HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA
(CD 143-05, SOC 149-01, UEP 181-01)
SPRING 2017

Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30-2:45
Anderson Hall, Room 306

Instructor: Laurie Goldman, Ph.D.
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Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, Tufts University
72 Professors Row, 2nd Floor
Office Hours: Mondays 2:45-4:00pm and by appointment (strongly encouraged)

Course Assistant: Christian Brandt -- Christian.brandt@tufts.edu (For assistance with volunteer placements and other course related logistics.)

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES
This course explores the social, economic, and political phenomenon of homelessness in the United States. It is designed to develop your capacity for meaningful inquiry about social problems and what can be done to address them. The complexity of homelessness makes it conducive to generating and pursuing challenging questions for several reasons:

➢ The meaning of homelessness is ambiguous and socially constructed.
➢ Policy interventions rest on contentious theories about the causes of homelessness, conflicting priorities about who most needs help and which needs are most pressing, and inconclusive evidence about what works.
➢ The accumulated knowledge for investigating these questions spans academic disciplines. Interventions span levels of government and engage a variety of actors across policy domains.
➢ The issue of homelessness has significant social, economic, physical, and moral implications for the individuals and families who experience it directly as well as for those who live in their midst and for society as a whole.
➢ Homelessness and our responses to homelessness are implicated in our country’s legacy of racial, ethnic, gender, and class-based discrimination and conflict.
➢ Intensifying inequality, paradigm shifts in policy, and new approaches to civic engagement raise questions about the potential for doing something different.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES
We begin by investigating our preconceptions and assumptions about homelessness in the United States. We’ll read about and meet people who have experienced homelessness and consider our observations in relation to prominent ideas about the causes and consequences of homelessness.
among scholars and policymakers. The second section of the course situates the problem in its social, economic, and political context. We explore market, policy, and societal failures that precipitate and perpetuate homelessness. We examine different approaches to addressing the problem of homelessness in the third section.

The course will be run in a discussion format accompanied by brief lectures, individual and group exercises, and guest speakers. In addition, four types of assignments will guide our exploration. Some of the assignments involve an individualized effort that is supported by a small group of fellow students.

1. **Reading Groups, Presentation, and Take-Home Essay Exam:**

Each student will join a group to read and discuss an ethnographic account about people experiencing homelessness: adult men, families with children, or homeless youth. Groups will meet both in class and outside of class to discuss the ideas. They will prepare a summary of their gleanings and questions for further inquiry and will present them to the rest of the class. The discussions of the books will form the basis for the Take Home Essay Exam. (Group members may also be responsible for supplementary readings to enhance the understanding and critique of the books.)

The book options include:


We will discuss Reading Group assignments and other details after the first few sessions of the class. (These books are available in the campus book store and are on reserve at Tisch Library.)

2. **Volunteer Experience or Other Interactive Activity:**

Each of you will engage in an activity that allows you to interact with people who are experiencing homelessness or who are involved in (or potentially involved in) efforts to address homelessness and its causes and consequences. Options include:

- Volunteering in an organization that serves people experiencing homelessness
- Participating in an action or event convened by an advocacy organization
- Attending a hearing or public meeting
- Conducting interviews and/or designing and administering a survey to understand a particular group’s perceptions, attitudes, and opinions about homelessness
- Observing a public space that is frequented by people experiencing homelessness.
A description of volunteer opportunities is in the Resources section of the course Trunk site. **Please try to make your volunteer placement arrangements as quickly as possible.** The Course Assistant – Christian Brandt – will provide assistance in locating a suitable placement. However, you are responsible for making contact with the organization and for arranging the actual days and times of participation. Keep in mind that it can take several attempts to make contact and finalize arrangements. Early preparation is especially critical if you plan to pursue an Exploratory Project (described below) that builds on this experience. Arranging interviews, designing surveys, and observing activities requires planning and coordination.

You will write a description and analysis of your volunteer/interactive experience and what you gained from it. (See below.)

