

Department: INTD

Course No.: 211

Credits: 3

Title: Seminar on Urban Problems

Contact: Margaret Lamb

Content Area: CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

Catalog Copy: INTD 211. Seminar on Urban Problems. Either semester. Three credits. Hours by arrangement. Open only with consent of the Director of the Urban Semester Program. Must be taken concurrently with INTD 210 and 212. Sponsored by the Urban Semester Program. Discussion based upon assigned readings and led by invited speakers from within the University and the Hartford community.

Course Information:

- a) INTD 211 examines urban problems and closely considers examples from Hartford and other urban areas in Connecticut. This course, as part of the Urban Semester Program, gives student participants the opportunity to explore the nature of the problems that they experience in the internships in which they are simultaneously enrolled during the semester.
- b) There are three major assignments: an individual research paper of 8-10 pages that explores in depth an urban problem that each student faces in his/her internship; a group research project that students design collectively to explore one or more issues that are of common concern to the group; a group service or action project that allows them to experience activities in the Hartford community. The latter assignment may include work with Habitat for Humanity, participation in lobbying and advocacy at the State Capitol, participation in local advocacy efforts, and so on.
- c) The course addresses issues of racial inequality, economic disparity, cultural assets in the community, systemic problems such as poverty, welfare, unemployment, urban education and more. Many speakers who are local experts, advocates and community residents are invited as guest lecturers.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.: Goals 4, 5 & 6 are relevant to this course:

- 4) Acquire more sensitivity: INTD 211 considers many urban problems that are tinged with value laden policy decisions; in particular when we consider the welfare system or urban educational problems, for the time in their lives, many students begin to see these issues through the lives of people they encounter in their internships and begin to see beneath the layers of stereotypes about the urban poor. They must consider questions relevant to the causes of poverty and individual or systemic culpability for poverty or educational failure.
- 5) Acquire awareness of their era and society: Students in INTD 211 as part of the Urban Semester Program are immersed in one of America's poorest cities; generally a large percentage of the students have never lived in an inner city before, although there are often students who

have lived in cities. They quickly have to adapt to the circumstances of living in Hartford and experiencing the issues of the city on a daily basis, particularly in their internships. Then, they must reflect on the issues in their assignments. They must seek to understand how these problems arise and what can be done about them. Finally, they must do so within a social environment in which whites are a minority and people of color and immigrants are the majority of the population.

6) Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience; In most of the internships and in the class, students are exposed to professionals of color and the diverse multi-racial population of Hartford. Its school system is over 90% students of color, a majority of whom are Latino. There are ethnic institutions and businesses all throughout Hartford and course sessions explicitly discuss immigration, welfare, poverty and other associated topics.

CA4 Criteria: The criteria below are met in INTD 211, as outlined.

1. INTD 211 considers how different groups of people in urban areas arrive, live and cope with urban problems. Given the multi-cultural population of Hartford, there are many different ethnic and national population groups that they encounter. Students are expected to seek out local institutions and new forms of learning about urban areas by using resources such as community and ethnic media, local cultural institutions and other resources in Hartford to include as sources in their research assignments.

3. Students engage with a variety of ethnic communities and client groups within Hartford. These groups come together in the education system and the political system in Hartford and students are involved in these systems. Their experiences are shared in classes and reflected upon in written assignments. Similarities in experiences of migration/immigration are studied, as well as the local development of unique cultural institutions by these populations to meet their needs.

4. Students are exposed to new arrivals in the education and social service system; they are sometimes involved in lobbying and advocating for disenfranchised groups, including immigrants. Class discussions highlight the human rights aspects of addressing poverty and the ongoing issues of protection of rights of Hartford residents, both politically and in civil matters, such as with the local police and immigration policy. These issues are the basis of numerous class discussions and some written assignments.

5. Nowhere in the country are issues of social, economic and political power and lack of power or disenfranchisement more stark than in Hartford, Connecticut. The entire course of INTD 211 is devoted to allowing students to see firsthand and work on the issues of power and inequality. Class topics include urban fiscal stress, the welfare system and its impact on urban residents, urban education and how to address educational opportunity and inequality, urban-suburban-rural inequality and solutions. Issues of urban development and who wins or loses in redevelopment strategies are analyzed. The course examines urban politics and the limitations of power on local government. These themes are more fully explored in INTD 211. Thus, students come away with new and different insights into how urban populations are diverse, suffer disadvantages, amass power and develop cultural institutions.