**CAS 399**  
**Special Topics: Perceptions of Poverty in America**  
**SPRING 2011 SYLLABUS**

### Instructors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Role</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norma-May Isakow</td>
<td>Director, Office for Service Learning</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nmisakow@uab.edu">nmisakow@uab.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristina Scott</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kscott@alabamapoverty.org">kscott@alabamapoverty.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Teaching Assistant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas C. McLemore</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tmclemore@alabamapoverty.org">tmclemore@alabamapoverty.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama Possible</td>
<td>939-1408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SaveFirst Coordinator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Palmer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hannahpalmer5@gmail.com">hannahpalmer5@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Alabama</td>
<td>920-251-2484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Blueprints College Access Coordinator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Selles</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hselles@alabamapoverty.org">hselles@alabamapoverty.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Alabama</td>
<td>383-6972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Office hours:

Flexible by appointment

### 1. Course Number:

CAS 399

### Course Title:

Special Topics: Perceptions of Poverty in America

### Credit Hours:

Three credit hours

### Class Time:

Wednesday from 2:00 – 3:50 p.m. in addition to attending training and volunteering at service sites

### Location:

Heritage Hall Room 549

### 2. Text:

Assigned readings to be announced and posted on course website

### 3. Service-Learning:

Service-learning is a method of learning that integrates academic work with community service. Students learn to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to “real life” by getting hands-on experience in the community. Service-learning benefits students by enhancing their understanding of concepts learned in the classroom, promoting personal identity, fostering the development of civic responsibility, and giving them the opportunity to work with diverse populations in a “real world” setting. The community
partners benefit from the relationships formed and the services students contribute in response to community needs.

4. **Course Description:**
This service-learning course engages students in critical analysis of perceptions and policies about poverty in the United States while providing essential services to members of our local community. Academic coursework will focus on the meanings, measures and demographics of poverty; causes of short- and long-term poverty; the intersections of race, gender, immigration status and family structure with social stratification, educational attainment, equal opportunity, and culture; work and economic disparities; and how federal, state and community-based policies impact poverty levels in the United States.

In addition to classroom discussions, readings and written assignments, students will participate in an initiative of their choice which addresses identified needs of low-income individuals in the Birmingham area. Students may be involved in the SaveFirst Initiative, which trains students to offer free tax preparation services to low-income individuals who are eligible for an Earned Income Tax Credit refund. Students will be trained to complete simple tax returns and then use this expertise to serve low-income individuals at sites located within lower-income Birmingham neighborhoods.

Alternatively students may be involved in the Blueprints College Access Initiative to create a college-positive culture for high school students in lower-income Birmingham schools. Students will be trained and will conduct a series of in-classroom workshops to present the possibility of high school students attending college, equip them with necessary knowledge and skills, and facilitate a visit to the UAB campus.

A student may, with pre-approval from the Instructors, be involved with another course-related service initiative of the student’s choice that will satisfy the service component of the course.

5. **Course Requirements:**
The course will meet on Wednesday afternoons from 2:00-3:50 p.m. for presentations, discussion of assigned readings and review of service work.

Students working with SaveFirst will complete 20 hours of service (four hours per week) and one full Saturday during the five weeks that the SaveFirst Initiative operates in Birmingham. A 6-hour training session and an IRS certification test are required prior to beginning the service work. Students must be certified by passing the IRS test to complete tax returns.

Students working with the Blueprints College Access Initiative will conduct six in-class workshops at Woodlawn High School, 5620 1st Avenue North, Birmingham, facilitate a visit to the UAB campus, and participate in other special events for a total of 20 hours of service over the course of the semester. Before participating in the classroom sessions, students must complete a 6-hour training session.

A student may, subject to the pre-approval of Course Instructors, meet the service-learning component of the course by working with an alternative service initiative/community
partner provided that the Instructors are satisfied that the service-learning experience will satisfy course requirements and enable the student to meet course learning objectives.

All readings are available at the Blackboard course website accessible through BlazerNet via http://blazernet.uab.edu.

6. **Course Objectives:**
   A. Develop an understanding of a spectrum of socio-economic issues relating to poverty in the United States;
   B. Work with Impact Alabama’s Save First Initiative to provide essential tax preparation services to members of our local community, with Alabama Possible’s Blueprints College Access Program to create college-positive culture in Woodlawn High School, or with another pre-approved initiative of the student’s own choice;
   C. Develop critical and analytical thinking skills regarding federal and state policies toward working families; and
   D. Explore strategies to address poverty in the United States.

7. **Expectations.**
   Students are expected to be actively engaged in the learning process, in class and in the community. Class participation is essential.

   Students are required to demonstrate mutual respect and consideration of others, including providing others time to speak and learn and allowing all students an opportunity to join the discussion.

   Students will be evaluated on their ability to relate course readings to class discussions and their work with their Community Partner. Class discussions, structured reflections and final paper should demonstrate analytical thinking and use of university and community resources.

