

Close Look at Dangerous Relationships

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newwave@tulane.edu

Tulane's innovative service-learning program helped draw Sally J. Kenney to New Orleans. When she became the new executive director of the Newcomb College Institute earlier this year, one of her goals was to encourage more service-learning courses focusing on women's issues. This fall, she is team-teaching her first such course: "Law and Politics of Domestic Violence."



Joining together to team-teach a service-learning course on domestic violence are, from left, Tania Tetlow of Tulane Law School, Sally Kenney of the Newcomb College Institute and Fred Buttell of the School of Social Work. (Photo by Tricia Travis)

"Although many Tulane faculty have expertise on issues surrounding violence against women, the university offered no undergraduate-level course on domestic violence," says Kenney, who also is a political science professor who holds the Newcomb College Endowed Chair.

The new course for undergraduates came about with support from the political science department and the [Center for Public Service](#).

Joining Kenney to teach the course are [Tania Tetlow](#), associate professor of law who is director of the law school's Domestic Violence Clinic, and social work professor [Fred Buttell](#), author of more than 40 scholarly articles on domestic violence.

Because it is a service-learning course, students will monitor domestic violence cases in court under Tetlow's supervision. In class they will gain interdisciplinary perspectives on violence.

Kenney says, "The three faculty members aim at nothing less than enlisting a cohort of the next generation to stop violence against women, what experts now characterize as a slow homicide."

Domestic violence is an issue that Kenney has researched during her academic career. Before joining Tulane she was on the faculty at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, where she also directed the Center on Women and Public Policy.

The idea for the service-learning course began when [Kenney](#) met with Newcomb alumna Martha Kimmerling, who recently endowed the Zale-Kimmerling writer-in-residence program. Kimmerling also is a strong supporter of the Dallas Women's Foundation and "particularly concerned about domestic violence," Kenney says.

"We ended up discussing how Tulane University might better prepare young women to avoid such dangerous relationships, given every woman thinks it will never happen to her. The sobering statistics show otherwise."