

# Course Syllabus

## EDUC 2100 Education and Society Online Graduate Course

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### Instructor Information

**Course Instructor:** M. Beatrice Dias, PhD

**Course Format and Duration:** Online (asynchronous)

**Course Duration:** Seven-Week intensive course

**Office Hours:** By appointment (<https://calendly.com/beadias/15-min>)

**Email:** [beadias@pitt.edu](mailto:beadias@pitt.edu)

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### School of Education Mission-Vision

**“We ignite learning.** We strive for well-being for all. **We teach.** We commit to student, family, and community success. **We commit to educational equity.** We advocate. We work for justice. **We cultivate relationships.** We forge engaged partnerships. **We collaborate.** We learn with and from communities. **We innovate and agitate.** We pursue and produce knowledge. We research. **We disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures.** We approach learning as intertwined with health, wellness, and human development. We address how national, global, social, and technological change impacts learning. **We shape practice and policy.** We teach with and for dignity. We think. We dream. **We lead with integrity.** We are the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh.”

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# Course Description

We will critically examine and discuss overarching questions that focus on the roles of state-sanctioned schooling in society and how these roles are expressed ideologically, socially, politically, and legally. We will pose, examine, and discuss critical questions to help understand the relationships between and among schools and other institutions and systems, both state and private such as prisons, health care, welfare, and so on. We explore and discuss educational movements within and outside state-sanctioned schooling within historical and political contexts.

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## Learning Pursuits

The main goal of this course is to grow our scholarship by following a process of deep and authentic inquiry.

Course material is designed such that the graduate learner will:

1. Examine and discuss critical questions about state-sanctioned schooling in society and how these roles are expressed ideologically, socially, politically, technologically, and legally.
2. Explore, pose and discuss critical questions to help understand the relationships between and among schools and other institutions and systems, both state and private such as prisons, health care, welfare, and so on.
3. Explore and discuss educational movements within and outside state-sanctioned schooling within historical and social-political contexts.

Coursework is intended to engage learners in:

- Examining their own relationship with school;
- Building critical questions about education and society through engagement with a wide range of readings and media;
- Developing their own analyses of course material, and applying those learnings to further refine their questions; and
- Deepening their inquiry through an exploration of movements within and outside state-sanctioned schooling.

Course objectives are aligned with the learning pursuits crafted by Dr. Gholdy Muhammad (in her book: [‘Cultivating Genius’](#)), who draws on the wisdom of 19th century Black literary societies. Based on Dr. Muhammad’s five learning pursuits, we will pursue the following course objectives:

### **Identity Development**

We will think about how our personal experiences with schooling are tied to the broader concept of education and society.

### **Skills**

Through engagement with course material and our learning community, we will enhance (or even discover) many of our capabilities, including our: reading, listening, articulating, writing, inquiry, analytical, empathy and imagination skills.

### **Intellect**

The scholars we will be in dialogue with through readings and other media will offer new knowledge, or deepen our existing knowledge, on how education functions in society.

### **Criticality**

We will be following our questions throughout this course in order to arrive at more in-depth and refined questions related to systems of education, and the movements within and outside them.

### **Joy**

Our exploration for this course will be grounded in the joy of learning. This will require embracing vulnerability and humility in not knowing, and staying connected to our purpose as educators and community members.

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## **Pedagogical Approach**

It is my intention that all learners in this course will develop a deeper understanding of how their personal experiences in school connect to the more expansive scope of education and society. Contextualizing this broader topic in our personal narratives better equips us to interrogate the systems at work with empathy, authenticity and integrity. This practice also situates us within the exploration, so that we recognize our power and responsibility to act on what we

learn. Finally, acknowledging the experiences and perspectives we bring into this work, enables us to engage with the course topics in a more authentic and mindful way. This type of honest and reflective study is critical because, "We teach who we are" (Parker J. Palmer).

