COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description:
The “underclass problem” – especially the urban underclass problem – is widely considered to be among the United States’ most troubling, complex, intractable, and controversial contemporary social issues. In this class, we will learn exactly what the term the ‘underclass’ means, we will look at its origins, we will examine both black and white responses to urban poverty, and we will look at the role that the underclass plays in the American political arena. Over the course of the semester we will try to answer three questions: 1) why do impoverished ghettos/barrios exist in America? 2) what impact, if any, do these neighborhoods have on their residents? and 3) what can we do to reduce concentrated poverty in America's cities? Although much of the course focuses on African Americans, we will look at the status of other racial groups and we will pay particular attention to interracial and inter-class conflict within the urban underclass.

Format and requirements:
This is a seminar and not a lecture course. Participation in class is mandatory. Forty percent of your grade will depend on your attendance and ACTIVE and THOUGHTFUL participation during each week’s discussion. To help you organize your thoughts about the assigned materials, you will be asked to prepare one essay in response to the readings each week. Each essay should be 1-2 single-spaced pages --- never more than 2 --- and should: 1) identify the main themes or arguments of EACH work assigned, 2) isolate 2 issues raised, or stances taken by ONE of the readings that you find problematic, intriguing, or otherwise especially deserving of attention; and 3) offer you own takes on those 2 issues, drawing on other readings and your own experience as appropriate. These essays are due at the beginning of class and will make-up 20 percent of your grade. The only other requirement is a research paper. You can write on anything as long as it is somehow related to the urban underclass. At the end of the quarter, students will be expected to make a short presentation to the class on their research. All students must submit a 2 page prospectus for the research paper (paper topic, outline of your argument, sample bibliography) by the
beginning of class week six. The research paper will account for the remaining 40% of your grade.
Required Course Packet:
All course readings with the exception of the one required book will be available on e-reserves at: http://reserves.ucsd.edu/eres/default.aspx. I will also make a hard copy course packet if there is enough interest.

Required Books:

Reading List

Week One
INTRODUCTION

April 4  Outline of class/Introduction to Underclass Research

Week Two
WHAT SHOULD WE DO? WHAT CAN WE DO?


R. Kent Weaver (2000) *Ending Welfare as We Know It* pp 169-195
Week Three
DEFINING THE UNDERCLASS

April 18  


Week Four
LIFE IN GHETTO POVERTY

April 25  

Story of Two Whole Book

Week Five
CAUSES OF GHETTO POVERTY-PART A

May 2  


Week Six
CAUSES OF GHETTO POVERTY-PART B

May 9


TWO PAGE PROSPECTUS FOR YOUR RESEARCH PAPER DUE TODAY
(brief description of topic, your argument, sample bibliography)

Week Seven
BARRIO POVERTY

May 16


Week Eight
NEIGHBORHOOD EFFECTS

May 23


Deborah Prothrow-Smith (1991). Deadly Consequences. Chapters 5, 6, & 7


Week Nine
THE MULTI-RACIAL UNDERCLASS AND PROSPECTS FOR COALITION BUILDING

May 30


Week Ten
SOLUTIONS


Students will make a short in-class presentation on their research papers