Social Justice Research Symposium

November 8-12, 2021
613 Student Union Building

sponsored by
The Duquesne University Sociology Club

Why a Social Justice Symposium?
The intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identities with social salience in our communities, cities, nation, and abroad play critical roles in the sets of vastly unequal life experiences among individuals and communities. As students of sociology, we recognize that the process of marginalization and its life altering and often, life threatening consequences are the sources of both social problems and resistance. Further, we understand that social justice issues and solutions exist within complex sets of social structures and institutions; and that small, but powerful groups of persons have substantial stakes in perpetuating injustices.

Our generation of university students, across a wide variety of majors and future professions, is among the most passionate about social justice. We are the next in succession to positions of relative power and privilege. How will we do things differently? The pathways to sustainable social changes are not without significant challenges. Success will require knowledge, understanding, skills, relationship building, and carefully chosen intentional sets of actions.

The Sociology Club’s Social Justice Research Symposium will:
1) Celebrate student passion and commitment to a better future;
2) Showcase student social justice-oriented research and action;
3) Unite students, accomplished scholars, and persons with lived experiences around shared issues and visions to generate cross-disciplinary and cross-sector collaborations in social justice scholarship and action;
4) Prepare students by leveraging the focused expertise of community partners and University faculty to expand our knowledge, understanding, skills, and networks to inform our social justice-oriented work.

Structuring of Symposium Events
Each symposium event has been carefully designed to: celebrate student passion, showcase student work, unite members of our campus and local communities, and to prepare students for social justice work. Participants in each event will include Duquesne University students and experts from both campus and community. The Symposium Planning Committee defines “expert” as someone with expertise based on either scholarly accomplishment or lived experience. Each of the Symposiums varied activities will include students, scholarly experts, and experts with lived experience.

As our campus community eases its way back into in-person gatherings, the Symposium will offer students and others the opportunity to participate in both virtual and in-person events. (This also affords the Symposium Planning Committee the ability to quickly adapt the entire Symposium to virtual
formatting should the need arise.) In-person sessions will be held from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM on each day of the Symposium in room 613 of the Student Union Building. There will be two (2) sessions per day from 11:00 – 12:30 and 1:30 – 3:00pm. There will be a designated lunch hour each day from 12:30 – 1:30pm in room 613. Relevant video submissions will be played in this room during the lunch break. Symposium attendees are both invited and encouraged to eat lunch in the room; lunch will not be provided, though food can be located on the 5th floor of the Union.

However, those who are chosen for Roundtable Luncheons, will have lunch provided in room 607 of the Student Union during the same time from 12:30 – 1:30. During the Roundtable Luncheons, selected students will unite with Social Justice experts to celebrate their passion, showcase their research, and better prepare students for social justice work beyond the university and in the community.

**Student Poster Presentations**
We have obtained permission from the University’s Office of Research and Innovation to utilize the Forager One Symposium Platform to organize virtual poster sessions to showcase student work. This is the same system used for the Spring 2021 Undergraduate and Graduate Research and Scholarship Symposium that permits presenters to upload brief video-recorded oral presentations to accompany posters. Further, the space for asynchronous discussion beneath provides the opportunity to celebrate student work and to unite students, at various levels in their academic careers, with one another and with accomplished scholars from across campus. Moreover, the asynchronous nature of the online forum for poster presentation, with its potential to reach a broader student audience in an on-demand capacity, is ideal for students as we prepare ourselves for social-justice oriented work.

**Student Podium Presentations**
Student presentation sessions will be 90 minutes in length, from 11:00am to 12:30pm on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Students will be allotted 15 minutes for presentation, but are encouraged to leave about 5 minutes at the end for Q&A. There will be up to five (5) student presentations per session being a mix of graduate and undergraduate selections. Following each 75-minute student presentation session, there will be 15 minutes of commentary and presentation from the selected experts.* Though only student presenters will have the opportunity to meet with these experts for a roundtable luncheon, the 15-minute commentary portion of the session will provide attendees to hear from the experts, too.

Immediately following the conclusion of the student presentations, the selected experts, student presenters, session moderator, and faculty-student organizers will be invited to meet at a designated campus location for a roundtable luncheon on the issues relevant to the student area of research.

*The Symposium Planning Committee defines “expert” as someone with expertise based on scholarly accomplishment, lived experience, or both.

**Expert Panel Discussions**
In keeping with the Symposium’s objective to prepare students, established scholars and persons with lived experience will engage in student-moderated panel discussions on current local, national, and international social justice issues including, but not limited to: poverty and economic injustice, health and healthcare inequity, criminal justice reform, restorative justice, or re-entry, gender and sexuality, environmental justice, disparities among marginalized populations and populations of color, informed community-based activism, education, civil and human rights. Correspondent to each of these social justice issues, one student’s work will be selected based on competitive review. At the conclusion of each moderated session, that student’s brief video presentation will be showcased, and the expert panelists will be asked to provide constructive feedback and guidance as we celebrate student passion
for social justice-oriented scholarship. All of the event’s expert panel discussions will be held in person (Delta variant permitting) but will be synchronously streamed on Zoom via the HyFlex technology to enable participation by those who reside outside of the local area as well as participation by those in our campus community who may be immuno-compromised or more comfortable with virtually formatted events.

**Roundtable Discussion Events**
Students whose proposals have been selected for in-person presentation will be invited to **celebrate and showcase** their social justice-oriented research and action by **uniting** with experts at a round-table luncheon relevant to their selected topic which will help **prepare** students for continuing and innovative social justice-oriented research and action. Lunch will be provided to all those invited (selected experts and student presenters, the session’s student moderator, and the student-faculty session organizers). The Roundtable Luncheon Discussion events are by invitation only and will take place on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 12:30 – 1:30pm in Student Union room 607.

**Call for Participation**
We will issue a formal call for participation during the second week of classes in August 2021. Student abstract submissions will be due by 11:59pm on October 1st, 2021. The symposium is open to both undergraduate and graduate students and students may choose to submit their work for the virtual poster or in-person oral presentation sessions. Our call will solicit student social justice work of three varieties:

1) Completed or in-progress research or other scholarship related to a social justice issue;
2) Completed or ongoing student-led social justice action work*; or
3) Student proposals for social justice scholarship or action work. *

*Successful student abstracts that describe action work must be grounded in existing theoretical or empirical research. If the social justice action was not originally motivated in existing scholarship, it is expected that students will conduct and include reference to relevant scholarship for inclusion in submitted abstracts.

**Selection of Student Presenters and Student-Faculty Teams of Session Organizers**
To encourage student-faculty collaboration and to create a novel educational opportunity for students related to dissemination of scholarship, individual sessions of the symposium will be co-organized by student-faculty teams with common interests related to social justice issues. The Symposium Planning Committee is in the process of expanding to include these student-faculty teams of Session Organizers.

**Support for the Social Justice Research Scholarship Symposium**
The Sociology Club received an initial grant from Duquesne Program Council (DPC).

**Sociology Club’s Social Justice Research Symposium Planning Committee**
- **Deidra Hubay**, Sociology Club President, Undergraduate Senior (Sociology & Political Science Major)
- **Sydney Yates**, Sociology Club Member, Graduate Student (History)
- **Robert (Alex) Losieniecki**, Sociology Club Member and Undergraduate Junior (Sociology)
- **Dr. Cathleen Appelt**, Faculty Advisor to the Sociology Club, Assistant Professor of Sociology