Public Service Scholars Program – Spring 2009

IU 280: Public Scholarship, Social Change and Justice in a Global Context

Spring 2009 3 credits

Description:

The IU 280 course is designed to engage students in knowledge building and critical thinking related to the concept of public scholarship and how action-oriented research can be linked to strategies for effecting social change and advancing social justice in diverse contexts (global to local; multicultural; economic, political, and societal spheres).

Course texts – including readings, films, case studies, and guest speaker presentations - will provide students with the opportunity to explore how locally-situated citizens from across the globe have engaged in diverse activities promoting social change and resistance against oppression, the meanings these activities and practices hold for them, and the larger cultural, social, and politico-economic context in which such activities are developed, carried out, and often resisted. A central task for students is to better understand how citizen movements, on a global scale, are connected to and shaped by macro-forces (political, economic, cultural, social, historical processes) and the ways in which interactions across national/cultural systems may support or complicate the promise of broad based campaigns advancing social justice, equal opportunity, and anti-discrimination. Students’ understanding of these processes will be assessed in the written reflection assignments (periodic papers and the final integrative paper) and in class discussions.

At the same time, students will be introduced to case studies in which civic leaders and public scholars have entered coalitions and solidarity networks with others across lines of social, political, and cultural difference. Public scholarship case studies will provide students with models of action-oriented scholarship that has been done with (not on) diverse communities. These case studies offer much-needed success stories of collective efforts to equalize opportunity, create corporate and environmental accountability, and fight against conditions of oppression both in the United States and abroad.

IU 280 will explore such ideas as the role of the university and research in social change, the influence of academic scholarship and public scholarship on local, national, and global social problems, and the nature of the human condition on a global scale. These discussions provide the larger framework and context for helping you imagine how to produce your own scholarship as a form of public service. Written assignments and class discussions will ask students to engage with the challenges and ethical dilemmas inherent in the production of respected, scholarly work that is also responsive to the genuine needs and cultural identities of under-resourced communities in the US and abroad.

Themes to be explored in the course...

- What is Public Scholarship?
- Perspectives on the Social Responsibility of Intellectuals
- Models of Social Change: Re-Thinking the Service Economy and the “Non-Profit Industrial Complex”
- Economic Globalization and the Global Dimensions of Social Problems
- Social Justice in a Global Context
- Studying Injustice: Methodological and Epistemological Challenges to Action-oriented Scholarship
- Public Scholarship and Independent Media
- Environmentalism and Social Movements
- The State’s Role in the Management and (Re-)Production of Social Problem
- Models of Community-based Research
- Consumer Choice and Social Change
- Understanding Race and Gender Oppression in Global Context
- Envisioning Alternative Realities: The Work of Social Change and Social Justice Organizations