3. **Exploratory Project:**
Each of you will explore a specific question about the causes, consequences, experiences, and/or ways of addressing homelessness. The scope of the final project will depend on how extensive the volunteer or other interactive experience is. (See the Chart posted on Trunk.) You may opt to collaborate with a few other students on a small group project.

**Possible ways to focus the project:**
- Examine a specific aspect of the causes and consequences of homelessness for a particular population group and/or context.
- Examine a particular approach to contending with homelessness, its root causes, or consequences.
- Examine perceptions, attitudes, or opinions of the general public or a particular group (e.g., Tufts students, “millennials”, the Boston area, your home town) about homelessness and the necessity to address it.
- Design a project that aims to influence the perceptions, attitudes, or opinions of a particular audience about a particular facet of the homelessness issue

**Possible formats for the project:**
- Literature review on a specific topic
- Critique of the portrayal of homelessness in a book, film, or other media
- Analysis of a program or organization
- Critique, endorsement of a policy, proposed legislation or ordinance, development project, or specific campaign (or propose a new policy)
- Interviews, focus groups, and/or a survey to understand perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of a particular population (This could be a good group project)
- Observation and analysis of a public space that people experiencing homelessness frequent
- Create a portrayal of the issue to help a particular audience understand the issue (e.g., a short story, play, series of photographs, short video…)

Every project will include a written component with the following elements:
- A **description** of the problem, solution, perceptions and attitudes, or other phenomenon
- **Critical analysis** that explains and assesses the underlying assumptions of the primary argument/s and the evidence that supports or refutes the argument/s
- **Persuasion** to convince your specified audience to adopt your critique
4. Reflections on the Readings, Experiences, and Emerging Questions and Ideas:

In addition to the Take-Home Essay Exam and Exploratory Project, students will write brief reflections on the readings, their volunteering/interactive experiences, and their emerging questions and ideas.

a. **Reading Reflections on Trunk:** All students are expected to read purposefully rather than passively. It is more important to engage the readings so that you learn from the experience of reading than to master every nuance. Questions to guide your active reading will be posted on the Trunk site in the folder for the session. You are also encouraged to choose your own focus, one you might develop in your Exploratory Project.

Each student will post brief reflections (no more than 150 words) on the readings by **11:30 am** before our **Monday** afternoon class. These reflections can respond to the questions for active reading. (Check for updated prompts in the folder for the session on Trunk.) You may also post questions for clarification or raise topics you’d like to explore in greater depth. By **12:30pm on Wednesday** afternoons, each student will comment very briefly – in 1-3 sentences – on at least one prior post of another student. Any of these posts can reference the readings assigned for Monday’s as well as Wednesday’s class session.

The timeliness and quality of these posts will influence your grade for class participation. Quality posts are those that are inquisitive, insightful, provocative, and curious. You may also pose questions for clarification (even if you think you should already know the answer). **Do not summarize the readings.**

b. **Reflections about Your Volunteer or Other Interactive Experience** (Due Wed. 4/19):

Every student will write about their “Interactive Experience.” This essay will

1) *describe* your observations and

2) *relate* these observations to at least one course theme, including specific reference to one or more of the readings.

(Students pursuing an Exploratory Project that builds on their Interactive Experience will submit these sections of their project report on this due date.)

c. **Personal reflective essay** (Due the last day of class):

At the end of the semester, you will write a brief reflective essay that includes about one paragraph on each of the following themes:

- Reflection on how your ideas and opinions have changed or were reinforced over the course of the semester.
- Assessment of how you achieved the goals you outlined in your Individual Learning and Aspirations Plan (described below).
- Thoughts about your future plans for study, work, and/or civic engagement.
Class Participation:
Active participation in all aspects of the class is critical to the success of the course – both for each individual and for our collective inquiry. Your questions and thoughts and challenges to the readings, lectures, and other observations will steer the progression of the course. Expressing your thoughts and questions is one part of active participation. Encourage your classmates to express their questions and ideas is equally important.

Naïve Question Pledge: To reinforce the adage that there are no stupid questions, you are each required to ask at least 5 “naïve questions” – those you feel might convey that you don’t know something you think you should already know – over the course of the semester.

