

2005 Campus Reading Program
Nickel & Dimed

Focused Discussion Opportunities
with SJSU Professors

- (1) Wednesday October 5**
(2) Wednesday November 2
(3) Thursday November 17
1:30 – 3 pm in ENG 189

Each reader experiences a book from a unique perspective, for example, some may have personal experience as a low-wage worker, others as employers of unskilled labor. Professors also bring a unique perspective based on their analytical training and research. The discussion sessions listed below promise to be exciting opportunities to consider different academic perspectives on the reading *Nickel and Dimed*. The SJSU professors on each program will share their perspectives based on their academic discipline and share current research on the particular topic. There will be time for questions and discussion with and among attendees.

The emphasis for each discussion is the book; you've read the book, so feel free to join these intellectual discussions that are designed to foster the tradition of higher education to stimulate your quest for knowledge and improve your critical thinking skills and provide you an opportunity to engage with some of the faculty at San José State.

(1) Economic and Social Policy Perspectives of *Nickel and Dimed*

Wednesday, October 5, 2005 from 1:30 – 3 pm in ENG 189

Lydia Ortega, Professor of Economics and Preston Rudy, Professor of Sociology will discuss some of the research on the low-wage workforce and raise questions about the reasons for wage disparities, challenges in access to housing, health care and education, and issues about the viability of solutions to the low-wage problems described by author Barbara Ehrenreich.

Professor Lydia Ortega is currently Professor and Chair of the Department of Economics at San José State University where she has been teaching since 1989. Her publishing and research interests include industrial organization and the economics of education. She is the principal investigator on a National Science Foundation grant to develop material to teach critical thinking and problem solving in economics. She plays an active role in providing economic information to the public through appearances on public affairs panels, local radio, and news reports. She has been an active board member of several community-based organizations including the Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley (founding member), the Hispanic Women's Club, and MACLA.

Professor Preston Rudy has been conducting research on work, labor unions, and the politics of social change. He recently completed an oral history of the impact of the grocery strike of 2003-4 on the residents of Bishop and Mammoth Lakes in Eastern California. He has also conducted research on the organizing of low wage janitors by the Justice for Janitors campaign in Los Angeles, San Jose and Sacramento. He has published an article based on this research and is working on publishing more results from that study. At present Dr. Rudy teaches as part of the Community Change concentration in the Sociology Department, especially the courses on social change and poverty, wealth and privilege. He also teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Social Theory.

(2) Business Ethics Perspectives of *Nickel and Dimed*

Wednesday, November 2, 2005 from 1:30 – 3 pm in ENG 189

Peter Hadreas, Rita Manning and William Shaw, Professors of Philosophy at SJSU will discuss the philosophical approaches to answering such questions as: Do businesses have a responsibility to their workers who might be sleeping in their cars or sick and unable to afford health care? Is it ethical to shop at discount stores to save money when the workers are paid wages at or below the poverty level? The faculty leading this discussion will cover various approaches to moral decision-making (such as the virtue and common-good approaches) and explore how individuals and businesses might resolve moral issues, such as those raised by the author in *Nickel and Dimed*. This event is co-sponsored by the Institute for Social Responsibility, Ethics, and Education (ISREE) at SJSU.

(3) Journalists' Perspectives of *Nickel and Dimed*

Thursday November 17, 2005 from 1:30 – 3 pm in ENG 189

Professor Diana Stover of the SJSU School of Journalism and Mass Communications and Dr. John McManus of *Grade the News* will share their perspectives on the book with an emphasis on the approach used by the author to “get her story.” They will discuss the different approaches to getting this particular story and the limitations of each and the ethical considerations of undercover reporting.

John McManus directs Grade the News. A former newspaper reporter and journalism professor, he has written extensively about communication, and particularly about how markets shape news. His book, Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware? won the Society of Professional Journalists' Research Prize in 1994.

Professor Diana Stover is a journalism professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications who teaches undergraduate courses in media law and ethics and a graduate course in communication law and public policy. A former reporter for two newspapers and The Associated Press, she has done undercover reporting in a state mental institution and in a women's job corps program. She has done research on First Amendment law as it relates to the ethical and legal dilemmas in privacy law. She is a member of the California First Amendment Coalition.