DePaul University SCPS
Undergraduate Programs
HC219 and LSP200: The Fight for Human Rights: One Woman's Crusade
Spring 2020

Faculty: Fred Wellisch, J.D. fwellisc@depaul.edu, office hours: flexible by appointment.

Monday evenings, March 30th – June 8th, 5:45-9:15 pm, Loop Campus

Course Description:

Sister Helen Prejean is a leading human rights activist in the United States. For the past 30 years, she has shaped conversation about equal treatment of all within the criminal justice system, especially persons of color and the materially poor. *Dead Man Walking*, the non-fiction account of her experience accompanying two condemned prisoners to their execution, has had a major influence on the discussion of violence, poverty, civil rights, criminal law, and social justice in the United States. As a compelling first-hand description, it inspired a film, an opera, and a play, which have been seen by millions of people worldwide. We will view the film during this class. She also completed *The Death of Innocents*, a first-hand account of her years with two convicts whom she is convinced were innocent. In this book she discusses both the legal issues and social justice arguments surrounding capital punishment. Her written work and activism on behalf of victims of crime as well as prisoners and their families have impacted decisions by Pope John Paul II, numerous governors, senators, prosecutors and defense attorneys. In this course, we will study her work, discuss issues surrounding the legality and morality of capital punishment, and consider what it takes to become a leader/advocate for human rights and social justice, using the work of Harvard sociologist Marshall Ganz as our starting point.

In 2011, Prejean donated her papers to the archives of the DePaul University library. The papers include correspondence with prisoners, families of victims, as well as persons of influence. Some of these are digitized and embedded in the modules of the D2L course website. However, you will also have the opportunity to view her papers first-hand during our April 13th class session. This will take place at the Richardson Library on the Lincoln Park campus.

Each spring Sister Helen spends a week at DePaul and is available to discuss with students and faculty the compelling issues she has written about. This year she will be in residence at DePaul the week of April 20th and you will be able to meet her when she visits our class on that date. During the same week you will be asked to attend as many other Sister Helen events as you can.
Learning Experience

We will use a variety of learning strategies, including reading sources, watching films, participating in class discussions, viewing primary materials in the archives, attending on-campus events involving Sister Helen, maintaining a journal, and writing a short research paper that incorporates documents from the archives.

Learning Outcomes for Students in Each Program

Students working within the Bachelor of Arts with an Individualized Focus Area in the School of Continuing and Professional Studies will develop one or two of the following competencies:

L-3: Can assess the social and personal value of civic engagement for achieving change. By the end of the course, students taking the course for L-3 should be able to:

1. Explain the impact an engaged citizen can make to improve the effectiveness of a society.
2. Articulate a strategy for personal civic engagement.
3. Engage in an activity that positively contributes to the civic life of a community.

H4: Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural, or economic groups in the US. By the end of the course, students taking the course for H4 should be able to:

1. Identify major arguments regarding capital punishment in the U.S., and assess implications for social, economic, and cultural policy regarding race and class.
2. Describe and assess methods of peaceful dissent in advocating for social justice.

H5: Can analyze issues and problems from a global perspective. By the end of the course, students taking the course for H5 should be able to:

1. Identify and analyze regional and global differences in the imposition of capital punishment.
2. Assess the United States’ approach to capital punishment in light of global practices.

FX: Can assess strategies of individuals and groups seeking to bring about major social change. By the end of the course, students taking the course for FX should be able to:

1. Identify and illustrate skills and attribute required to engage in social activism.
2. Describe effective approaches to bringing about social change in the past.
3. Explain what an activist must do in order to change public opinion on a charged issue.

Students working in the BA Programs in Applied Behavior Sciences, Leadership Studies, Business Administration, or Decision Analytics in the School of Continuing and Professional Studies will develop one or more of the following outcomes:

1. Apply various methods of communication in multiple settings.
• Describe and assess methods of peaceful dissent in advocating for social change to accomplish social justice.

2. Explain the value of social justice in the behavior sciences.

• Identify the major arguments regarding capital punishment in the U.S., and assess implications for social, economic and cultural policy regarding race and class.

3. Analyze and apply knowledge and theories of leadership.

• Assess the theories presented by Marshall Ganz on the general field of leading social change and apply them to efforts to impact criminal justice in the U.S.

4. Explain the value of social justice in organizational contexts.

• Explain the impact an engaged citizen can make to improve the effectiveness of a society.
• Articulate a strategy for personal civic engagement.
• Engage in an activity that positively contributes to the civic life of a community.

_Students working toward the Personal and Social Responsibility Learning Goals in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences will develop the following:_

1. Students will understand the historical debates about and the values of multiculturalism. They will compare dimensions of issues of race, class, and ethnicity in the experience of the criminal justice system of the United States. They will be able to identify the major arguments regarding capital punishment in the U.S., and assess implications for social, economic and cultural policy regarding race and class. They will be able to describe approaches to activism in the past that have resulted in effective social change.

