Pitt Education

Course Syllabus

EDUC 2303 Technology in Context
Online Graduate Course

Instructor Information

Course Instructor: Beatrice Dias, PhD (she/her)
Course Format: Online (asynchronous)
Course Duration: Seven-Week intensive course
Office Hours: By appointment (https://calendly.com/beadias/15-min)
Email: beadias@pitt.edu

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."

About The Course

In this course, we will go on a scholarly journey to: interrogate the underlying historical factors that have shaped our perception of technology; critically examine how technology is designed, built, and applied in our society; and explore technology's role in our future possibilities. This seven-week course is broken down into three modules, which will each span two-three weeks:

- Module I: Technology Roots (weeks 1, 2 & 3)
- Module II: Technology in Society (weeks 4 & 5)
- Module III: Technology & Our Collective Futures (weeks 6 & 7) [note: since the November holiday falls between weeks 6 and 7 of the course, Module III will be broken up into parts A and B]

You will likely leave this course with more questions than answers - this is the goal of our journey (destination, unknown). Scholarship is about living in the questions, and engaging in deep inquiry will support us in growing our understanding of technology within a broad context. I also hope our course conversations will encourage you to join ongoing discourse about technology, with a critical and discerning lens that is informed by our collective study and struggle.

Course Description

In this course, we will engage in critical discourse about the historical roots, present-day manifestations, and speculative futures of technological innovations. We will explore and be in conversation with scholarly texts and media that provide a critical lens on the values, ideologies and social structures encoded in technological systems. Based on this foundation, we will interrogate applications of technology in our everyday lives and education spaces, and pursue lines of inquiry about the implications of these technologies on society. Our scholarship will build on the wealth of [research conducted by women and people of color](#) to analyze the implications of everyday technologies across race, gender, class, ability and other intersections of identity. We will explore a broad range of topics, including algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI), digital surveillance and science fiction. Our goals will be to follow our questions to find new questions, play with ideas, think deeply, and create scholarly artifacts that grapple with technology in the context of our collective humanity.

* This course is part of the [Critical Technology and Digital Media for Learning (CriT-DML) Certificate Program](#) - if you are interested, please see details below.

Pedagogy

It is my intention that all learners in this course will develop a deeper understanding of how their personal experiences with technology are situated within the broader context of how technology is operationalized in society. Exploring this topic through our personal narratives better equips us to engage in authentic inquiry. This practice also embeds us within our study, so that we recognize our power and responsibility to act on what we learn. Finally, acknowledging our own experiences and perspectives, enables us to start from what we know, recognizing that we have valuable wisdom to bring into the conversation.

Learning Pursuits

The main goals of this course are to **complicate the narratives we hold about technology, and build a contextual framing around how technology is positioned within education and society**.

Course material is designed such that the graduate learner will:

1. Develop a contextual understanding of how technology operates within a socio-economic framework.
2. Examine and discuss critical questions about the values, ideologies and social structures encoded in technological systems.
3. Explore narratives about technology in society, and grapple with the implications of these stories for education futures.

Student Expectations
(adapted from Sabina Vaught's 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 (beadias@pitt.edu). I will also use the announcement tool to disseminate course-related information. Coursework consists of discussions, reflections, and scholarly activities that 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.

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 [Inquiry Project](#), which is the main scholarly artifact you will create

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.

Inclusion and Diversity
(adapted from Sabina Vaught's syllabus)

This 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.

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, disabled 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 Content

Modules

This course consists of three Canvas modules that cover a broad range of topics related to Technology in Context. The course duration is seven weeks: during the first five weeks we will cover Modules I and II; after Thanksgiving break, we will begin Module III, which spans weeks six and seven of the course.

Module I: The Roots of Technology (Weeks 1, 2 & 3)

- What is our connection to technology?
- How has history shaped our current technologies?
- Where do our widely-accepted technology-narratives come from?

Module II: Technology in Society (Weeks 4 & 5)

- What are the values encoded in technological infrastructure?
- How does technology operate in society?
- What are the economics of technology?

