HEALTH EQUITY INITIATIVE

HED/CINE 527:
Documentary for Social Justice
Fall 2007 – Spring 2008 (6 units per semester)

SUMMARY
The Departments of Health Education and Cinema, with the Health Equity Initiative at San Francisco State University propose working in collaboration with the National AIDS Fund to link interdisciplinary student teams with 5 community-based organizations across the nation to produce short documentary films. These films would be about the work being done to address the unique needs of women and families whose lives have been impacted by HIV/AIDS in each site. This would provide students practice in the field creating a documentary that each site could use to advance their work. In addition footage from the sites could be compiled into a sixth short illustrating the work of the National AIDS Fund.

Benefits
• Each community-based organization will have a short documentary that focuses on the work they do along with a distribution plan to use the documentary as a tool for change.
• All films will be packaged on one DVD as separate chapters with a booklet featuring discussion questions and actions individuals can take pertaining to each site.
• Using footage from the five sites, along with select interviews with key staff, The National AIDS Fund will have a short documentary exemplifying the work they support.
• The Health Equity Initiative will play a key role linking San Francisco State University to community-based organizations supporting place-based practice for students while strengthening interdisciplinary learning.
• Through this course, the Health Education Department will promote an educational model that examines the relationships of personal, cultural and institutional contributions to complex personal and social issues that impact health; prepare leaders capable of advancing the work of disease prevention and health promotion in culturally appropriate and globally conscious ways; and provide health education students the opportunity to work across disciplines using media for social change.
• The Cinema Department is committed to a curriculum which recognizes cinema to be an independent and powerful medium in the world. This course provides students the unique opportunity to develop and apply their skills in the context of public health messaging.
**BACKGROUND**

In Spring 2006, the Departments of Health Education and the Cinema at San Francisco State University worked in collaboration to pilot a new 6 unit interdisciplinary course titled *Documentary for Social Justice*. The course brought Master’s in Public Health and Cinema students together to create short documentaries on a health and social justice issue of choice while working in partnership with a community-based organization. The pilot class was a success and resulted in quality films that were all scheduled to be distributed and used to foster community engagement around the following topics:

- Redevelopment in Bayview Hunters Point, San Francisco,
- Advocating for same sex marriage equality,
- Confronting stigma related to Bondage & Discipline and Sadomasochism (BDSM),
- Promoting school-based health care, and
- Addressing the increasing threat of bed bugs in San Francisco.

*HED/CINE 527: Documentary for Social Justice* is now being taught as a two semester course, with the first semester dedicated to research and pre-production work and the second semester focused on filming and editing. The current films in production address:

- The failing levee system in California
- Cultural identity in second and third generation Vietnamese American students
- The importance of social support networks for gay Latino immigrant men
- Natural home birth and midwifery
- The positive effects of a school/community garden for kids living in an impoverished community