8. **Course Blackboard Vista.** The course website will serve as an on-line repository for this course and will be used to post class assignments, course readings and other materials. Students will also submit two structured reflections and a final paper through the course website. Be sure to bookmark the Vista login page: www.uab.edu/academiccourses.
   Resources for use of Blackboard Vista are available on the course website. If you have any problems, contact AskIT at 996-5555

9. **Assigned Readings:** Throughout the semester you will be assigned readings. Since there is no textbook assigned to this class, the readings posted on the course website serve as the text for this course. **You are expected to have done the assigned reading and be prepared to discuss the reading when you come to class.**

10. **Weekly Structured Reflections:** You will be required to submit eleven weekly structured reflections online. These are due by Monday at midnight before and should be submitted through the course website. Each structured reflection should be roughly two pages (12 pt font, 1” margins and double-spaced) and each will count for 3 percentage points toward the 33 percentage points available toward your final grade. Each structured reflection should NOT be a summary of the reading assignment for the week. Rather, to earn the full 3
points, a student must demonstrate that he or she has a clear understanding and has given thought to the topic(s) addressed in the reflection in addition to solid writing, careful spelling and good grammar. Once you have started your volunteering, the structured reflection prompts will also include reference to your service-learning experience. **Late structured reflections will not receive a grade.**

11. Grading Procedure

The following scale will determine grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Category</strong></th>
<th><strong>Weight</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation in discussion showing evidence that you’ve done the assigned reading</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training, Testing (where applicable) and Service with Community Partner Service Sites</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Structured Reflections on Blackboard</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Critical Thinking Paper and Presentation</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

- A = 90 – 100%
- B = 80 – 89.9%
- C = 70 – 79.0%
- D = 60 – 69.9%
- F = 0 – 59.9%

12. **SaveFirst Program Training, Testing and Volunteering**

**Training:** All students who choose to do the SaveFirst Initiative are required must complete both an A and B section of the Basic training. Students need to attend two three-hour training sessions: an “A” session and a “B” session, in that order. Students need to email Hannah Palmer [hannahpalmer5@gmail.com](mailto:hannahpalmer5@gmail.com) their preferred training dates to reserve a seat in the training. Students should mention that they are enrolled in this course so that they receive priority if training sessions start getting large. They can attend training sessions at Birmingham-Southern or UAB, and, again, must sign up for BOTH an A and a B training session to get the full six hours – A before B.

Trainings are scheduled as follows:

- **Saturday, January 8; 9am-4pm**; Basic A and B UAB HHB 402
- **Monday, January 10; 6-9pm**; Basic A UAB HHB 432
- **Tuesday, January 11; 6-9pm**; Basic B UAB HHB 432
- **Wednesday, January 12; 9am-noon**; Basic A, Birmingham-Southern, Harbert 301
- **Thursday January 13; 9am – noon**; Basic B Birmingham Southern Harbert 310
- **Tuesday, January 25; 6:30 – 9:30 pm**; Basic A, UAB HHB 432
- **Wednesday, January 26; 6:30-9:30 p.m.;** Basic B, UAB HHB 432
**Testing:** Students will receive more information about the IRS certification test at the training. They may complete the test on their own or come to the computer lab any time from 2-6pm on Tuesday, January 18, in HHB 432 when a SaveFirst staff member will be there to answer any questions while they take the test.

**Volunteering:** SaveFirst sites in Birmingham will officially open on Martin Luther King Day (January 17), but most SaveFirst volunteers will begin the following Monday (January 24). At least one Birmingham site will remain open through Saturday, March 5. Students will be asked, in addition to doing any required training and testing, to volunteer four hours per week from January 23-February 25, 2011, and one full-day Saturday during that same time period. (If there is some unavoidable conflict with this volunteer schedule, we can normally work with them to make sure they get the appropriate number of hours). Students are responsible for their own transportation, so if they do not have a car, they will need to try and partner with someone else who does and make sure the site coordinator knows to schedule them at the same times. At the training for each site, students will fill out an availability form and they will be assigned to the same volunteer hours each week.

Students are responsible for their own transportation, so if they do not have a car, they will need to try and partner with someone else who does

13. **Blueprints College Access Initiative Training and Volunteering**

**Training:** All students who choose to do the Blueprints College Access Initiative to foster a college-positive culture among freshmen at Woodlawn High School are required to complete training to be held on Saturday, January 15 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Southside Baptist Church, 1016 19th Street S, Birmingham.

**Background check:** Woodlawn High School, the community partner for the initiative, requires all volunteers, including UAB students, to undergo a local background check through the Birmingham police department before commencing the Blueprints College Access Initiative workshops at Woodlawn. This background check is to see if the person being checked has any pending charges or felony convictions within the City of Birmingham. Each student submitting to the check needs to present his or her driver’s license and original Social Security card to the Birmingham Police Department at 1710 1st Avenue North, Birmingham (between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday). The process takes 15 – 20 minutes and requires payment of $10 cash per background check. UAB Office for Service Learning will reimburse students for the background check. Students who satisfy the background check will immediately receive a letter to this effect from the Police Department and will need to bring the letter to class no later than Wed. January 19, 2011.

