

**Simpson College Urban Studies Institute  
Urban Anthropology: Cultural Sensitivity Project  
Carolyn Dallinger and John Pauley**

**Introduction**

The Simpson College Urban Studies Institute was established as a collaborative effort between Simpson College and Urban Dreams. Urban Dreams is a non-profit human services agency that provides multiple services to disenfranchised populations in Des Moines and selected other locations in Iowa and Missouri. The mission statement for the SUSI states “...The purposes of the collaboration are to provide a service to targeted communities in which persons find themselves culturally isolated and disenfranchised from society’s institutions and to increase experiential learning opportunities for Simpson students.”

Urban Dreams founder and CEO, Wayne Ford, recognized a need for those who are entering human service careers to have more in-depth cultural sensitivity training. SUSI’s Cultural Sensitivity Project is an outgrowth of this recognized need.

In the summer of 2008, professors Carolyn Dallinger, from the Sociology and Criminal Justice Department, and John Pauley, from the Philosophy Department, undertook the development of a course addressing cultural sensitivity issues utilizing the increasingly diverse nature of the Des Moines metropolitan area as their laboratory. Other members of the Simpson Community have played an important part in the final product. Assistant Dean for Multicultural and International Affairs, Walter Lain, helped with interviews, filming and limited editing of interviews to produce an initial DVD. This DVD has already been used in several classes and at the AmeriCorps-Vista conference held at SUSI’s Des Moines location on December 5, 2008. Communications Department professor Lisa Carponelli and several of her students are logging and editing hours of interviews so that DVD’s focusing on specific diversity issues can be produced. Omar Padilla, SUSI’s AmeriCorps-Vista volunteer, spent many hours scheduling and aiding in the interview of community members.

Interviews were conducted at SUSI’s Des Moines location in the Casady Building at 1801 16<sup>th</sup> Street in Des Moines’ River Bend neighborhood. River Bend is possibly the most diverse neighborhood in Iowa. River Bend includes large white (44%), African American (24.3%), Latino (24.5%), and Asian (15.2%) populations. The remaining 13% of the population includes recent immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Sudan as well small numbers of other ethnically identified persons.<sup>[1]</sup> Budget restraints resulted in limiting the initial investigation to issues among the Latino and African American populations. The hope is that the study can be expanded in the years ahead to include individuals from additional cultural traditions.

The syllabus and DVD listing that follows is the product of the Cultural Sensitivity Project. It is anticipated that the course will be ready to offer in the 2009-2010 academic year. One objective of the project is to have a course that introduces students to diversity issues found in our own metropolitan community and that provides a meaningful diversity experience for those who cannot participate in international travel.

## SIMPSON COLLEGE

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Hours: \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### COURSE PURPOSE:

This course will help students understand minority cultural groups through both theoretical study and experiential learning. The course will proceed on the assumption that learning about other minority cultures is a condition for empathizing with those cultures. This course is organized around discussion based on reading text materials and observing interviews of urban community members whether working or living in the urban area.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Acquiring the ability to view the urban context from various minority perspectives.
2. Apply theoretical concepts to everyday cultural interactions and cultural misunderstandings.
3. Increase understanding of the Des Moines minority and/or cultural communities to develop professional skills in dealing with all communities.
4. Increase ability to communicate and actively participate in learning.
5. Compare and contrast the cultural group similarities and differences.
6. Increase interviewing skills of community members.
7. Engage in critical thinking about urban cultural anthropology issues and race relations in America.
8. Increase leadership skills and ability to work collaboratively with others.

### CORNERSTONE 6

Various cornerstone studies in the liberal arts are required through the Simpson curricula. This course fulfills Cornerstone 6: Minority Perspective. Through this perspective, students will learn to appreciate the contributions to American society made by those who have frequently been denied access to power due to considerations of race, religion, ethnic background or gender.

### COURSE CONTINUITY PLAN

Should the normal instructional activity on the campus be shortened or interrupted by a campus-wide closing, students will receive information from the instructor or other representative of the college about when and if the course might be continued or completed via Internet, telephone, or United States mail.

### ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Honesty is a must in this course. *The College's policies regarding academic dishonesty are outlined in the Simpson College General Catalog.* With regard to this course, acts of dishonesty include, but are not necessarily limited to, cheating on exams, plagiarizing material from other sources, making up material or sources of information, not giving citation to work from other sources, and/or submitting work for this course originally completed for other courses without the permission of all instructors involved. The penalty for any form of substantiated academic dishonesty may be one or more of the following decided by the professor: Failure of the course, or Failure in the paper, quiz, test, etc. where the dishonesty occurred, or Replacement of item with a suitably substituted assignment.

Students wishing to appeal charges of substantiated academic dishonesty may request a hearing before an academic appeals committee of the college.

#### AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT:

Please contact the professor if you have a documented disability for which you need an accommodation in any aspect of the course.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS AND RESOURCES:

1. Adalberto Aguirre, Jr. and Jonathan H. Turner, *American Ethnicity: The Dynamics and Consequences of Discrimination*.
2. Setha M. Low, *Theorizing the City: The New Urban Anthropology Reader*.
3. SUSI's Research Documentation of Des Moines demographics
4. Other selected readings.
5. DVD Selections: Minority culture perspectives regarding mainstream culture are presented in the DVD's below. The DVD's are based on interviews conducted in Des Moines, Iowa in the fall of 2008. The DVD's should be available for use by the end of the spring 2009 semester.