2. Students will develop, through self-reflection and critical analysis, alternative perspectives on the historical roots of inequality in the practice of unequal application of investigation, prosecution and sentencing in the United States and the lasting effects on persons of color and the materially poor.

3. Students will be able to critically analyze multiple sources of information about the practice of criminal justice and be able to interpret data, assess various points of view, and build a clear, concise argument regarding the death penalty and related issues. They will be able to illustrate skills and attributes required to engage in social activism and explain actions an activist may take to change public opinion on a charged issue.

4. Students will be able to advance collective intellectual understanding and use information to address problems and issues related to social inequality, conflict and diversity. They will be able to explain the impact an engaged citizen can make to improve the effectiveness of a society, describe and assess methods of peaceful dissent, and articulate a strategy for personal civic engagement.

_Course Resources_

To buy your books, go to [http://depaul-loop.bncollege.com](http://depaul-loop.bncollege.com).
Required Texts/Sources All Students:


“Dead Man Walking,” film (1995) directed by Tim Robbins and starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn


Additional required sources below will be available either on the D2L website, on-e-reserves or handed out by the instructor in class.

Recommended sources and websites (useful for some assignments and final papers):

**BOOKS AND ESSAYS**


**WEBSITES**

**Amnesty International**

[www.amnesty.org/en/death-penalty](http://www.amnesty.org/en/death-penalty). AI, as an international organization focused on human rights, strongly opposes execution and supports efforts to exonerate the falsely accused.

**Balanced Politics**

[www.balancedpolitics.org/death_penalty.htm](http://www.balancedpolitics.org/death_penalty.htm). This website offers pro and con arguments for multiple issues. It provides succinct summaries of points of view of proponents and opponents of execution by the state.

**Bridges to Life**

[www.bridgestolife.org](http://www.bridgestolife.org). This organization, founded by the family of a victim, brings together victims and incarcerated prisoners to promote mutual healing.

**Catholics Mobilizing Against the Death Penalty**
catholicsmobilizing.org. This is the organization Sister Helen Prejean founded in 2010 to provide an educated workforce to support anti-death penalty legislation at the state level.

Constitute

https://www.constituteproject.org/. This website contains the constitutions of all the nations in the word and can be searched for specific rights and provisions, including those pertaining to crime and capital punishment.

Death Penalty Information Center

www.deathpenaltyinfo.org. This organization provides the most accurate and comprehensive data on capital punishment in the U.S. and other countries.

Equal Justice Initiative

https://eji.org. This organization, founded by attorney activist Bryan Stevenson, provides information on contemporary issues including racial justice, children in prison, mass incarceration, death penalty, and what he calls “just mercy.”

Innocence Project

http://www.medill.northwestern.edu/. This organization at Northwestern University Medill School of Journalist investigates cases of persons on death row who claim to be wrongfully convicted.

Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights

www.mvfr.org. This national organization of families of victims opposes the death penalty.

ProCon.Org

www.procon.org. This website presents both (all) sides of various controversial issues, including capital punishment.

Restorative Justice

www.restorativejustice.org. This group emphasizes healing the wounds of victims, offenders and communities affected by crime.

Southern Poverty Law Center

splcenter.org. SPLC is a nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society.

United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CoreInstruments.aspx. This website contains the major international agreements and statements regarding human rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Wikipedia


Assessment of Learning

Course Grading Scale

A = 95 to 100  A- = 91 to 94  B+ = 88 to 90
B = 85 to 87  B- = 81 to 84  C+ = 77 to 80
C = 73 to 76  C- = 69 to 72  D+ = 65 to 68
D = 61 to 64  F = 60 or below  INC

For those students in the competence degree programs at the School for Continuing and Professional Studies, grades lower than a C- do not earn competence.

Pass/Fail Policy

It is assumed that you are taking the course for a letter grade. It is possible, however, to take the course on a Pass/Fail basis. If you wish to do so, you must inform me in writing by the end of week two, https://catalog.depaul.edu/student-handbooks/undergraduate/undergraduate-academic-policies/grades-pass-fail/.

NOTE to LSP Students: You may not use the Pass/Fail grading option if you are using this course to meet Liberal Studies Program (LSP) requirements. Likewise, if this course is taken to meet a requirement in your major (including intended and pre-majors), minor, and/or certificate (including intended and pre-minors/certificates) you may not use the Pass/Fail option.

