

**APPLICATION FORM**

**2009-10 FUND FOR ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE DEVELOPMENT GRANT**

Please Type

TITLE PAGE

**Name:** Karen Koenig

**Position:** Assistant Professor of Religious Studies

**Campus Address:** 432 Boyle Hall

**Phone:** 403.2932

**Email:** Karen.koenig@snc.edu

**COURSE CATEGORY:** (Please check one)

New Course

Revised Course

**COURSE TITLE:** Catholic Social Teaching in Action: Poverty and Homelessness in Northeastern Wisconsin

**ABSTRACT OF COURSE OR BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY:** This course, which will be held during J-term 2011, will be an intense investigation into Catholic social teaching on poverty, the poor, and the marginalized. We will focus in particular on the problem of homelessness in Northeastern Wisconsin. Our academic and theological explorations will culminated with a week long volunteer internship at either the Warming Shelter of the Fox Valley, a homeless shelter program founded by St. Joseph Parish, Appleton, WI, or the Warming Shelter of St. John the Evangelist in Green Bay.

**HAVE YOU MADE APPLICATION TO THE SNC INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD, IF APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR PROJECT** (Please check one)

YES

NO

If yes, please attach your IRB application to this form, and, if available, a copy of the letter documenting the IRB approval of your project.

**INCLUSIVE DATES OF PROJECT OR ACTIVITY:** Jan 3-Jan 21 2011

**AMOUNT OF REQUEST:** Stipend request: \$2,000

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE ATTACH TYPED PROPOSAL**

**Academic Service Learning Course Development Grant Proposal**  
**Submitted to: The St. Norbert College Center for Service Learning**  
**By: Karen Park Koenig**  
**November 2, 2009**  
**Revised April 6, 2010**

**2. Narrative**

A) Description of the Course:

I have applied for this grant in order to develop a new course in the Religious Studies discipline which will offer an exploration of the links between poverty and homelessness in our community. The course will be designed as an intensive three-week seminar to be held during the J-term 2011.

Academic Service Learning will be incorporated into the course by working with two diocesan-affiliated homeless shelters in our region: the Warming Shelter of the Fox Cities in Appleton and/or the Warming Shelter of St. John the Evangelist Church in Green Bay. The course will integrate the theological and theoretical dimensions of poverty and homelessness with a direct volunteer role within these agencies. As we serve meals, distribute supplies and provide companionship we will put our understanding of Catholic social justice into action.

The course will meet for three hours every day for the first week and a half of the term. During this time we will be reading a number of works on Catholic social teaching and discussing them in seminar. Texts we may use include *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action* by Thomas Massaro, S.J. and *Lazarus at the Table: Catholics and Social Justice* by Bernard F. Evans. Our readings will also focus on the links between poverty and homelessness in America from theological, sociological and historical perspectives.

During the second week we will meet with the director(s) of the shelters to learn about their programs and services, gain insight about the populations served, and explore reasons for chronic homelessness in northeastern Wisconsin. During this week we will also receive training from the shelter employees about the work we will be doing with the homeless during the final week of class.

The third week of class will be spent working in shifts at the shelter(s). Each member of the class will take at least three (3) 4-hour shifts during this final week. The exact schedule for these shifts will depend on the needs of community partners with whom we will be working. We will also meet as a class at least twice during this week to reflect on and process our service learning experiences.

The participants in the course will be required to attend one meeting during the fall semester 2010 to discuss expectations and responsibilities and will also participate in a panel discussion/presentation about the course during the spring semester 2011. These requirements will be included in the course description

The 3 criteria of ASL as identified in the Faculty Handbook of ASL will be met in the following ways:

(1) Relevant and Meaningful Service with the Community:

Homelessness is a chronic problem in both the Fox Cities and in Green Bay. During the bitterly cold winter months, this problem becomes particularly acute. The service provided by the students directly and meaningfully addresses this problem.

(2) Enhanced Academic Learning:

This course will be taking a deeply theological approach to the issue, exploring homelessness from the perspective of Catholic teaching on social justice, especially for the most marginalized members of society. The academic component will be enhanced by the participation of the homeless shelters themselves, which are programs of the Green Bay archdiocese and operate from a complementary Catholic theological framework.

(3) Purposeful Civic Learning:

It is also my intention, through the inclusion of material on the sociological and historical forces contributing to homelessness, that the students will come to a deeper understanding of this complex issue and its root causes in poverty, moving beyond the stereotypes of homeless people as simply lazy and worthless. This class will ideally help the students engage with their civic responsibilities as thoughtful adult members of society, and will encourage them to think about this issue from a broad range of perspectives, something they will take with them in the future.