The titles and descriptions for DVD's are as follows:

#### Behavioral Interpretations:

The interpretation and misinterpretation of verbal and non-verbal behavior is the focus of this DVD. This title includes a) the behavior of minorities as interpreted by mainstream culture (from the perspective of the minority) and b) how the minority interprets mainstream behavior, and c) specific suggestions for majority interaction in minority communities

#### Race and Ethnicity and the Larger Community:

The manner in which one's ethnic/racial identity is related to one's identity as an American or Iowa citizen is the focus of this DVD. The experience of being a minority person and living within and or around the fringes of the mainstream is investigated. What is this experience like?

#### Experiencing Discrimination:

The experience of racism/discrimination and its nature and frequency in Iowa - the psychological and social challenges of being a minority person (from their perspective) is investigated.

#### GENERAL EXPECTATIONS:

1. Work will be completed in a timely manner. Late work will not be accepted, or grades will be significantly reduced at the discretion of the professor.
2. Participation: you are expected to attend class and to participate in discussions.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION:

1. Class Discussion & Attendance will be heavily weighted in the course grade.
2. Classroom Interview & Development of questions:  
Students will be asked to watch current videotaped interview. They will then develop other interview questions subsequent to the watching. The interviewee will attend class and students will jointly interview the interviewee.

3. Service Learning Field Experience to be developed with the use of SUSI
4. Paper Assignment(s):  
This course can be taught with a larger 10 to 15 paper to make connections between theory and experiential learning or several short papers could be assigned over the various sections of the course. Oral paper presentations will be given to the class on Week 14 & 15.
5. Final Exam – Reflection Reports

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Understanding Urban Anthropology, Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations; SUSI project

- a. *American Ethnicity*: Preface & Chap. 1
- b. *Theorizing the City*: Introduction
- c. SUSI's Research Documentation of Des Moines demographics
- d. Explanation of SUSI Service Learning Project

Week 2: Theories of Ethnic Relations, Historical Core of Anglo-Saxon, the New Urban Segregation

- a. *American Ethnicity*: Chap. 2 & 3
- b. *Theorizing the City*: Chap. 3
- c. Selected readings

Week 3: White Ethnic Americas, White Privilege

- a. *American Ethnicity*: Chap. 4
- b. *Theorizing the City*: Chap. 3
- c. Selected readings on White Privilege
- d. Videotape of Alex Piedros on White Privilege

Week 4: African Americans in the Urban Area

- a. *American Ethnicity*: Chap. 5
- b. Selected readings
- c. Videotapes from SUSI project

Week 5: African Americans in the Urban Area

- a. *Theorizing the City*: Chap. 1 & 2
- b. Selected readings
- c. Videotapes from SUSI project

Week 6: Africans in the Urban Area

- a. New immigrant groups in Des Moines
- b. *Theorizing the City*: Chap. 9
- c. Guest speaker
- d. SUSI statistics

Week 7: Latinos in the Urban Area

- a. *American Ethnicity*: Chap. 7
- b. Selected readings
- c. Videotapes from SUSI project

Week 8: Latinos in the Urban Area, Global Perspective of Urban Anthropology

- a. *Theorizing the City*: Chap. 4
- b. Selected readings
- c. Videotapes from SUSI project
- d. Guest Lecturer (students will interview)

Week 8: Native Americans in the Urban Area, Displacement from Indian Reservations, Landscape

- a. *American Ethnicity*: Chap. 6
- b. *Theorizing the City*: Chap. 5
- c. Selected readings

Week 9: Asian and Pacific Island Americans in the Urban Area

- a. *American Ethnicity*: Chap. 8
- b. Research the diversity of Asians in Des Moines SUSI area

Week 10: Asian and Pacific Island Americans in the Urban Area, Divergent Economies

- a. *Theorizing the City*: Chap. 6 & 7
- b. Guest Lecturer

Week 11: Religious groups in the Urban Area, The Modernist City

- a. Selected readings on particular issues of working with religiously diverse residents
- b. Jews, Muslims, Christians, Interfaith work in Des Moines
- c. *Theorizing the City*: Chap. 8
- d. Guest Lecturer

Week 12: Arab Americans, Revitalization of Urban Areas, Policy Making for Urban Areas

- a. *American Ethnicity*: Chap. 9
- b. *Theorizing the City*: Chap. 10 & 11

Week 13: The Future of Ethnicity in Urban America, Spatial and Social Boundaries

- a. *American Ethnicity*: Chap. 10
- b. *Theorizing the City*: Chap 12

Week 14 and 15: Class presentations on research, Reflections on Service Learning

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<sup>11</sup> See “Needs Analysis of the Des Moines River Bend Neighborhood, Fred Jones and Omar Padilla, Simpson Urban Studies Institute, January 2009. The data reported comes originally from The Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC) analysis of 2000 Census Data for the River Bend Neighborhood. The neighborhood accounts for approximately 2% of Des Moines population.