COURSE CODE: AFR 1502 – THE SOCIOLOGY OF URBAN POVERTY

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The primary objective of this course is to increase students’ awareness of the nature, causes and effects of poverty and inequality in the U.S. The course will use ethnographic materials from Black urban communities where necessary to highlight the specificity of Black urban problems. In this course we will draw on a variety of disciplines from the social sciences. The course, which is primarily a lecture course, will consist of classroom discussions, student presentations, films and lectures by community activists as to their perceptions and solutions to the crisis in urban America. At the end we will critically interrogate the causes and solutions to the problems of poverty and inequality. Some of the issues we will examine in this course will include the problems of urbanization, family instability, crime and delinquency, poverty and welfare, race and ethnic conflict among others.

PREREQUISITES:
Certified in Reading and Writing

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
The primary objective of this course is to introduce students to an appreciation of the dynamics of the sociology of urban poverty. Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

- Develop a socio-historically grounded analysis in explaining the causes and consequences of urban poverty in the US.
- Learn the central art of the social scientist’s craft: communicating research and original ideas through writing.
- Learn to read critically and thoroughly. This competency is a cornerstone of the liberal arts education. As you read, pay careful attention to the arguments developed, the evidence provided to support them, and your own reactions. Do you agree with the author? Do you think the author argues her or his position poorly? How would you have written the narrative differently? What sort of image about Africans Americans in their communities does the author provide?
- Develop critical skills in reasoning and argumentation.

REQUIRED TEXT:
Anna Leo-Guerrro, Social Problems: Community, Policy and Social Action, Pine Forge Press, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2005 (This book is on reserve in the library and is
available for purchase at the campus bookstore)* Please note that I will provide supplementary readings throughout the semester.

**GRADING PROCEDURE:**

Class Participation 10%
1st Take home exams 25%
2nd Take home exams 25%
Finals (in class): 40% 100%

**Policy on Incompletes:**
I do not give incompletes. If you choose not to complete the class please formally withdraw from it.

**Extra Credit:**
At certain times I will ask students to make class presentations for extra credit. Please note that presentations for extra credit should not be seen as substitute for course work and course grade.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
- Active class participation and attendance is required of all students.
- Students who do not attend class without valid permission or reasons may lose credit. Students are expected to understand the material, or at least identify issues/themes they do not fully understand in order to ask questions in class.
- The instructor will assume that students know the material and are prepared to discuss it. Students are responsible for all work assigned in this class, whether or not they are present. Assignments must be completed on time. Papers submitted late will be penalized
- Students are expected to observe normal courtesy in class. They are expected to pay attention to the instructor, take detailed notes, refrain from personal conversations, and avoid any other behavior, which is disruptive and disturbing to others.
- A student who does not observe these courtesies may be asked to leave the room. Sleeping in class is not allowed and you will be politely asked to leave.

**CLASS CONDUCT:**
Students must arrive on time, in order to fully participate and receive full credit for attending the class session. If lateness is unavoidable, the student is welcome to join the class, but he/she is expected not to disrupt the session already in progress. Students must turn off cell phones, beepers, and other electronic devices before class begins. No one is allowed to wear headphones in class. No one is allowed to eat in class.

**Plagiarism**
Students are reminded that plagiarism (using another author’s words without attribution or otherwise presenting another person’s work as one’s own) is fraudulent and is
considered to be a serious academic offence and, if discovered, will result in academic penalty.

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**Week 1:**
**Introduction to Course**

**Understanding the conceptual tools:**

**Week 2:**
**Theories and philosophies of poverty and inequality:**

*Examine how social philosophers have theorized about inequality*

**Week 3:**
**Exploring the basis of inequality:** Social class, ethnicity and race? Anna Leo-Guerro, *Social Problems: Community, Policy and Social Action*, Chapter 2, p.25-44

*How does one’s social class, race or ethnicity explain inequality in society?*

**Week 4:**
**Exploring the basis of inequality:** Sex, Gender and Age? Anna Leo-Guerro, *Social Problems: Community, Policy and Social Action*, Chapter 3 p.45-60

*How does one’s gender, sex and age explain inequality in society.*

**Week 5:**
**Understanding, definitions and measurements of Poverty:**
Anna Leo-Guerro, *Social Problems: Community, Policy and Social Action*, Chapter 9, p.223-233

*Examine the various ways social scientist have defined and measured poverty*

**Week 6:**
**The poverty of Urban Black People:**
William Julius Wilson, “The New Urban Poverty and the Problem of Race” The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Delivered at University of Michigan, October 22 and 23, 1993. Available at:
Using the various measurements and definitions of poverty examine the extent and nature of Urban Black People

Week 7:
Poverty and Family structure
Anna Leo-Guerro, Social Problems: Community, Policy and Social Action, Chapter 4, p.61-86

Is there any relationship between urban poverty and black family structures?

Week 8:
Women and Poverty: Feminization of poverty
Available at http://www.olin.wustl.edu/macarthur/working%20papers/wp-mclanahan3.htm
Rebecca Huffman, “The Feminization of Poverty: The Consequences of Inequality.”
Available at: http://www.stolaf.edu/depts/womens-studies/ws399/ws399_03/Portfolios/Portfolio%20-%20Huffman/Papers/Feminization%20of%20poverty.doc
Michael Katz, The Undeserving Poor: From the war on poverty to the war on welfare, Pantheon Books, New York, 1989, p.66-78

What is “Feminization of poverty”? What factors explain the poverty of women in the US? How will you improve the status of women?

Week 9:
Drug Abuse:
Anna Leo-Guerro, Social Problems: Community, Policy and Social Action, Chapter 8, p.189-222

Week 10:
Crime and the Criminal Justice system:
Anna Leo-Guerro, Social Problems: Community, Policy and Social Action, Chapter 10, p.257-295

The Juvenile Justice System: Documentary: GIRLHOOD

**Week 11:**
**Remedies for Urban Poverty**

**Week 12:**
**Reforming Welfare?**

*How will you evaluate the various strategies on the fight against poverty?*

**STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**
**Week 13:**
**Group A Student Presentation:** The War of Poverty success or failure

**Week 14:**
**Group B Student Presentation:** The War of Poverty success or failure

**Week 15:**
**Review**

**Week 16:**
**Final Exams**