

Franciscan University of Steubenville
Statement on Social Work 314
September 4, 2012

Franciscan University bases its educational mission on the teaching of Christ as proclaimed in Sacred Scripture and Tradition and authoritatively interpreted by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. Accordingly, Franciscan University follows Catholic Church teaching in regard to homosexuality and treats homosexual persons with “respect, compassion, and sensitivity” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2358) while holding homosexual acts as “intrinsically disordered” (*Catechism*, No. 2357).

The purpose of Franciscan University’s course Social Work 314, Deviant Behavior, which covers a wide range of topics including crime, alcoholism, heterosexual deviance, and homosexuality, is to help students learn how to better serve and assist future clients. Faculty members who teach Social Work 314 use secular textbooks that present timely research findings, current data, and solid sociological analysis. However, as when any issue is discussed, faculty members are expected to present authentic Catholic teaching.

This approach benefits both Franciscan University graduates and the clients they serve. Since students have considered both sides of an argument, they leave here better prepared to assist clients than their counterparts from schools that teach only one perspective.

The course description for this class, to which some are taking issue, is little more than abbreviated chapter headings from the primary course textbook. It is a book used in more than a dozen public universities, and uses the term “deviant” in the sociological sense, simply meaning different from the norm. We understand that some, not understanding the term or its context, might take offense at the description. Nevertheless, changing standard sociological definitions is beyond the scope of our work.

So, too, is changing the teachings of the Catholic Church. As a Catholic university, Franciscan teaches “all the truths of revelation whether found in Scripture or Tradition as taught by the Catholic Church”

(Mission Statement, p. 6). To do otherwise would be a violation of our basic mission as a Catholic university in the Franciscan tradition.

Our prayers and our love go out to all our alumni. All men and women, regardless of their sexual orientation, are deserving of respect, compassion, and love, and as a Catholic university we not only believe that, but also strive to live out that belief each day in our relations with students and alumni alike.

Background:

The *Catechism* teaches that “homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.” They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357). However, the *Catechism* also teaches that “The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.” (*Catechism*, 2358)