“Individual Learning Aspirations Plan” (ILAP)
To help you keep track of all of these elements and make the most of learning opportunities, you will set personal objectives with respect to the course as a whole and each of the assignments detailed above. You will meet with Laurie to discuss these goals and your plans for achieving them. We will consider how you can build on what you have learned in previous courses and life experiences and how we might supplement readings in relation to your interests and curiosities.

The “Homelessness In America Intake Form,” to be distributed in class, will guide our thinking. (The form is also on the Trunk site towards the top of the Resources section.) Sign up for a meeting with Laurie and upload the completed form to Trunk Assignments or bring it to class by Wednesday, 2/25. Meet with Laurie by Friday, 2/10.

Reading Assignments:
Assigned readings include scholarly publications from books and academic journals. News clips and government, advocacy, and program reports as well as excerpts from legislation, policy documents, and organizational web-sites also inform our inquiry.

Two books are required. In addition to the ethnography for the Reading Groups described above, all students will read:


All additional resources will be available on the Trunk site for the course. As with any on-line resource, it is your choice whether to read on-line or print a copy for your personal use. If you choose to print materials, download **before printing and print only what you need** -- often the assigned reading is only a portion of a voluminous document, and you will only need to print a few pages.

The reading assignments will be adjusted in response to the themes that emerge from our discussions in class and in the Reading Groups. The Trunk site (and announcements in class and by e-mail) will facilitate communication about these changes. **You are responsible for making sure that you follow the changes that occur.**

You’re also urged to read The Boston Globe and/or The New York Times to keep up with current events pertaining to homelessness. A list of additional resources is posted on the Trunk site. You are encouraged to share any articles or sources of interest to the rest of the class.
### Schedule of Assignments and Due Dates

Assignments should be uploaded to the Assignments section of Trunk by 4pm, unless otherwise noted. In addition, please submit hard copies of the Take-Home Essay and Exploratory Projects to the designated box at the UEP office on 97 Talbot Ave (not Laurie’s office.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Individual Learning Aspirations Plan”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Intake Form” with personal learning goals and choices for book groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule meeting with Laurie.</td>
<td>Wed. 1/25</td>
<td>__</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet with Laurie about your “Individual Learning Aspirations Plan”</td>
<td>By Friday 2/10</td>
<td>__</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis of an Ethnography</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Book group notes</td>
<td>Friday 2/24</td>
<td>feedback only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book group presentations</td>
<td>Wed. 3/15</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Essay Exam</td>
<td>Friday 3/17</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteering or Other Interactive Experience:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sign up for volunteering or plan other interactive experience</td>
<td>By Friday, 2/10</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description and Analysis</td>
<td>Wed 4/19 (in class)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploratory Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial idea and relation to Interactive Experience</td>
<td>Friday 3/3</td>
<td>feedback only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Proposal</td>
<td>Friday 3/31</td>
<td>feedback only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Presentation</td>
<td>4/26 or 5/1</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Report</td>
<td>Friday, 5/5</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflections and Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly comments on the readings</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Reflection</td>
<td>5/1 (in class)</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active participation in class discussions and exercises</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>5%</td>
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**Format for assignments:** All assignments should be submitted in Word format. Please use 12 point font, 1.5 line spacing, and 1 inch margins. Please include page numbers and your name! (Alternative formats may be acceptable for Exploratory Projects.)

**All work must be submitted on the due date.** If you expect to have difficulty meeting a deadline, you must request an extension at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline (except in case of emergency). Work submitted late (without a previously approved extension) will receive a reduction in the grade.

**Academic Integrity:** The faculty are required to report suspected academic integrity violations to the Dean of Student Affairs Office. Academic and personal integrity should be its own reward: knowing that you can be proud of your work and your accomplishments; knowing you have done your best and have earned your grades. Please consult the Tufts University policy on academic integrity. [https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy](https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy)
READING ASSIGNMENTS & SCHEDULE

The required readings will be posted on the Trunk site for the course, either as links to electronic sources or as downloadable “pdf” files. Additional references on each of the course themes will also be posted on the site.

