

**SOCIAL STUDIES JUNIOR
FOCUS FIELD AND PLAN OF STUDY
FALL, 2008**

NAME _ _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _

ACADEMIC ADVISOR

ADVISOR'S SIGNATURE _____

NAME OF FOCUS FIELD Social and Educational Inequalities in Urban America

BOARD OF INSTRUCTION SIGNATURE _____

EXPLAIN WHY THIS FOCUS FIELD IS INTERESTING TO YOU (LIMIT: 150 WORDS)

In my Harvard application essay, I wrote that I hoped to graduate with a better understanding of the factors driving persistent poverty and inequality in the United States. Both my coursework and extracurricular responsibilities have refined that focus to urban inequalities and, in particular, education in an urban setting. Much of this country's concentrated poverty can be found in urban neighborhoods, and thus understanding cities and urban problems is critical to addressing poverty and inequalities in their most relevant contexts. Anti-poverty policy can be approached from myriad angles—housing policy, welfare policy, economic and employment policies, etc.. However, I believe that education, always seen in this country as the ultimate driver of social mobility, is the most fascinating perspective from which to examine poverty, inequality, or racial injustice because a child's development is touched by nearly every facet of his or her life—family values, public schools, neighborhood conditions, social perceptions, educational peers, etc.. Even in isolation, any one of these factors can be shown to reproduce social or educational inequality through its developmental impact on children. From this focus field, I could envision writing a thesis on the impact of recent Supreme Court decisions on racial integration, and the corresponding impact on affected communities, or examining how the definition of urban or metropolitan boundaries impacts school demographics and performance.

PLAN OF STUDY. List 4-6 letter-graded courses, drawn from at least two disciplines and including at least one historical course. Put a star (*) next to the historical course or courses. Do not list introductory language courses, methods courses, or junior tutorials.

For each course you list, provide the title, course number, term, and year that you have taken it (or plan to take it). Explain in 1-2 sentences how

the course contributes to your focus field, and append the catalog description if you are not sure that the Board of Instruction will understand why the course should be part of your focus field.

If a course is *not* in anthropology, economics, government, history, continental philosophy, sociology, foreign cultures, historical studies, ethical reasoning, moral reasoning, social analysis, societies of the world, or America in the World, attach a syllabus. Courses outside of these departments will be accepted only if more than 50 % of the topics covered fall into one of those disciplines, or if the instructor has a Ph.D. in one of those fields.

I. COURSE OR COURSES YOU HAVE TAKEN PREVIOUSLY

Harvard Graduate School of Education A-110: Issues in American Education Policy (Spring 2008) – The course provided an overview of issues facing American public education, both historically and currently. In discussing the problems faced by disadvantaged schools, we touched upon broader issues of race and class discrimination, as well as urban decline.

II. COURSE OR COURSES YOU ARE TAKING THIS SEMESTER

Sociology 145: Urban Social Problems (Fall 2008) – The course addresses a number of issues that have historically troubled cities such as crime, race relations, education, corruption, etc.. In addition to addressing different urban problems, the course also introduces a variety of sociological perspectives for understanding the issues discussed.

***Historical Study B-61: The Warren Court and the Pursuit of Justice (Fall 2008)** – The course provides an overview of the Warren Court's jurisprudence and historical impact. Of particular relevance to my focus field, the first six weeks of the course deal with the court's role in addressing race relations in the United States—e.g. the legal history behind the persistence and eventual abolishment of *de jure* segregation in neighborhoods and, most centrally, public schools. Given my interest in educational inequalities, this course provides an excellent historical and legal background to understanding how present inequalities emerged.

III. COURSE OR COURSES YOU ARE PLANNING TO TAKE IN THE FUTURE (Please indicate the term and year)

Economics 1815: Social Problems of the American Economy (Spring 2009) – The course examines social and economic problems of the U.S. and evaluates market and governmental solutions. Topics include discrimination, income and wage inequality, welfare reform, antipoverty strategy, homelessness, crime, and charitable behavior.