Module III-A: Technology & Our Collective Futures (Week 6)

- Can we envision technology rooted in equity and justice?

********** **HOLIDAY WEEK** **********

Module III-B: Technology & Our Collective Futures (Week 7)

- What are the narratives we want to write about our technology futures?
- How do we work collectively for liberated futures with technology?

Coursework

Throughout the course, we will engage in scholarly work that helps develop and articulate how we are grappling with the topics we encounter. Coursework includes engaging with core material (readings, podcasts and videos), collectively

reflecting on those resources, and producing a project that follows a line of authentic inquiry.

All coursework has due dates and times to help 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. There will be no points/percentages assigned to coursework - submissions will be simply categorized as complete, incomplete or excused.

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. Ideally, these scholarly artifacts will pave the way for new avenues of inquiry, as well as publication and collaboration opportunities.

Inquiry Project

The most involved coursework component will be your **inquiry project**, which is a scholarly endeavor you take on in three-parts, in parallel to our collective exploration. As we encounter concepts in the course, you will have an opportunity to apply those broad-scale lessons to your more focused inquiry project.

- In Module I, you will work on Part 1 of your inquiry project to explore the roots of a technology that you have a personal connection to. This will entail thoughtfully selecting a tech and doing some relatively simple internet research about it.
- In Module II, you will work on Part 2 of your project by delving into the design and applications of that technology in society. This will require additional research and critical analysis to understand the socialization of your chosen technology.
- In Module III, you will complete Part 3 of your project by speculating about possibilities for the future of the technology you chose to write about. This will draw on your imagination, and challenge you to consider what our collective, just and liberated futures might look and feel like.

Community Building

Relational Responsibilities

In order to build a respectful and caring learning community, we will follow an adapted version of Dr. Sabina Vaught's 'Relational Responsibilities,' as guidelines for this course.

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.

Together, we will undertake relational praxes of:
- Studying deeply
- Contributing meaningfully to one another's learning
- Recognizing one another's experiences and ideas as gifts to the community
- Engaging generously, by:
  - generating possibilities
  - seeking out connection
  - deepening of understanding
  - practicing complexity over critique
- Responding to one another with care and respect
- Working through disagreement by challenging ideas in a scholarly manner but never insulting or disparaging each other
- Affirming that affective responses are part of a just intellectual project
- Making culturally-specific requests as soon as/if you realize you need to.

As a learning community we are responsible for engaging with difficult core material and ideas as we undertake critical inquiry and exploration. Not all class members will respond to the material in the same manner, and some readings and/or media will upset some students more than others. In light of this, there is no clear way to warn students in advance. As a point of reference, please read Dr. Brittney Cooper's article: [No trigger warnings in my class: Why you won't find them on my syllab](). I will work with you to navigate challenging conversations and material, and ask that you reach out to me if you need support or guidance with any of the readings and media we engage with through this course.

Positive Response Protocol

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?