In crafting my approach to facilitating this course, I will be drawing from work of the following scholars:

- [Tinukwa Boulder](#), who co-designed this course with me
- [Sabina Vaught](#), who authored the 'Relational Responsibilities' adopted for this course, and also supported the curation of modules and readings.
- Goleman and Senge's '[The Triple Focus](#)', which informed the structure of this course that begins with the context of self/personal, then explores the perspectives of others/peers, and finally examines overarching systems.
- Ghody Muhammad's '[Cultivating Genius](#)', which influenced our five pursuits of learning: identity development, skills, intellect, criticality and joy.
- Richard Koch's '[The Mindful Writing Workshop](#)', which inspired guidelines for discussions and community building - these will help us approach our learning journey with kindness and grace.
- [Michelle King](#), who offered course resources and support to keep loving learning at the heart of what we do.

Guided by these teachers, I intend to cultivate an experience that engages learners in deep and authentic inquiry, critical study, and freedom dreaming.

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## Course Policy and Approach

### Student Expectations (Source: Sabina Vaught syllabus)

Active participation in this course is vital to developing a community of inquiry, practice, and learning. Active participation entails logging into your Canvas course, interacting with instructional materials, and completing learning activities. Please know that I will work with you to extend due dates if the deadlines are challenging to meet. I strive to build a learning community by recognizing the strengths of our collective knowledge, and personal and professional experiences. We can achieve this by sharing artifacts we develop, and our experiences and strategies, as well as contributing to class discussion forums. I know that there are many aspects of our lives (internal and external factors) that distract us, but I hope that we can do what

Dr. James Lang urged educators to do - to create our learning environments as classroom retreats, or what Dr. Sabina Vaught described as "retreat spaces." I hope that this course serves as a retreat to interact with each other and build on our collective wisdom.

We will conduct most of our communications through discussion forums, but you are welcome to communicate privately with me via email ([beadiaz@pitt.edu](mailto:beadiaz@pitt.edu)). I will also use the announcement tool to disseminate course-related information. Coursework consists of discussion forums and reflection activities to enable us to share and discuss our insights, ideas, strategies, and resources in the form of instructor-student produced content, and/or external resources such as articles, podcasts, TED Talks, blogs, and YouTube videos, etc.

### **Inclusion and Diversity (Source: Sabina Vaught syllabus)**

The course aligns with the School of Education's mission to ignite learning and deliver a respective, inclusive, and equitable learning experience. As such, as a collective, we will behave professionally, and communicate mindfully while feeling free to share contrasting viewpoints and ideas. Together, we create an open learning environment for students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The diversity denoted by the intersections of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and culture that we all bring to this course is advantageous in serving as a strength and resource in our learning community.

"As the course instructors, I am committed to pedagogy that is anti-racist, non-sexist, non-classist, non-heterosexist, and non-gender-normative. This includes fostering an environment that is as safe and inclusive as possible. I intend to name and correct any actions on my part that fall short of these commitments as best as possible.

The University of Pittsburgh prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a disabled veteran. The University is committed to creating a learning environment that is inclusive of all races, genders, socioeconomic statuses, religions, sexual orientations, nationalities, and languages." (Roop, L., 2020).

In particular, I am committed to including the voices of minoritized groups in this class, including those of womxn and other people of color, transgender people, LGBTQIA+ people, non-Christian people, non-US citizens, and those who speak multiple languages. If you feel uncomfortable due to your social identities and

background or how they are perceived, please let me know. If you do not feel comfortable talking with me, you can contact the [Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#).

**Preferred Names and Pronouns:** You can use the [NameCoach](#) feature in Canvas to indicate your preferred pronouns.

## Course Assessment: Grading with Care Policy

It is my policy that if a learner is actively and authentically engaging with the course material and our learning community, they are fulfilling the goals of this course. Learning happens at your own pace and from your own perspective, and cannot be assessed based on a decontextualized and depersonalized standard of measure. Moreover, grading has been proven to be ineffective in engaging authentic learning ([Kohn, A., 2011](#) and [Stommel, J., 2020](#)). As such, for this course, we will be utilizing a 'grading with care' policy, which I co-developed with Dr. Tinukwa Boulder and our class from the fall of 2021. Our goal was to create a more humanizing approach to grades - one that is rooted in care, supports learning and growth, and offers grace.