Percentage distribution of Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Category</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Journal entries</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper(s)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Evidence Students Will Submit
Class Participation – 30%

20% of your class participation: you are expected to do the appropriate reading or viewing of sources for each class session by the specified due date and to demonstrate that you have done so by participating in class or small group discussions. You will also be required to present an oral status report on your final papers in a small group setting.

10% of your class participation grade will be awarded for brief oral presentations 7th and 8th week on race, intellectual disability and mental illness in capital sentencing and the death penalty in an international context. If you miss either of these classes, you will forfeit 5% of your participation grade for each class you miss; if you miss both, you will forfeit 10%.

And since you cannot participate unless you attend class, failure to attend may adversely affect your participation grade. **Missing two class sessions or more will result in a 10% loss in class participation.**

Journal Entries – 30%

In weeks 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10, you will submit a journal entry (two-three typed double-spaced pages in length) on readings, sources or experiences from the course. This will make for a total of 5 journal entries by the end of the course. Each journal entry will constitute 6% of your grade. I will give you specific prompts on which to base each of your journals entries.

Papers – 40%

One 5-8 page research paper that addresses the learning outcomes or competencies for which you have registered and that incorporates work done in the Sister Helen archives. I will give you guidelines for these papers after our visit to the DePaul archives.

Grading Policies and Practices

To complete the course, you must complete each of the assignments and contribute to class discussion as described below and in the course calendar. **Written assignments will be due at 6:00 p.m. at the beginning of the following class session.**

**One point will be deducted for each day work is late.**

Criteria for Assessment

In assessing your class discussion, journal entries and final papers, I look for evidence that: a) you have absorbed and comprehended the various sources and events provided in the course; b) can relate those sources/events to your own experience or can compare and contrast them with other material studied in the course; and c) thoughtfully engage with the larger socially-relevant issues, questions or conflicts raised or implied by the material; and d) can relate them to the model of advocacy exemplified by Sister Helen. Evidence of one of these elements equates roughly with a D; evidence of two, with a C; evidence of three, with a B; and evidence of all four, with an A.
In assessing written submissions, I expect work to conform to college-level standards of mechanics and presentation, as detailed in the SCPS Writing Rubric, https://scps.depaul.edu/Pages/SCPSWriting.aspx. I am happy to work with you on these points, on a draft-revision basis, if you so desire, within set deadlines.

In making all assessments, I strive to be clear, flexible, forthright and empathetic.

Incomplete (IN) Grade: This process follows university policy.

A student who encounters an unusual or unforeseeable circumstance that prevents her/him from completing the course requirements by the end of the term may request a time extension to complete the work.

- The student must formally initiate the request by submitting the Contract for Issuance of Incomplete Grade form (via email, word doc), no later than week 10 (or prior to the final week of a shorter-term course).
- The instructor has discretion to approve or not approve the student’s request for an IN grade.
- The instructor has discretion to set the deadline for completion of the work, which may be earlier but no later than two quarters (not counting Summer term).
- The instructor may not enter an IN grade on behalf of a student without a completed and agreed upon contract.
- The student is alerted that IN grades are not considered by Financial Aid as evidence of satisfactory academic progress.

Course Policies

This course includes and adheres to the college and university policies described in the links below:
- Academic Integrity Policy (UGRAD)
- Incomplete (IN) and Research (R) Grades Expiration Policy
- Course Withdrawal Timelines and Grade/Fee Consequences
- Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability
- Protection of Human Research Participants

Other Resources for Students

- University Center for Writing-based Learning
- Dean of Students Office

Instructor Bio

Fred A. Wellisch was a resident faculty member at SCPS (formerly SNL) since 2000. Before that, he served as an adjunct faculty member from 1998-2000. He taught Foundations of Adult Learning, Research Seminar, Critical Thinking, The Death Penalty: A Multidisciplinary Approach, Democracy and Religion, The Bill of Rights in Contemporary Life, The “Drama” of the Courtroom, From Page to
The Fight For Human Rights: One Woman’s Crusade

Spring 2020 Course Calendar

Weekly Schedule, Assignments, Homework and Due Dates

Please note that this course calendar is subject to change and that prompts for journal entries and assignments for group oral reports will be assigned the week before they are due. These changes and assignments will be communicated by email. It is therefore imperative that you check your D2L email at least twice a week, particularly if you have missed or anticipate missing a class.

3/30  Module 1. Dead Man Walking And Social Justice. Introductions. Overview of course, syllabus and D2L website. The nature of the Dead Man Walking phenomenon. Views on capital punishment. Small group work on social action, causes or issues for which you are interested in advocating.