**Volunteering:** Students will be asked, in addition to doing the required training, to prepare for and participate in a series of six weekly tutoring/mentoring sessions with freshman students at Woodlawn High School from January 24-March 10, 2011. The session will take place on Mondays from 1:25-2:05 pm. Students should plan to be at Woodlawn High School from **12:45-2:30 p.m.** on each day on which a session is scheduled. In addition, UAB students will be required to attend an initial meeting with Woodlawn parents and students to be arranged in the week of January 17 to discuss the Blueprints College Access Initiative. Following Woodlawn High School’s Spring break, UAB students will host Woodlawn
Students on a field trip to UAB and a final celebration for Woodlawn High School participants and their parents.

Students are responsible for their own transportation, so if they do not have a car, they will need to try and partner with someone else who does. On the first day of class, students will fill out an availability form so that it can be determined what day of the week the mentoring sessions will take place at Woodlawn High School during the Freshman Activities Period.

13. Course Policies

A. Policy on Academic Misconduct: Students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct as found in the UAB Directions. All acts of dishonesty in any work constitute misconduct, including cheating and plagiarism.

B. Academic Accommodations: Any student wishing to request academic accommodations due to a disability need to set an appointment with the instructor and present an accommodation memo. Contact information for Disability Support Services: 516 Hill University Center; Phone: 934-4205; Web: www.uab.edu/dss; e-mail: dss@uab.edu.

C. Attendance is required. This means that students are expected to be present at each scheduled meeting of the course, Service-Learning Training, Testing and Volunteer Sites.

D. Policy on Late Work: Students are expected to turn in all assignments on time. Points will be deducted for late submission.

E. Cell phones are to be TURNED OFF during class and at Service-Learning Training, Testing and Volunteer Sites.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Guest Speakers</th>
<th>Out of Class Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1/5  | **Introduction to Course and Community Partners; Views of Poverty in History**  
**Guest Speaker:** Impact Alabama’s Stephen Black, President/Founder and Blueprints Founder Nicole Bohannon | Introduction to SaveFirst and Blueprints College Access Initiatives |
| 1/12 | **What is Poverty?: Meaning and Measures**  
**Reading:**  
| 1/19 | **Who is Poor?: Demographics of Poverty**  
**Reading:**  
- Alabama Poverty Project 2010 Data Sheet | **SaveFirst:** complete the IRS Certification Test on Tuesday January 18 on your own or in the Computer Lab from 1-5 p.m. when a SaveFirst staff member will be present to answer any questions  
**Blueprints:** attend initial meeting with Woodlawn High School Students and Parents on date TBD |
| 1/26 | **Causes of Poverty: Situational vs. Systemic**  
**Reading:**  
**Guest Speaker:** Dr. Kevin Higgs, Senior Pastor, Church of the Reconciler | **SaveFirst Tax Prep Week 1**  
**Blueprints Mentoring Week 1** |
| 2/2  | **Work and Economic Disparities**  
**Reading:**  
**Blueprints Mentoring Week 2** |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Guest Speakers</th>
<th>Out of Class Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2/9  | **Race and Educational Disparities**  
  Reading:  
  **Guest Speaker:** Dr. Robert Jefferson, Director of African American Studies, UAB College of Arts & Sciences | SaveFirst Tax Prep Week 3  
 Blueprints Mentoring Week 3 |
| 2/16 | **Immigration and Barriers to Opportunity**  
  Readings:  
 Blueprints Mentoring Week 4 |
| 2/23 | **Gender, Family Structure and Culture**  
  Readings:  
 Blueprints Mentoring Week 5 |
| 3/2  | **No regular class:**  
  Class participation in National College Health Assessment Survey (Department of Human Studies and Students Affairs) | SaveFirst Tax Prep Week 6  
 Blueprints Mentoring Week 6 |
| 3/9  | **How State Public Policy Impacts Poverty**  
  *It’s a Thick Book* (ACCR video)  
  Readings:  
<p>| 3/16 | <strong>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</strong> |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Guest Speakers</th>
<th>Out of Class Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3/23 | **How Federal Public Policy Impacts Poverty**  
Readings:  
**Guest Speaker:** Webb Lyons, Greater Birmingham Community Foundation | Blueprints UAB Students host Woodlawn high school students and parents at tour and celebration |
| 3/30 | **Social Change and Community Development**  
Readings:  
| 4/6  | **Reflection and Integration**  
**Guest Speakers:** Sarah Louise Smith, Executive Director, Impact Alabama; Hannah Selles, AmeriCorps VISTA, Alabama Poverty Project | |
| 4/13 | **Final Class – Student Presentations of Points from Final Critical Thinking Paper**  
*Final Paper Due on Blackboard on 4/11* | |

***CALENDAR AND COURSE CONTENT ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE DURING THE SEMESTER AT THE DISCRETION OF INSTRUCTORS***