While I acknowledge we are in a system that requires grades to be handed out, I also recognize our power to be “in but not of” (Harney and Moten) this institutional practice. And so, I actively wrestle with the tension between the institutional obligation to assign a final grade and the knowledge that this type of assessment can cause harm. My primary goals for this course are that learners maintain a genuine curiosity about the course material, and grow their critical thinking and scholarship on the broad topic of Education & Society. As such, I hope that learners do not worry about their final grade, and focus on learning at their own pace.

To assuage some of this grade-anxiety and also in acknowledgement of the market value of grades, ***I offer a minimum final grade of B*** to all learners who participate in all course discussions and activities, and complete and submit scholarly artifacts for each module. While this is a relatively less meaningful assessment, it is a transparent measure that learners can keep track of. Within this scope, I anticipate that many students will receive an A for their active participation in, and meaningful contributions to the course. However, the more meaningful assessments I offer will be through individual feedback and relational conversations. **Note that coursework will be graded as complete/incomplete and will typically include dialogic feedback from me - a letter grade will only be assigned for your final grade.**

As you work through the course, please pay close attention to the following key elements, which are critical for our scholarly growth as individuals and as a learning community:

1. [Relational Responsibilities](#) for our course community
2. The [PQS](#) feedback format for receiving and offering feedback
3. Your [Final Portfolio Project](#), which includes a self-assessment element

Finally, I ask that you communicate with me about any challenges you might be experiencing with the course. No one will be penalized for life circumstances that lead to delayed or missed submissions in this course.

Rest assured that **you are enough**, and I am deeply grateful for your contributions to our shared learning. My hope is that your participation in this course will enrich your scholarship and humanity. I will work with you to help ensure the logistics of grades do not interfere with your learning joy.

## Scholarly Artifacts

Throughout the course, we will engage in coursework that helps develop and articulate our grappings with the topics we encounter. Traditionally, we would refer to this work as “assignments”. However, I would like us to reframe coursework as 'scholarly artifacts' that we create and contribute in service of our shared learning.

At the end of the course, each learner will have produced a series of reflections, writings and media that form a cohesive profile of their scholarly journey. We will begin with personal narratives that offer a framing for connecting with the broader scope of education. Next, we will explore education history and purpose, societal impacts, and active movements. Finally, learners will engage in a speculative exercise of envisioning future dynamics of education and society that uphold values of equity and justice. Collectively, the artifacts we develop through this course will ideally pave the way for new avenues of inquiry, and publication and collaboration opportunities.

## Coursework Submissions (Adapted from Sabina Vaught syllabus)

All coursework has due dates and times to keep us on track in the course. If you need more time to complete a specific piece, or are experiencing difficulties with the pace of the course, please let me know as soon as you can.

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# Course Modules and Guiding Questions

We will be structuring this course using Canvas modules. Our course map will consist of five modules that cover a broad range of topics related to Education and Society. Please note that the weeks assigned to each module might change as we continue to iterate on the course design during the semester.

## **Module I: Reflecting on Schooling [Week 1]**

What are the narratives we hold about our personal relationships with school and the purpose of education?

## **Module II: The Role of Education in Society [Week 2]**

What are the roots and roles of state-sanctioned education in society?

## **Module III: Education in Context [Weeks 3 & 4]**

What are the relationships between and among education and other institutions/systems, both state and private (prisons, economic systems, technological infrastructure, etc.)?

