, cultures, education and status. It has become life threatening to many innocents, including by-standers. Most shooting rampages we have witnessed lately started as domestic violence incidents that quickly grew into indiscriminate killings.

Is violence an inherent part of human nature? What is domestic violence? Can it be avoided? How can victims cope? How does one survive domestic abuse and how does one heal? Is there a way to protect children from abusive parents? Can the cycle of violence be broken? These are some of the questions we will try to answer during our semester. We will have guest speakers, experts on domestic violence and child-abuse and testimonies from victims. You will be required to ask questions and raise issues that concern you as well as to conduct your own research.

As part of this course you will be working with young kids from Head Start and with women from Turning Point, the local agency helping victims of domestic violence. You will be meeting women and children; you will listen to their stories and write them down as testimonies, so that you can recognize, understand and help them. Voicing the pain is sometimes the beginning of healing. More than writing or reading skills, this course will demand goodwill and compassion.

This is an interactive class; therefore you will have to participate on a regular basis, share your impressions, your writings and your experiences in and out of class. The course will depend greatly on your direct involvement and impassioned participation. Your own interests will be reflected in the course's agenda.

Some of the written assignments will be graded. There will be other un-graded assignments relating to reading, writing, researching and working with domestic violence victims.

The major assignments in this course will be as follows:

A. A research paper on a topic of your choosing (to be approved by the course instructor); a subject you are passionate about. You can compile the testimonies you will collect during the semester and add a research component about the specific aspect you are interested in. You will be asked to submit a first draft at mid-term and your final research paper at the end of the semester, or you can choose 2 different topics.

B. Short creative writing assignments each week (1-2 pages long), reflecting your personal perspective on the literature we will be reading and discussing in class. You will receive feedback from fellow students and the instructor, improving your skills of reflecting and analyzing. By talking in class about your chosen subjects you will improve your expressive skills as well.

C. Informal journal of your reading as well as about the various presentations, and interactions with women and children taking place outside of class.

Un-graded assignments will still be submitted to the course instructor and receive feedback. Even though these items do not receive separate grades, they are required parts of the course; missing, incomplete, or late assignments will result in a lowered “written assignments” part of your grade.

### **Purposes**

Unfortunately domestic violence is a part of our lives. Understanding it will enhance your knowledge of the society and civilization we belong to. Through this course you will increase your awareness of discrimination, persecution, violence and other forms of antagonism. You might become a better ambassador in the service of understanding and tolerating and hopefully help to create a world with less violence.

### **Goals**

- Learn to identify the different narratives of domestic violence.
- Become knowledgeable of the devastating toll domestic violence takes.
- Caution all involved against different forms of abuse.
- Ameliorate your listening skills.

- Enhance your proficiency in reading, writing, discussing and communicating.

**Expectations**

You are expected to show up to every class, and on time. Unexcused absence and tardiness will interfere with your learning and hence affect your grade. You are permitted one unexcused absence from class. For every unexcused absence beyond that, your attendance grade will be lowered by 5 pts.

Please turn off your cell phones when you enter class. If they ring during class or you are caught texting during class, your cell phone will be confiscated and returned to you when the class is over for the day. Please refrain from eating during class, as this interferes with your ability to participate in class discussions.

All assignments will be presented in print, and in a timely manner.

**Academic Honesty**

You are expected to perform your academic work honestly and fairly. Since you can choose your subject and your writing is supposed to be personal, write it on your own. The consequences of failure to meet those expectations are outlined in the current *Student Handbook*.

**Grading**

- 1. Contribution in class discussion.....20%
- 2. Community service..... 15%
- 3. Journals.....10%
- 3. Presentations in class.....15%
- 4. Written assignments .....20%
- 5. Research papers on your chosen topics .....20%

**Required Texts**

*Free to Be* a compilation of stories and poems written by abuse victims.

*Why Does He Do That?* By Lundy Bancroft

**Schedule-** with possible modifications according to student topic researches

Week I

Tuesday September 1

Introduction

Thursday September 3

what is domestic violence?

Week II

Tuesday September 8 can it happen to you?

Thursday September 10 abuse and silence

Week III

Tuesday September 15 saying it out loud

Thursday September 17 is there a point of no return?

Week IV

Tuesday September 22 voicing the pain – a meeting with TP counselor

Thursday September 24 taking sides

Week V

Tuesday September 29 protecting children's innocence

Thursday October 1 abuse and taboos

Week VI

Tuesday October 6 emotional abuse

Thursday October 8 midterm due

Week VII

Tuesday October 13 fall Recess

Thursday October 15 why does he do it?

Week VIII

Tuesday October 20 women's violence

Thursday October 22 anger and control

Week IX

Tuesday October 27 coping with testimonies

Thursday October 29 abuse and addiction

Week X

Tuesday November 3 abusive men and their allies

Thursday November 5 the process of change

Week XI

Tuesday November 10 objectivity and writing

Thursday November 12 violence on TV and films

Week XII

Tuesday November 17	creating trust
Thursday November 19	writing to heal
Week XIII	
Tuesday November 24	abusive thinking
Thursday November 26	learning to let go
Week XIV	
Tuesday December 1	final essay due
Thursday December 3	the process of change
Week XV	
Tuesday December 8	Conclusions

## Notes

- 1) You can expect to dedicate 6-8 hours per week outside of class, reading, preparing assignments and meeting with women and children.
- 2) Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodation in this class are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Offices as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.
- 3) Do not hesitate to address me with any kind of problem you have during class or after.
- 4) This syllabus is subject to change.