Readings and Homework Assignments – due 4/6:
1. Begin by reading the D2L Module 1 content, looking at the digitized images from the Prejean Collection, and choosing two or three that interest you to share with the class.
2. Read Chapters 1-5 of Dead Man Walking. Read the D2L Module 1 content and choose two or three artifacts that interest you to share with the class.
3. Look at the Death Penalty Information Center fact sheet, https://files.deathpenaltyinfo.org/legacy/documents/FactSheet.pdf and find an interesting or surprising fact, trend or statistic to share with the class. Also found under “Syllabus and other documents” on the D2L website.
5. Submit Journal #1 to D2L (prompts to be provided)

4/6  Module 2. The First -Hand Witness Experience. The nature of an “eyewitness” account. Discussion of chapters 1-5 of Dead Man Walking. Sharing of items from module 1 and capital punishment news stories. Journal #1 due in D2L at 6:00 p.m.

Readings and Homework Assignments – due 4/13:
1. Read Module 2 content and find two or three artifacts that interest you.
2. Finish reading Dead Man Walking.


Readings and Homework Assignments – due 4/20:
1. Read Module 3 content and look over the archived documents.
2. View the film “Dead Man Walking” on You Tube or Netflix. A copy is also available at the reserve desk of the library.
3. Prepare questions for Sister Helen’s visit next week.
4. Submit Journal #2 to D2L (prompts to be provided)

4/20   Module 4. Different Ways Of Telling the Truth. Sister Helen will join us at 5:45 for a discussion of her advocacy and her writing. Point of view. Compassion and forgiveness. Guilt and innocence. Class discussion comparing the book and film of Dead Man Walking. Journal #2 due in D2L at 6:00 p.m.

Readings and Homework Assignments – due 4/27:
1. Read Module 4 and look over the archived documents.
2. Attend as many Sister Helen events this week as you are able. Report back to the class on what you attended.
3. Read Chapter 1 in The Death of Innocents, Dobie Gillis Williams
4. Read Ganz, pp. 1-19 (pp. 527-545 of the PDF)


Readings and Homework Assignments – due 5/4:
1. Read Module 5 and look over the archived documents.
2. Read Chapter 3 in The Death of Innocents
3. Finish Reading Ganz, pp. 19-38, (pp. 545-564 of the PDF)
4. Submit journal #3 to D2L (prompts to be provided)

5/4   Module 6. Confronting Questions of Criminal Justice and Social Justice. The power of individual experience and the willingness to admit error. Class discussion of Chapter 3. Lecture on death penalty litigation. Small group work on how strategy and action, as discussed by Marshal Ganz, can be applied to your social justice advocacy goals. Journal #3 due in D2L at 6:00 p.m.

Readings and Homework Assignments – due 5/11:
1. Read Module 6 and look over the archived documents.
2. Read Chapter 4 and Epilogue in The Death of Innocents.
3. Prepare group oral class presentations on the role played by such factors as race, mental illness and intellectual disability in the imposition of the death penalty, using the Death Penalty Information Center as a primary source (topics to be assigned).
5/11  **Module 7. Bringing About Change by Challenging Authority.** Discussion of Chapter 4 and Epilogue. Group oral presentations on race and capital sentencing.

**Readings and Homework Assignments – due 5/18:**
1. Read Module 7 and the digitized copies of the letter by Coretta Scott King and the Baltimore Sun article of 8/26/87.
2. Read Articles 1-11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Articles 6 and 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Both documents can be found on the D2L website.
3. **Prepare group oral presentations on capital punishment in an international context, using the Death Penalty Information Center, [https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/policy-issues/international](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/policy-issues/international) as a primary resource.** (topics to be assigned)
4. Read guidelines for final papers.
5. **Submit Journal #4 to D2L (prompts to be provided)**

5/18  **Module 8. Bringing About Change by Mobilizing Others.** Presentation of oral reports on capital punishment in an international context. Review of guidelines for final paper. Small-group brainstorming on final papers. **Journal #4 due in D2L at 6:00 p.m.**

**Readings and Homework Assignments – due 6/1:**
1. Read Module 8 and the digitized letters.
2. **Submit Journal #5 to D2L (prompts to be provided)**
3. Prepare a short oral status report on where you are on your research for your final papers. You will be sharing these in small groups. What have you discovered about your topic? What is left to be done? What artifacts from the archives will you be discussing and why are they relevant? Given the two-week gap between classes, this would be a good time to revisit the archives and spend more time with the folders you have chosen to incorporate into your final paper.
4. Feel free to send me a rough draft of your final paper.

5/25  **Memorial Day – No class**

6/1  **Bringing About Change by Refusing to Quit.** Small group presentation of status reports. In-class debriefing: reflections on competencies/learning outcomes mastered and knowledge achieved. Course evaluations. **Journal #5 due in D2L at 6:00 p.m.**

**Readings and Homework Assignments – due 6/8:**
Submit final papers to D2L

6/8  Exam week. No class. Final papers due in D2L at 6:00 p.m.