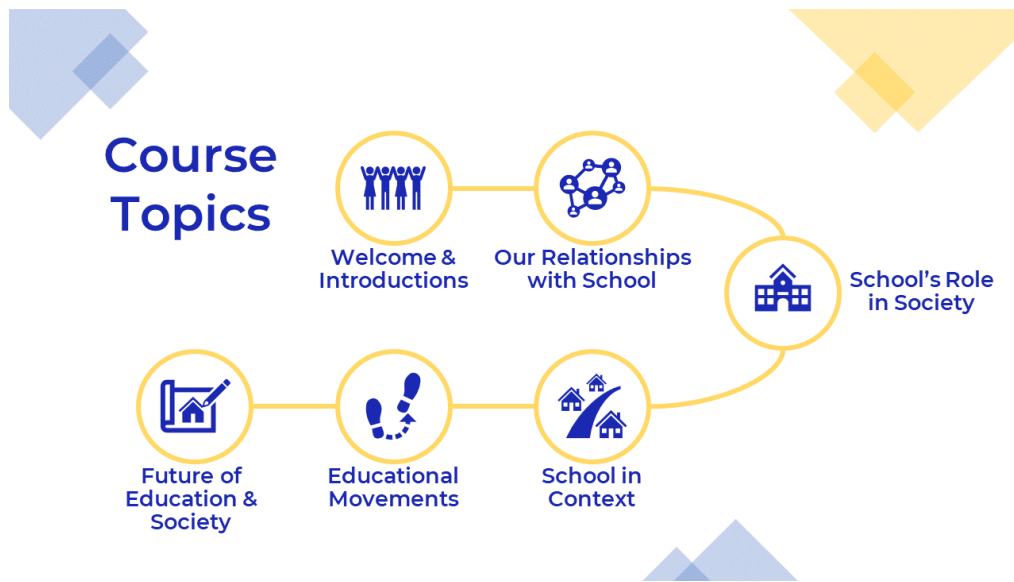
## **Module IV: Education & Social Movements [Weeks 5 & 6]**

What are the social movements that have been undertaken outside state-sanctioned education or insurgent within it?

## **Module V: Future of Education and Society [Week 7]**

How can we envision a more just and equitable system of education, and what should its role be in society?





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## Relational Responsibilities

(Source: Sabina Vaught Syllabus)

In order to build a respectful and caring learning community, we will adopt Dr. Sabina Vaught's 'Relational Responsibilities' as a grounding guide for this course.

### Our Collective Responsibilities

Our collective responsibilities are grounded in our interdependent relationships and are expressed through our active engagement with one another and ideas and through our dedication to learning.

We will undertake relational praxes of:

- Studying deeply
- Contributing meaningfully to one another's learning
- Engaging generously:
  - generating possibilities
  - seeking out connection
  - deepening of understanding
  - practicing complexity over critique
- Abiding the principles of reciprocal relationality

- It is your responsibility to co-create a rigorous and productive learning environment in which you challenge one another's ideas in a scholarly manner but never insult or disparage one another.
- It is your responsibility to engage the ideas, discussions, and materials provided in this class in ways that *enhance and strengthen your own interests*.

## Avoid Unintentional Censorship

Our responsibility is to engage with difficult readings and ideas as we undertake the study of repressive systems and oppressive institutions. Not all class members will respond to the readings in the same manner, and some readings will upset some students more than others. In light of this, there is no clear way to warn students in advance. Moreover, we as a community do not want to unintentionally engage in censorship. Read the article: [No trigger warnings in my class: Why you won't find them on my syllabi](#).

- Recognize and affirm that affective responses to readings and discussions are part of a just intellectual project
- Check-in with one another in ways that honor our differences but affirm our membership in a community of conscience
- Excuse ourselves when need be and without explanation in order to take necessary space.
- Attend carefully and attentively to one another's experiences and ideas, recognizing those as gifts to the community
- Make culturally-specific requests as soon as/if you realize you need to

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## Positive Response Protocol (PQS Format)

Building a learning community requires trust, respect and caring. With these values in mind, I have adapted [Richard Koch](#)'s "PQS: Positive Response Protocol" as a guide for providing meaningful and supportive feedback to each other on our scholarly work. As Dr. Koch points out, "Research clarifies (Hattie and Timperley) that response is more helpful to the writer [or producer of a piece of scholarly work] if we begin by listening to understand and appreciate."