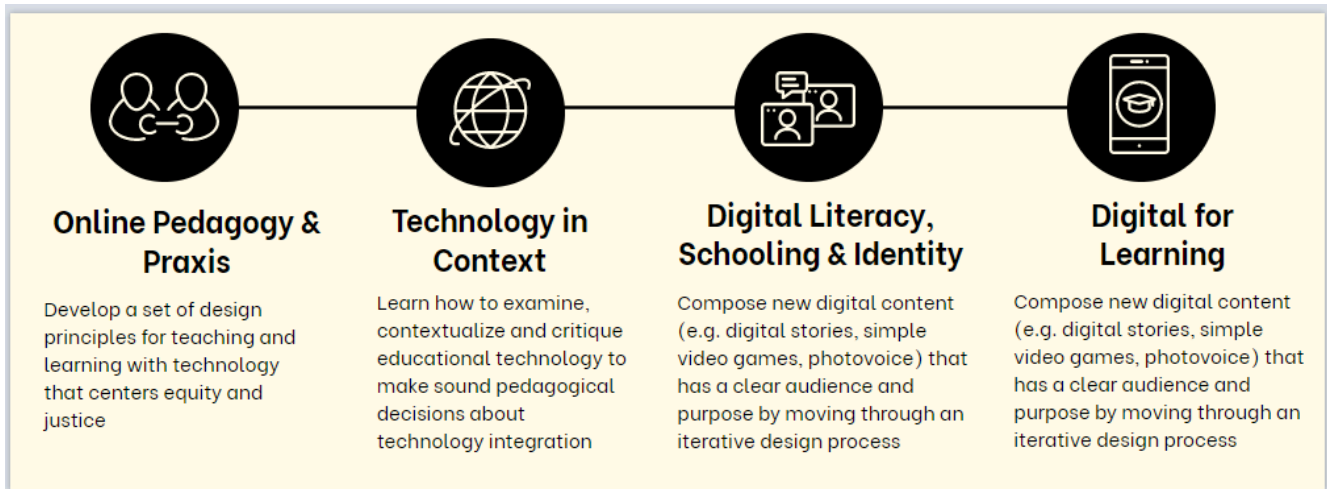# Supplemental Information

CriT-DML Certificate Overview

This course (Technology in Context - EDUC 2303) is a part of the [Critical Technology and Digital Media for Learning (CriT-DML) Certificate Program](#) launched in 2022 to explore equitable design, digital literacies, agency, and critical thinking about the applications of technology and digital media for learning. Digital media and technology play an increasingly significant role in many aspects of our lives. We use these tools to communicate, create, design, collaborate, teach, learn, and assess within various educational contexts. This graduate-level certificate program is designed for any educator, instructional designer, administrator, or school technology director who wishes to broaden their understanding of and experience with digital media and technology for learning. To intentionally work toward equity, justice, and freedom, students will learn how to design learning experiences that center and support people and human processes.

Certificate Goals and Outcomes

Through the four courses of the CriT-DML certificate, students will:

1. Develop a set of design principles for teaching and learning with technology that centers equity and justice. (*EDUC 2301 Online Pedagogy and Praxis).*
2. Learn how to examine, contextualize and critique educational technology to make sound pedagogical decisions about technology integration (*EDUC 2303 Technology in Context*).
3. Compose new digital content (e.g., digital stories, simple video games, photovoice) with a clear audience and purpose by moving through an iterative design process (*EDUC 2302 Digital Literacy, Schooling and Identity).*
4. Utilize digital media technologies to nurture collaboration, dialogue, and authentic learning (*EDUC 2300 Digital Media for Learning & all certificate courses*).

Certificate Goals Overview

Online Pedagogy & Praxis	Technology in Context	Digital Literacy, Schooling & Identity	Digital for Learning
Develop a set of design principles for teaching and learning with technology that centers equity and justice	Learn how to examine, contextualize and critique educational technology to make sound pedagogical decisions about technology integration	Compose new digital content (e.g. digital stories, simple video games, photovoice) that has a clear audience and purpose by moving through an iterative design process	Compose new digital content (e.g. digital stories, simple video games, photovoice) that has a clear audience and purpose by moving through an iterative design process

Certificate Program Goals and Course Alignment Matrix

Program Goals	EDUC 2300	EDUC 2301	EDUC 2302	EDUC 2303
1. Develop design principles for teaching and learning with technology that centers equity and justice (EDUC 2301 Online Pedagogy and Praxis).		X		
2. Learn how to examine, contextualize and critique educational technology to make sound pedagogical decisions about technology integration (EDUC 2303 Technology in Context).				X
3. Compose new digital content (e.g., digital stories, simple video games, photovoice) that has a clear audience and purpose by moving through an iterative design process (EDUC 2302 Digital Literacy, Schooling and Identity)		X	X	
4. Utilize digital media technologies to nurture collaboration, dialogue, and authentic learning (EDUC 2300 Digital Media for Learning & all certificate courses)	X	X	X	X

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 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 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 Food Bank](#)
    - [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.