COURSE: Special Topics in Development: Seminar – Children and Poverty - Rashmita Mistry

Course Overview:
In this course we will examine applications of developmental science – theory and research to contemporary social issues that impact the healthy development and well-being of children and families. Specifically, the course examines the determinants and pathways by which poverty influences family and child functioning. Poverty is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. In this course, we will explore what it means to be poor in the U.S., and how poverty affects child development. Topics vary from year to year but include parenting and other dimensions of family functioning (e.g., adult relations, parents’ mental health), the context of low wage work, early childcare & education, neighbor and community characteristics, immigration, public attitudes and perception of the poor, intervention efforts, and social policies.

Assigned Reading:
A majority of the course readings are available online (through the UCLA library). Copies of nononline readings (i.e., book chapters) will be posted on the course website (https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/17W-EDUC256B-1). In addition, the following books are required reading for this class and are available at the UCLA bookstore and on Amazon.


Assignments:
All assignments must be completed to pass the class. Grading will be based on class participation, writing, and oral presentations. Both understanding and critical analysis of the course material are expected.

CLASS PARTICIPATION (40%)

This class is a seminar. Students are expected to participate in discussion. Informed analysis, dialogue and debate will form the foundation for learning of the course material. Please note the readings for this course are substantial—child poverty is a broad topic and challenging to cover in one quarter! Students are expected to read all of the assigned readings and come prepared to discuss them in class. Please plan accordingly. Attendance will be tracked; if you are unable to attend class, you need to notify me ahead of time. Unexcused absences will affect your final grade.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (60%)

Weekly Commentaries (25%) – 5 total: To facilitate discussion, students will submit weekly commentaries. The commentary should be up to 1 page MAX., and focus on synthesizing issues across the set of readings (include citations in text). Commentaries should not be used to ask clarification
questions, either substantive or methodological, which you are encouraged to raise in class. However, you are encouraged to constructively critique the assumptions, design, methods, and conclusions drawn in a particular study. The readings reflect multiple disciplinary perspectives, but are oriented toward a developmental science perspective and quantitative methods. We will discuss the implications of this in class.

Commentaries are due Friday at 12pm (noon) preceding the class. Commentaries should be written in Microsoft Word and included as attachments to an email to be sent to the instructor. Late submissions will not be read or distributed.

Students will be asked to submit at least one commentary every three weeks (Weeks 2-4; 5-7; 8-10). Sign-ups will be determined on the first day of class.

Research Paper (35%): The major paper assignment is a literature review of a topic focused on some aspect of low-income children’s well-being. This assignment is designed to increase your knowledge about an aspect of child poverty and to use this information to evaluate the adequacy of existing policies and programs designed to redress the problem. It involves two components:

1. A critical analysis of existing research on a topic. You can choose to expand upon one of the topics discussed in class, or select another topic related to child poverty. Be sure to include a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the existing research, the major theoretical perspective taken, methodological considerations, and directions for future research.

2. A critical discussion of the relevant social policies, programs, and practices addressing your topic and assessment of the policies, programs, and practices’ effectiveness. Be sure to include empirical evidence of the efficacy of policies and programs (i.e., if they have been evaluated) for improving family functioning and child outcomes.

3. Papers are to be written according to APA publications guidelines and should be a maximum of 15 pages in length (doubled spaced, 1” margins, minimum 12-point font), excluding references.

Timeline for paper completion & submission

- A PAPER COPY one-page description of your paper topic is due January 23 (Week 3).
- A PAPER COPY outline of your paper is due February 6th (Week 5).
- Round 1: A PAPER COPY Draft of your paper is due February 27th (Week 8). *
- Round 2: A PAPER COPY Draft of your paper is due March 6th (Week 9).*

*students will sign up to submit on one of these two days.

A PAPER COPY FINAL PAPER is due Thursday March 23rd by 3:00pm (Finals Week). Electronic copies will not be accepted.

SYLLABUS WK 1: JANUARY 9TH   INTRODUCTION & ORIENTATION


WK 2: JANUARY 15TH NO CLASS – MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

WK 3: JANUARY 23RD INCOME POVERTY & CHILD DEVELOPMENT ****ONE-PAGE TOPIC STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE****

Guest: Prof. Randall Akee (Public Policy)


(Continued next page)


WK 4: JANUARY 30TH EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Guest: Prof. Jennie Grammer (Education – Human Development & Psychology)


WK 5: FEBRUARY 6TH SOCIAL CLASS PERSPECTIVES ****OUTLINE OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE****


WK 6: FEBRUARY 13TH FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS PERSPECTIVES


WK 7: FEBRUARY 20TH   NO CLASS – PRESIDENT’S DAY

WK 8: FEBRUARY 27TH  EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & INTERVENTION **** ROUND 1: DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE****


WK 9: MARCH 6TH    EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY **** ROUND 2: DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE****


WK 10: MARCH 13TH  STIGMA, STEREOTYPES, & ATTRIBUTIONS


WK 11 (FINALS WEEK): MARCH 20TH  CONNECTING SCIENCE TO POLICY & PRACTICE

*CHOOSE ONE:

