

AMST 43102
Fall 2008
TH 2:00-3:15
140 DeBartolo Hall

CONFRONTING HOMELESSNESS IN THE U.S.

Instructor: Benedict Giamo
Dept. of American Studies
168 Decio Hall (631-7142)
Hours: TH 3:30-4:30 (or by appointment)

Course Description

The purpose of this interdisciplinary seminar is to examine the conditions of extreme poverty and homelessness within the broader context of American culture and society. In order to confront the nature of these conditions, this seminar will draw upon insights from literature, history, documentary nonfiction, and the social sciences. We will focus on the degree of permanence and change in our approach to both traditional and contemporary forms of the social problem. In addition, the causes of extreme poverty and homelessness will be explored, as well as the various cultural representations that work to organize social perceptions of the situation.

There will be an experiential or community service learning dimension to the seminar as well. All students are required to make at least 10 weekly visits to the Center for the Homeless in South Bend (30 hours), and complete a systematic documentary journal.

Required Books:

B. Giamo & J. Grunberg. Beyond Homelessness.
C. Jencks. The Homeless.
W. Kennedy. Ironweed.
E. Liebow. Tell Them Who I Am.
J. Riis. How the Other Half Lives.

Course Packet

On Reserve:

R. Hunter. Poverty.

Responsibilities & Evaluation

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following components:

20% Participation (includes attendance & in-class participation)

25% Midterm Exam

30% Fieldwork & Documentary Journal

25% Final Exam

Guidelines

Attendance Policy:

Since classroom experience and participation are vital to this course, I expect regular and timely attendance. To allow for flexibility, extenuating circumstances will be considered.

Lateness:

Late papers and assignments will be assessed grade penalties.

Conferences:

During the semester, I will be happy to schedule individual conferences with you to discuss relevant issues concerning course content, readings, fieldwork, papers, etc.

Academic Code of Honor:

It is understood that you will honor your pledge to the Academic Code of Honor. This pledge shall be binding.

Center For the Homeless Orientation Sessions (meet in lobby of Center: 813 S. Michigan St., South Bend, IN, 282-8700. Contact person–Peter Lombardo, Chief Programming Officer, ext. 344).

Thursday, August 28th, 6-7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 10th, 6-7:30 p.m.

Thursday, September 11th, 6-7:30 p.m.

Note re. weekly fieldwork: Select a three-hour shift between Sunday & Thursday, 4-9:30 p.m.

- August 26 Introduction
- 28 Part 1: Urban Poverty & Homelessness in the Late 19th Century
 Documentary Expression in the 1890s
 Read: Riis, How the Other Half Lives, Intro & Chs. 1-5.
- Sept. 2 Documentary Expression (cont.)
 Read: Riis, How the Other Half Lives, Chs. 7-10, 21, 23-25.
- 4 The "Realism" of William Dean Howells
 Read: Course Packet–Howells, "Tribulations of a Cheerful Giver" and "Midnight Platoon" (from Impressions & Experiences and Life & Literature).
- 9 Critical Realism: Stephen Crane's Bowery Sketches
 Read: Course Packet–Stallman & Hagemann, eds., The New York City Sketches of Stephen Crane ("The Men in the Storm," "An Experiment in Misery," and "An Experiment in Luxury").
 *****Fieldwork/Community Service Learning Begins*****
- 11 The Progressives
 Read on Reserve: Robert Hunter, Poverty (Ch. 1 & Conclusion).
- 16 Discussion: Fieldwork & Method
 Read: Liebow, Tell Them Who I Am, Appendix B & E.
 Guest: Peter Lombardo, Chief Programming Officer, Center For the Homeless
- Sept. 18 Part 2: Down & Out in the Great Depression and

Postwar Society

Literature & Society

Read: Kennedy, Ironweed, Chs. 1-4.

23 Literature & Society

Read: Kennedy, Ironweed, Chs. 5-7.

Read: Course Packet--Crouse, "The Homeless Transient in the Great Depression."

25 Documentary Expression in the 1950s: Skid Row

View (in-class): Lionel Rogosin's "On the Bowery."

Read: Course Packet--Jackson, "The Bowery," (from Beard, ed., On Being Homeless: Historical Perspectives, pp. 69-79).

30 Documentary Expression (cont.)

Discuss Rogosin's documentary film.

(In-class) Giamo, "Rock Bottom" (The Grid of New York).

Oct. 2 Comparing Classic and Contemporary Homelessness

Read: Course Packet--Rossi, Down & Out in America, Ch.2.

7 Classic and Contemporary Homelessness

Listen to (in-class): "The Sunshine Hotel"

9 Discussion of Fieldwork/Community Service Learning

14 Review Session

*****Midterm Exam Due*****

16 No Class (Annual American Studies Conference)

October 18-26 Midsemester Break

- 28 Part 3: Contemporary Homelessness
Social Conditions and Forces
Read: Intro & Rossi Interview in Beyond Homelessness.
- 30 Social Conditions & Forces (cont.)
Read: Jencks, The Homeless, Chs. 3-6.
- Nov. 4 Social Conditions & Forces (cont.)
Read: Jencks, The Homeless, Chs. 7-8, 10-11.
- 6 The Public Interest
Read: Dumpson & Pardes Interviews in Beyond Homelessness.
- 11 Social Advocacy
Read: McGeady & Dukes Interviews in Beyond Homelessness.
- 13 The Shapes of Social Conflict
Read: Kosinski and Lifton Interviews in Beyond Homelessness.
- 18 Homeless Women
Read: Liebow, Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women,
Preface, Intro, and Part One.
- 20 Homeless Women (cont.)
Read: Liebow, Tell Them Who I Am, Part Two.
- November 25 Discussion of Fieldwork/Community Service Learning
*****Fieldwork/Community Service Learning Completed*****

26-30 Thanksgiving Holiday

Dec. 2 Student Fieldwork/Community Service Learning Reports

4 Student Fieldwork/Community Service Learning Reports

9 Student Fieldwork/Community Service Learning Reports

11 Concluding Thoughts

*****Documentary Journals Due*****

15-19 Final Exams