B) Methodology:

I will develop this course by working with the directors of the shelters and with other local homelessness agencies including Mary Kelly, the Director of St. John the Evangelist Warming Shelter in Green Bay, Fr. Guy Blair, the pastor of St. John the Evangelist, Deb Cronmiller Executive Director of the Emergency Shelter of the Fox Cities and Brad Vivoda, Executive Director of the Fox Cities Warming Shelter to discuss training of both myself and the students for this experience. Final decisions about service commitments in Green Bay and/or Appleton will be made based on these meetings and available transportation for the students.

C) Significance of the Course:

This course is original. I believe it will contribute directly to the curriculum in the areas of Religious Studies, Sociology and Social Work, and Peace Studies. I have spoken with my colleagues in Religious Studies as well as Bob Pyne, Director of the Peace and Justice Center and Cheryl Carpenter-Siegel of the Sociology department and all have expressed

support for the class. The service learning component will allow the students to make the connection between what they read about homelessness and poverty, and the actual lived experience of homeless persons in the community. My professional duties as a professor of Religious Studies and Theology will be enhanced as I continue to make the connection between Theological History, Catholic Social Theory, and lived practice in an academic setting.

D) Applicability:

As a teacher/scholar I have always operated from the strong belief that theology cannot be something that exists only as part of the written word. Theology must be experienced through literature, art, liturgy, and of course through community engagement. The subject of theological inquiry, God, is far too complex to be understood through only one medium. I look forward to the opportunity to take students out of the lecture hall or seminar room, and move them beyond the written page, in order to engage physically with the experiences of the extremely marginalized. This will contribute to a deepening of the curriculum in Religious Studies, which currently offers no such opportunities. It will also allow me, as a teacher-scholar, to more fully explore the theological dimensions of service work and will deepen my own understanding of my role as a historian and theologian in a Catholic Norbertine setting.

E) Need:

I will not be receiving any other funding to develop this course. The stipend will assist me to make the connections with the directors of the shelter, and develop the syllabus over the summer months.

F) Summer Grant History:

This is my second year on the faculty of St. Norbert College. This is therefore the first time I have requested summer program development support.

G) Method of Evaluation:

In addition to the completion of the course and the SOOTs, students will complete a detailed course evaluation designed by me in cooperation with the CCSL, which will ascertain the students' understandings about the success of the course. I will also ask the students to be part of a panel presentation during the Spring Semester 2011 in order to share our experiences with the wider campus community.

H) N/a

I) PARE Model:

In developing the course I will follow the PARE model as described on the CCSL website. For example, as preparation, I intend not only to meet with leaders in the homeless services community myself over the summer, but to arrange for several meetings and trainings during the latter part of the Fall semester 2010 which will include the students already registered for the J-term course. We will incorporate some of the reflection materials during our class meetings to be held during the last week of class in conjunction with our service work. I will also work with the CCSL to disseminate

information about the course and present our experiences to the SNC campus community. These pre and post-class meetings will be part of the course description so that students who register for the course will be aware of these additional expectations.

Goals for the future of this course:

Should the development of this course be funded, I intend to offer it every other year, depending on interest. I also hope, in the future, to offer a version of this course which would explore the issues of homelessness in the Southwestern United States, in conjunction with the St. Norbert Priory in Albuquerque. The course may also eventually become part of a semester-long service learning course on poverty and marginalization in northeastern Wisconsin.

### **3. Timetable**

*Early Spring 2010:* I will make contact with the directors of the warming shelters and arrange meetings to take place either late in the spring or early in the summer so that the dates for the trainings and service projects are set. Because I have extensive ties to the human services community in the Fox Cities, through my own volunteer work at the Fox Cities Warming Shelter, and through my husband's employment as a Case Manager for the Emergency Shelter of the Fox Cities, much of this groundwork has already been laid. Contact with the directors of the Green Bay shelters will be made during the summer months.

(1-2 months)

*Summer 2010:* I will make final decisions about what texts to use, work out the details of the syllabus and class requirements and will meet with the directors of the shelters to finalize plans and discuss training requirements for myself and the students. I will also attend one seminar on poverty and homelessness offered by the Center for Social Innovation or the Homeless Resource Center. The schedules for these events are not yet available but they are frequently held at UW Stevens Point or UW Milwaukee. (1-2 months)

*Early Fall 2010* With the help of the RS department and the CCSL I will publicize the course and will also attempt to meet with any interested students to discuss the class prior to their registration. Books will be ordered and all final arrangements will be made (1-2 months)

*Late Fall 2010* I will meet again with the directors of the shelter in order to finalize any arrangements. If students already registered for the course wish to attend these meetings, they will be welcomed when appropriate ( 1 month)

*J-term 2011* Course will be taught from Jan 2-Jan 21 (3 weeks)

*Spring term 2011* I will offer a presentation of our experience to the campus community. Students who participated in the course will also contribute to this presentation.

**4. Budget of expenses**

Expenses included in stipend
Books
Summer Seminar/Training