

## **Finding Work and a Place to Live**

Political Science 270/370

A travel course on urban poverty and social policy (Washington, DC, and Chicago)

{sample syllabus only – this may not reflect the details of the current course}

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### *Course description and requirements:*

This course will introduce students to issues surrounding low-income housing, homelessness, and welfare-to-work programs through interviews with Washington, DC-based research organizations, advocates for the poor, government officials, and poor people. Building on these discussions in Washington, we will spend about a week in Chicago to investigate and experience first-hand how well those federal programs fit the local reality in Chicago. Our fieldwork will involve visits to non-profit social outreach organizations in both cities. You will be responsible for three short papers that reflect thoughtfully on assigned readings. You should take advantage of some of our unstructured time to keep up on the readings. We will meet a few times each week to discuss them.

In an effort to minimize the distance between our own lives and the lives of the people and places we study, we will stay in somewhat Spartan accommodations during our three weeks of traveling. In Washington we will stay in the Community for Creative Non-Violence. Most of their facility is dedicated to a homeless shelter. We will have a secure room within their facility with showers, bunk beds and a kitchen. You will need your own linens. In Chicago we will stay at the International Conference Center in the Uptown neighborhood. The ICC will provide us with rooms with bunk beds and showers down the hall. The ICC will also provide breakfast each day and five of our dinners. Programming in Chicago will be provided by the Urban Life Center. You should pack light. Be prepared to carry your things up to about a half-mile at a stretch. I recommend either a backpack or a duffel with strong and comfortable handles. I'll distribute separately a list of suggested items to take.

The course budget includes most of our meals. I will distribute modest cash stipends for food periodically. You are responsible for your own incidentals. You should take at least \$100 to cover meals and incidentals. Taking a credit card would also be an excellent idea. You will be responsible for providing yourself with approximately a dozen meals (off budget) during the three-week term.

Students' grades will be based on a series of short papers that reflect on the readings (45%, or 15% each), a journal (15%), and participation in group discussions and activities (40%). You should use your journal to record your thoughts about our fieldwork, readings, and your experiences generally. I will ask to see your journals periodically and will collect them at the end of the term, to be returned later. I will advise you throughout the term as to my evaluation of your participation. Each of the three short papers reflecting on the readings are due on Wednesdays, the first two in the evening and the third by noon. These should be hand-written

(neatly) and should run 5-6 pages. No late papers please. Students wishing to take this course for 300-level credit need to make special arrangements with me *at the beginning of the term*. I will expect a substantial term paper in these cases. Students taking the course for 300-level credit will receive a grade of “IP” (in progress) at the end of the term and will turn in their completed papers by the last day of August. Regardless of upper- or lower-level credit, all students will receive general education credit in the analysis of values category for this course.

Three texts are required and are available at the university bookstore:

*American Poverty in a New Era of Reform*, Harrell Rodgers, Jr. (M.E. Sharpe, 2000)

*The New Politics of Poverty: The Nonworking Poor in America*, Lawrence Mead (Basic Books, 1992).

*No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*, Katherine Newman (Vintage Books, 2000)

I will distribute several other brief readings. It is imperative that you complete the reading as soon as possible in order to facilitate our group discussions. Your active participation is crucial for your own and the group’s success.

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*Tuesday, the 7<sup>th</sup>* (optional)

- 6PM: gather on the quad to build the shanty – spend the night on the quad

*Wednesday, the 8<sup>th</sup>*

- 9AM: class/small group sessions on IWU campus
  - Introductions
  - Discussion of Rodgers, chapter 4, and excerpt from Oscar Lewis’ *La Vida*
- 1PM: meet in Beckman Auditorium for showing of video, “America’s War on Poverty” – discussion to follow
- Afternoon: discussion of welfare and housing policies and poverty

*Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>*

- 7:00AM: IWU van leaves campus for O’Hare Airport
- American Airlines flight to DC; take Metro to the Community for Creative Non-Violence
- Mid-afternoon: settle into accommodations – grab a snack/light dinner
- 5:30PM: lecture at the American Enterprise Institute
- Later: group trip to the Lincoln Memorial – King’s “I have a dream” speech

*Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup>*

- Morning: programming with CCNV staff
- Afternoon: reading time
- Evening: relax, see the city

*Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>*

- Day of community service at the CCNV
- Evening: group session to share experiences and to discuss TANF policy

*Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>*

- Free time

*Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup>*

- Morning: group session to discuss readings: *American Poverty*, chapters 1-3
- 10:00AM: interview at Senator Dick Durbin's office
- 11:15AM: interview at Rep. Jerry Weller's office
- 2:00PM: interview at Rep. Tim Johnson's office
- Late afternoon (optional): tour of the Supreme Court

*Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>*

- 10:00AM: interview with the Congressional Research Service
- Afternoon: group session to discuss readings: *American Poverty*, chapters 5-9

*Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>*

- 10AM: interview at the U.S. Conference of Mayors
- Afternoon: time to write
- First reflection paper due by 8PM

*Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>*

- 8:30AM: breakfast with Senators Durbin and Fitzgerald
- 10:30AM: interview at the Urban Institute – welfare and housing
- 2:00 – 3:30PM: interview at the Heritage Foundation – TANF reauthorization
- 6PM: arrive at George Washington University for taping of “Crossfire”

*Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>*

- 10:00AM: interview at National Alliance to End Homelessness and National Coalition for the Homeless – relationship of welfare to housing
- 11:00AM: discussion of homelessness with panel of currently/recently homeless people, organized by the National Coalition for the Homeless
- Afternoon and evening: free time

*Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>*

- Morning: group session to discuss the week's experiences
- (optional) 1:00 – 1:45PM: tour of Library of Congress
- Afternoon and evening: free time

*Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>*

- Free time

*Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup>*

- 10AM – 1PM: volunteer at Martha's Table (charity kitchen)
- 2:00PM: visit the Community of Hope (transitional housing facility)
- Late afternoon: group session to discuss readings: Mead, *The New Politics of Poverty*

*Tuesday, May 21<sup>st</sup>*

- 6:00AM: depart for the airport and return to Chicago

- Lunch on your own (lots of good restaurants in the neighborhood)
- Afternoon: settle into International Conference Center; orientation from the staff at the Urban Life Center

**Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> through Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup> – programming by the Urban Life Center (see separate itinerary)**

*Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>*

- Morning: Chicago social service agency visit
- Afternoon: Interview with the Reverend Steve Saunders of Featherfist
- 2<sup>nd</sup> reflection paper due by 8PM

*Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>*

- Day at a Chicago public housing complex – Stateway Gardens

*Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup>*

- See separate itinerary for details of day's programming
- Evening: begin overnight shifts at shelters in Uptown (Cornerstone Community Outreach)

*Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup>*

- 7:00AM: shifts at shelters end; meet for breakfast – discuss experiences
- Later: free time until Monday morning

*Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>*

- Free time
- Evening (optional): group dinner at Cuernavaca Restaurant

*Monday, May 27<sup>th</sup>*

- Morning into the mid-afternoon: tour of Chicago's south side
- Evening: group session to discuss readings: *No Shame in My Game*

*Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup>*

- See separate itinerary for details of day's programming

*Wednesday, May 29<sup>th</sup>*

- 10AM – 12noon: session with the Coalition for the Homeless
- YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN FOR TRANSPORT