

A University Professor Tells How She Uses STOPVAW in the Classroom

An Interview with Sharon Rice Vaughan

1. What courses do you teach at Metro State?

I teach in the College of Professional Studies, Human Services Department, which includes a major and minor in Community Violence Prevention (CVP). I teach the three CVP core courses:

Violence: Origins and Explanations; Violence: Individual, Community and Global Responses; Community Violence Prevention Group Internship (combined field and study); Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence and Human Services (taught but not yet approved); and The Family: Racial, Class and Gender Dimensions.

In the Psychology department I teach Battered Women: Historical and Social Perspective, and a seminar, Theories of Violence Against Women.

2. In which of these courses do you use the StopVAW website?

I first used it in theResponses (to violence) class. Then I used it teaching Sexual Assault and DV and HS on a trial run.

I am now using it as a text in the theory seminar on violence against women.

Before the website and along with it, I have asked guest lecturers from MAHR's Women's program speak to the violence and battered women's classes.

3. How do you use the Stop Violence Against Women website in those courses?

I first used it as a web assignment for students to look up, read Explore the Issue for one form of violence, choose a country, write a one page synthesis and report to the class what was found to be most compelling and related in some way to other readings or topics. This was intentionally a broad introduction to human rights as an approach to violence prevention, specifically violence against women, and the role of law in defining human rights.

This semester I am concentrating on the initial Explore the Issue section for the excellent material on history and theory. I'm using it as a basic tool that integrates theory and practice. As the class looks at groups of theoretical approaches to violence against women, we can use the website as a foundation for what works to ground effective legal remedies, and in general, to make battered women safe, to intervene and prevent violence against women. All of this is a basic view that counters an underlying victim-blaming stance of so much historical and current social policy. It is useful to raise awareness of the relevance and the meaning of human rights in the stopvaw countries as well as in the U.S. This awareness is one approach to ethical and professional issues in the human services.

4. *Which sections of the website do you find most helpful?*

No specific sections. The general background and the topics organization of the website; the overall presentation of ways that violence against women is a human rights issue (a very radical notion for some); the easy access to more specific information; the specific breakdown of forms of violence against women; the grounding of human rights conventions and resolutions; the reflection of the commitment of women and men in generally unfamiliar countries to uphold international law, on the US Constitution; the way that the topic of human rights is a basic approach to violence prevention awareness and activism.

5. *Do you have any recommendations for educators like yourself on teaching about violence against women?*

I'd like to learn from other instructors who use the website. I think it is a really important and incredible tool and that I'm sort of stumbling along and could do so much more.