**Note:** These readings are subject to change in response to the topics that emerge in the class discussions and to adapt to different learning and reading styles as they develop. **Be sure to check the Trunk site each week for updates and additional reading and preparation guidance.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon 1/23</th>
<th><strong>Introduction to the Course</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions:</strong></td>
<td>How do we see people experiencing homelessness?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Due by Wednesday, 1/25:</strong></td>
<td>“Homelessness in America Intake Form” (upload to Trunk or give Laurie a hard copy in class or 97 Talbot Ave mailbox.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sign up for a meeting with Laurie to talk about your “Individual Learning Aspirations Plan”</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Wed 1/25</th>
<th><strong>Encountering the Issues and Raising Questions</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions:</strong></td>
<td>Who experiences homelessness and precarious housing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin reading Desmond’s (2016) <em>Eviction</em>.</td>
<td>Aim to read the Prologue and Part I before Wednesday’s class. (You may skip Chapter 3, 4 and 6 if you’re pressed for time.)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Mon 1/30 &amp; Wed 2/1</th>
<th><strong>Framing the Problem of “Homelessness” and the “Window of Opportunity” for Ending It</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visit to the Somerville Homelessness Coalition Adult Shelter on Monday.</strong></td>
<td><strong>We will meet at 14 Chapel St. at 1:30.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Before the visit, peruse the Somerville Homelessness Coalition website:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.somervillehomelesscoalition.org/">http://www.somervillehomelesscoalition.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Questions:</strong></td>
<td>How have social scientists, policymakers, and the public conceptualized what homelessness is and what should be done about it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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| Mon 2/6| **Read for Wednesday**  
| Wed 2/8| **Homelessness and the Broader Picture of Poverty and Social Exclusion**  
**Questions**: What is the relationship between poverty and homelessness? What roles do race and racism play in poverty and homelessness.  
| Mon 2/13 & Wed 2/15| **Exploration of Inter-relationships: Causes and Consequences; Individuals and Systems**  
**Questions**: What are the inter-relationships between the causes and consequences of housing instability and homelessness? What are the roles of individuals and social systems in these causal dynamics?  
Complete reading of Desmond’s (2016) *Eviction*. Be sure to read the sections on Arleen, Crystal, and Scott and their families as well as the epilogue (specific pages on the Trunk.).  
Nooe, R. A. & Patterson, D.A. (2010). “The Ecology of Homelessness.” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*. Vol. 20: 105-52. *(SKIM. Focus on Figure 1 for Monday’s class.)*  
*(Begin reading your ethnography in preparation for next week’s Reading Group discussion.)* |

**Make sure you’ve met with Laurie to develop your “Individual Learning Aspirations Plan” and have signed up for volunteer assignments by Friday, 2/10.**

**Spare Change.** Buy a copy of the current issue of this “street newspaper” that was founded by homeless people and is written, produced, and sold largely by homeless people. You’ll find people selling it ($1.00) in Davis, Porter, Harvard, and Central Squares, near Whole Foods, and many other locations. *(We will be talking about your experience of buying your copy on 3/6.)*  

**Monday, February 20 No Class (Presidents’ Day)**
### Part II: The Context of Homelessness: Market, Policy, & Societal Failures

#### Affordable Housing and Market and Policy Failures?

**Questions:** How does the housing market influence homelessness? Who is most affected and why? How have public policies helped people access safe and affordable housing and what are their limitations?

**Guidance for when and how to read these will be posted on Trunk.**


*The following reports and report excerpts are only a few pages with many charts.*

- *The State of the Nation’s Housing, 2016.* The Joint Center on Housing Research. Executive Summary (p. 1-6).
- Center on Budget and Policies: Federal Housing Basics and “Chart Book: Rental Assistance Reduces Hardship and Promotes Children’s Long-Term Success”

**Reading Group discussions.** Read the (at least) the first half of your ethnography by Wednesday. Notes from your reading group are to be uploaded to Trunk by 4p on Friday, 2/24.

