Course Rationale:
A conventional academic course on poverty exposes you to the literature on the issues. In this course, we use experience and reflection on that experience to understand the poverty in Northwestern's backyard. National Student Partnerships (NSP), a student-run, non-profit organization, mobilizes students to tackle such local poverty issues. Students will use NSP as a primary instrument to understand these issues first-hand. In addition, literature and speakers will further allow students to engage in learning about poverty and inequality in Evanston and the surrounding community. Once armed with the knowledge and skills to understand these issues, students will be able to create real change now and in the future.

Course Description:
This course counts for an elective credit and is graded on a pass or no-pass basis. It is open to all students on campus and provides an introduction to local poverty and inequality. This course will take a hands-on approach, rather than focusing on the historical or theoretical aspects of these issues, which are already offered in other university courses. Students will be expected to volunteer at National Student Partnerships. Using National Student Partnerships as a vehicle to explore various local and national issues, students will analyze poverty from the perspective of low income individuals. Additional materials, including readings, speakers and films, will complement the students' field work. Furthermore, students are required to participate in weekly discussions, post online Blackboard reactions, and complete a mandatory final project.

Final Project:
Students will form teams and go out into the local community to assess how Chicago and Evanston deals with a specific issue in the social service world. Possible examples include topics covered in the lesson plan (job market, welfare, housing, legal issues) or a team-chosen topic. Students will visit where clients obtain services (relevant to their topic) and examine how the local organizations are run: the paperwork involved, the kinds of people that come in (demographics), how well the organizations work with clients, etc. They must also interview clients and caseworkers to get an affected individual's perspective on the successes and failures of the local community's endeavors. In other words, the student will perform research on an aspect of poverty and thoughtfully assess how Evanston and Chicago handle the problem. Students will write a paper about their findings and present their work the last week of class.

This course meets Tuesday and Thursday from 4:00-5:20. Although there are no prerequisites for this course, we are interested in some basic information about you. Please fill out this brief application and return to the SESP office (1st floor on Annenberg) by Wednesday, February 25th.