Throughout this course, we will be developing several artifacts of our scholarship - e.g. reflections, free writing, essays, policy, discussions, annotations, and other

media. In order to grow our thinking and learning, we will share our work with each other for feedback. Our work, much like our learning, is never truly 'done', so we will consider the pieces we share "works-in-progress" that can be further refined through community reflection.

In responding to someone's work, we will follow this PQS pattern:

1. **Positive Response:** If we "listen" fully to the work that is offered, we can find wisdom within. For example, consider:
    - What do you remember best from this work?
    - What resonated with you most from this work, and why?
    - What is most interesting to you about this piece?
  2. **Questions:** Through our spirit of curiosity, we can offer our peers new questions to grapple with in their inquiry process. For example, consider:
    - What are you curious about in relation to the topic of this work?
    - What are you confused about?
    - What would you like to know?
  3. **Suggestions:** We can offer our own wisdom to support the learning journey of our peers. Based on what you think is the purpose of the work, consider offering one or two suggestions, especially for what could be:
    - **Added** to the piece - Does it need a new section, or is there a part that should be made longer?
    - **Taken out** of the piece - Is a part unnecessary or repeated?
    - **Changed** in the piece - Is there a part that could be revised with a recommended approach to improve it?
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## University Policies and Procedures

### Attendance and Observance of Religious Holidays

Pitt guidelines on class attendance and observance of religious holidays:

- The observance of religious holidays (activities observed by a religious group of which a student is a member) and cultural practices are an important reflection of diversity. As your instructor, I am committed to providing equivalent educational opportunities to students of all belief systems. At the

beginning of the semester, you should review the course requirements to identify foreseeable conflicts with assignments, exams, or other required attendance. If at all possible, please contact me within the first two weeks of the first class meeting to allow time for us to discuss and make fair and reasonable adjustments to the schedule and/or tasks. (Source: Faculty Assembly, December 2020)

- I interpret this language to apply to cultural and spiritual observances, feasts, dances, ceremonies, etc., not covered by colonial notions of religion and/or culture.
- Please notify me in advance of any anticipated absences related to the guidelines.

## **Instructor Presence**

I will maintain an active role in this online course by logging into the course daily and responding to any queries/concerns posted in the 'Ask Your Professor Discussion Forum' on Canvas. I will participate in the discussion forums as much as possible, and help to make connections between learner responses and instructional content. I will also provide timely feedback on drafts and final assignments. I will respond to student queries within 24 hours of receiving your emails and course messages. Please note that I will typically be more available to address questions and respond to discussion forum comments in the *evenings between 4:00 pm and 5:00 pm*.

## **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

Please review the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#).

## **Disability Services**

Pitt required syllabus statement: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructors and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, at 412-648-7890 or 412-383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible, but no later than the fourth week of the term or visit the [Office of Disability Resources and Services](#) website as early as possible, but no later than the 4th week of the term. The DRS will work with you to provide accommodations.

Please let me know if you need resources or accommodations to complete this course. You may also seek campus-wide support, information, and/or services:

- [Disability Resources and Services](#)
- [Disability Accommodations](#)

**NOTE:** I recognize that while institutional resources can be useful and important support, interacting with the university can at times be experienced as an invasion of privacy or a source of distress. If you are uncomfortable interacting with the university, please feel free to communicate with me directly about what would be helpful to your learning and participating in the community of the course (Source: Sabina Vaught).

Please review the [University of Pittsburgh Non-Discrimination Policy](#).

Pitt single-occupancy restroom map and information:

<https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/lgbtqia/single-occupancy-restrooms/>.

## **Accessibility**

Canvas is ADA Compliant and has fully implemented the final accessibility standards for electronic and information technology covered by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Learn more about [Canvas accessibility statement](#).

## **Sexual Harassment**

The University of Pittsburgh is committed to maintaining a community free from all forms of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment violates University policy as well as state, federal, and local laws. It is neither permitted nor condoned. It is also a violation of the University of Pittsburgh's policy against sexual harassment for any employee or student at the University of Pittsburgh to attempt in any way to retaliate against a person who makes a claim of sexual harassment. Any individual who, after thorough investigation and an informal or formal hearing, is found to have violated the University's policy against sexual harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, reprimand, suspension, termination, or expulsion. Any disciplinary action taken will depend upon the severity of the offense. [For more information, see the Web site](#).

