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Seminar: Europe Facing Diversity

European countries face diversity in all of its various forms and aspects. The U.S. also faces challenges related to a world that is becoming both closer and more diverse through globalization. What are the similarities and differences in the experience of European nations and the U.S. and what can we learn from each other? This seminar will explore these questions with the goals of understanding more fully our social environment and developing solutions to the problems we face.

1. Multiculturalism: Multiculturalism is the term used to describe the interactions of people from varying ethnic communities. In the U.S., multiculturalism centers on race ethnicity. Humans cannot really be divided into races, but the social construct of race has played an enormous role in American history and continues today to be a critical dividing line in the U.S. Legal Apartheid existed in the U.S. until the middle of the 20th century (1964) when it was finally abolished after a long and violent struggle. This lecture will discuss the concept of race ethnicity and trace its historical development in the U.S. We will then talk about recent developments, including the election of an African American president and the remaining racial ethnic inequality for most African Americans.

2. Social Class: Another form of diversity that plays a pivotal role in American society is social class. A powerful myth exists in the U.S. that Americans are nearly all middle class, but in fact, the largest economic gap in the history of humanity exists today in the U.S. Bill Gates represents one end of the spectrum, while increasing numbers of homeless people represent the other. This lecture will discuss the various ways of defining social class and the character of social class diversity in the U.S. We will then discuss the problem of creating political change in a nation where social class is invisible and therefore, only some social classes are represented within political institutions.

3. Gender inequity: Europe, and perhaps, especially Eastern European Countries, face the challenge of providing equal opportunities for educational and professional development for men and women. Creating a social environment which allows everyone to develop his or her own potential is a difficult and complex process, which touches on many aspects of society including stereotyped ideas, legislation, social care systems, and business practices. In the twentieth century, the U.S. was a leader in challenging gender inequity, but has recently fallen behind Europe and many African nations in the last decade. This lecture will begin by discussing the social construct of gender and then describe some of the areas of policy change in the U.S. that have been successful creating more gender equity, most notably in education and around the problem of violence against women. We will then look at some of the reasons the U.S. has fallen behind and explore some of the other areas of the world that are taking the lead on gender equity and gender mainstreaming especially in regard to political leadership.

4. International inequality: Perhaps the most striking area of diversity in social experience today is the difference among nations. At the same time that billions of people are living on one or two dollars a day, other nations are comprised of people who are mostly living on tens of thousands of dollars a year. International recession and global debt threaten to exacerbate these inequities. This lecture will explore the global gaps with a focus on the problem of HIV and ARVs (Anti-Retroviral medicines) as a moral, political, and economic dilemma that will require bridging the gaps from one nation to another.

When: March 16-20 2009, 17.00 Instytut Zachodni uL. Mostowa 27

Who: Lectures by Prof Judy Root-Aulette

Judy Aulette is a professor of sociology and women's studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She also is an adjunct professor at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town, South Africa where she teaches in the Social Work program in the summers. She is the recipient of two Fulbrights, one to teach at Adam Mickiewicz University and one to teach at the University of the Western Cape. Her publications focus on gender, families, and women's activism. Her most recent publications are *Gendered Worlds* (2008) for Oxford University Press and *Cape Verde Women and Globalization: the Politics of Gender, Culture and Resistance (2009)* for Palgrave MacMillan. She is currently conducting research on HIV education programs for women.

IMPORTANT:
Those interested in participating in the seminar should contact dr Hanna Mamzer at mamzer@amu.edu.pl