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Umpqua Community College
A student publication

HOME	COMMUNITY	ENTERTAINMENT	PAST ISSUES
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Wednesday, February 13, 2013

Free class to focus on poverty barriers to graduation

By Cindy McSperitt · *The Mainstream*

Published November 14, 2012

A free class called Bridges Out of Poverty is being offered winter term to students and staff as part of the campus initiative called Achieving the Dream which intends to help students overcome barriers to graduation.

The class will be held as an ongoing, open discussion focusing on the concepts in the book Bridges Out of Poverty by Ruby Payne. The book addresses poverty in America and the sometimes hidden rules associated with the different economic classes in our society.

The intention of the class is to “provoke thought on what students in poverty are dealing with and how community colleges can best support them,” said Caroline Hopkins, advising specialist for TRIO and facilitator for the Bridges Out of Poverty class.

Educational levels often fall along certain economic and cultural lines. Looking at ways to overcome this will be part of the ideas explored. “In America, it’s taboo to talk about class lines and distinctions,” said Hopkins, “but they are pervasive within our society.” Hopkins adds, “These are important discussions to have.”

The class offers students a way to share their personal experiences and viewpoints directly with staff. “It is an opportunity for students to represent themselves as we discuss what they’re going through and how best to support them,” said Hopkins.

Student input from these discussions may later be used to help formulate ideas about how best to implement ATD, said Hopkins.

“The whole program is geared toward student success,” said Freddy Gompf, ASUCC student body vice-president and ATD committee member. “It’s great that a class is being offered that involves getting as much student input as possible.”

Each week the class will cover one chapter of Payne’s book (each chapter is approximately 10 pages). According to Hopkins, the class is designed to require a minimal amount of preparation.

The class will be offered online through Angel, so students can participate at their convenience. There will also be monthly meetings in the Bistro for face to face discussions over coffee. Look for CRN 37591 when you register.

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