## **Copyright Notice**

These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibits

unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials. See [Library of Congress Copyright Office](#) and [the University Copyright Policy](#).

## Additional University Resources

**(Source: Chris Wright)**

- **Education Library Guide:** See this Hillman Library [customized libguide](#), a gateway to education students and faculty resources.
- **Religious Observances:** See the [Provost's annual memo](#) about religious observances.
- **Emergencies:** Do you have Pitt Police saved on your mobile phone? 911 works, or Pitt Police, 412-624-2121.
- **Catalogs:** The University Catalogs have comprehensive information about policies, programs, and courses. There are University-level policies and policies specific to the School of Education. Bookmark these links and review these documents periodically. [Pittsburgh Campus Graduate and Professional Studies](#)
- **Student Mental Health:** Resources to support student mental health and wellness are available here at Pitt: Counseling Center, in the Wellness Center in Nordenberg Hall: <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cc/>. Call 412-648-7930, any time.
- **Sexual Assault Response:** 412-648-7856
  - contact Pittsburgh Action Against Rape:
  - 24-hour crisis intervention, counseling, and advocacy for victims of sexual assault
  - Phone: 1-866-363-7273
  - Website: [Home - PAAR](#)
- **Racial violence, discrimination, harassment**, etc., you can access resources and contact at the [Pitt diversity website](#).
- **Care and Resource Support Team (CARS):** Email [pittcares@pitt.edu](mailto:pittcares@pitt.edu) or see: <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cars/>.
- **Student Affairs Summary:** [Faculty and Staff Guide for Helping Distressed Students](#).
- **Basic Needs Security:** Some students are unable to afford groceries or access sufficient food to eat every day. Some students lack a safe and stable place to live. Some students experience challenges in balancing school with paid work, childcare, and other family obligations. Those challenges can create considerable anxiety for students and may also affect students' performance in their courses. Students experiencing those challenges are

urged to contact the Assistant Dean of Student Engagement, **Andrea Zito** (email: [andreaz@pitt.edu](mailto:andreaz@pitt.edu) and phone: 412-648-1780). If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, work, and/or family obligations, are also encouraged to let your instructor know if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable us to assist you in accessing support. In addition, the University maintains a student food pantry and a resource guide compiled by the University Library System with food, housing, health, employment, health, and other resources:

- [Pitt Food Pantry](#)
- [Pitt and Community Assistance Resource Guide](#)
- [Access the Greater Pittsburgh Community Foodbank](#)
- [Pitt Pregnant and Parenting Students](#)
  - **NOTE:** The current Pitt language appears to reflect antiquated gender binary and heteronormative frameworks. It also focuses on harassment. Should you be adopting, fostering, or otherwise significantly shifting your dependent care demands, or should you be a student whose gender is not clearly covered by the policy and is pregnant, etc., and would like accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible so we can work together to establish a fair, respectful, and supportive plan (Source: Sabina Vaught)

## **A lack of a safe and stable place to live can find**

- Affordable housing assistance
  - **Action Housing:** 611 William Penn Place, Suite 800; Pittsburgh, PA 15219 Phone: 412-281-2102. Assists in locating affordable housing
  - **Allegheny County Housing Authority:** 625 Stanwix Street, 12th floor; Pittsburgh, PA 15222 Phone: 412-355-8940. Assists in locating affordable housing

## **Shelter options**

- **Allegheny County Bureau of Hunger and Housing Services Phone:** 412-350-4354 This is an area homeless resource.
- **East End Cooperative Ministry:** 6140 Station Street; Pittsburgh, PA 15206 Phone: 412-361-5549. This emergency shelter provides a refuge for the night, case management, breakfast, dinner, shower, and laundry services for men and women older than 18. Individuals can stay in the Emergency Shelter for up to 60 days.