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#### Holes in the Safety Net and the Challenges of Accessing Limited Resources

**Questions:** What resources does the social welfare system provide to help people make ends meet? What prevents people from accessing these resources to survive, overcome, or prevent homelessness? Who are the targets of the social welfare system and how do patterns of racism, sexism, and classism influence who receives assistance in our society?

**Guidance for reading and preparing for an interactive exercise will be posted on Trunk.**


Initial idea for your Exploratory Project and its relation to your Interactive Experience due Friday, 3/3. Upload to the Assignment section of Trunk.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities and Readings</th>
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</table>
| Mon 3/6 & Wed 3/8 | **Moral Responses in Encounters with People Experiencing Homelessness**  
**Questions:** Do we have an obligation to give to those who ask for help? Should rights to use city streets be restricted and protected?  
Massachusetts Homeless Bill of Rights (filed in January; to be updated!) and recent news clips on the Trunk site. |
| Mon 3/14 | Reading Group discussions and preparation for presentations on your insights. |
| Wed 3/16 | **Reading Group presentations on gleanings to the class, Wednesday.**  
**Take Home Essay Exam due Friday, 3/17 at 4pm. Upload to Trunk and submit hard copy in the designated box at 97 Talbot Ave (the UEP Office – not Laurie’s office).** |

**Enjoy your Spring Break!**
## PART III: APPROACHES TO CONTENDING WITH HOMELESSNESS

### Mon 3/27 & Wed 3/29

**Housing First: A New Paradigm and the Inter-Connected Challenges of Addiction, Mental Illness, Trauma, Other Health Issues, and Homelessness**

**Questions:** What are the public costs associated with homelessness, particularly for those contending with addiction, mental and physical illness, and trauma? What are the alternatives to temporary shelters? What are the benefits of preventing homelessness or shortening stays in temporary shelters?

**Guest Speaker** (on Wednesday): Leigh Hardy, Marie’s Place of the Commonwealth Care Alliance [http://www.commonwealthcarealliance.org/](http://www.commonwealthcarealliance.org/)


**Exploratory Project proposal (and update on Interactive Experience) due Friday 3/31. Upload to Assignments section of Trunk by 4p.**

### Mon 4/3 & Wed 4/5

**Supporting Support People’s Journey Out of Homelessness and Evaluating the Programs**

**Questions:** What supports do people and families need? How do we know if the programs are working?


Additional resources on a programs for different groups of homeless people and families will be distributed to small groups of students in preparation for this week’s sessions. These resources will include (a) readings about mental health, substance abuse, or other needs and (b) an evaluation of a program that provides both housing and supports.

### Mon 4/10

**Challenging Relationships Between Programs & Neighbors: NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)**

**Questions:** Why do people oppose shelter or housing for poor people and people with disabilities? What evidence is there to substantiate concerns? How can neighbors' concerns be alleviated?


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed 4/12</td>
<td>Gentrification and Displacement: Community-Level Perspectives</td>
<td>Materials on the Somerville Gentrification Project -- a partnership between four community</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>based organizations and Tufts University will be posted on Trunk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 4/17</td>
<td>No Class: Patriots’ Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 4/19</td>
<td>Volunteerism, Forging Partnerships, and Building Coalitions for Broader Impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>&amp; Mon 4/24</td>
<td></td>
<td>Questions: The call to service and the call for change: How do they fit together?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>For Wednesday: Reflections on your Interactive Experience. (Descriptive and analytic essays due today in class.)</td>
<td>For Monday: Browse the website of one of the organizations listed in the table in the google doc and follow the instructions for learning about its vision, mission, and strategies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 4/26</td>
<td>Final Project presentations and reflections on the course.</td>
<td>Personal Reflection due in class.</td>
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<td>Mon 5/1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday 5/5</td>
<td>Exploratory Project due. Please upload to Trunk and submit a hard copy to the designated box at the UEP Office at 97 Talbot Ave (not Laurie’s office.)</td>
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