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Sociology Department

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To Whom It May Concern:

I enthusiastically recommend Jerome (Jerry) Hendricks for a position in your department. Jerry is an exceptionally dedicated and effective teacher. He is an ideal candidate for any Sociology department committed to critical, student-centered teaching.

I have known Jerry since 2007, when he was a student in my Social Movements class at Northeastern Illinois University. Jerry made wonderful contributions to class discussions, wrote superbly, and displayed a very sophisticated sociological analysis. He remains one of the most intellectually inquisitive and adept students I have had in 22 years of teaching. Jerry graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2008 with a BA in History and a minor in Sociology. After Jerry received his MA in Sociology from the University of Illinois at Chicago, we jumped at the opportunity to hire him as a part-time lecturer here at NEIU. Since 2010, he has taught a total of thirteen sections of seven classes: Introduction to Sociology; Women, Men & Social Change (our 100-level gender course); Sociology of Small Groups; Sociological Research Methods; Contemporary Social Issues; Social Movements; and Urban Sociology. Jerry does a fantastic job in teaching all of them.

In his teaching statement, Jerry delineates a holistic and dynamic teaching philosophy centered on a commitment to minimizing hierarchy in the classroom, fostering critical thinking, and presenting multiple perspectives. I've seen him put this philosophy into action in his spring 2011 Sociology of Small Groups class and his summer 2014 Urban Sociology class, and it was clear that Jerry ignites students' passion for sociology. This is also evident in glowing quantitative and qualitative student evaluations of Jerry's teaching. His overall average on over twenty evaluation items is 4.6/5.0. This is all the more impressive because he receives rave reviews from non-majors taking General Education sociology courses, majors taking core courses (including research methods), and a diverse mix of students taking upper level electives.

Jerry's knowledge of the subject matter is deep and broad. His syllabi are exquisitely crafted—organized, detailed, and student-friendly. In both my observations, Jerry demonstrated great skill in helping students to understand and apply complex sociological concepts. During my visit to his Sociology of Small Groups class, he guided students through a discussion on the topics of implicit bias and explicit bias as well as subtopics including racialized society, cognitive congruence, in-groups and emotion work. Jerry very effectively explained and made linkages between these concepts and guided students through sociological critiques of psychological approaches to studying bias. Students in all his classes have similar assessments of his teaching. For example, one student in his Women, Men and Social Change class wrote: "Jerry is an amazing teacher with great enthusiasm and a wealth of knowledge. Everything we learned was thought provoking and I've never had a class impact me in such a positive way before. I truly think differently—more openly now—because of Jerry."

Jerry employs a creative mix of teaching strategies—lecture, discussion, small group activities, video clips, and more—to engage students. He has mastered William Fawcett Hill's

Learning Through Discussion (LTD) method, which—when done effectively—maximizes student comprehension, engagement and knowledge. As I listened to students in his Sociology of Small Groups course discuss the readings in their LTD groups, I felt like I was in a graduate level seminar. Every student made significant contributions to discussion, asked questions and supported her/his peers. Jerry's use of *Learning Through Discussion* was so effective in generating student inquiry and critical thinking that I decided to use it in my own classes. In both classes I observed, both Jerome and the students made linkages between the course material and other courses, current events, and their own lives.

Jerry also employs an array of assignments to promote student learning. These include analytical papers, journals, presentations, and fieldwork. For example, students in his Social Movement course are required to complete fieldwork in a local social movement or community based organization. Students first write an interest statement outlining how their fieldwork placement will interface with course concepts. As they conduct their fieldwork, they complete time sheets, field notes, journals, and memos to describe, analyze and apply what they observe and experience.

Jerry is a very interactive and enthusiastic teacher. In my observation of his Urban Sociology class this summer, I was impressed with his use of a call and response technique to help students unpack and provide concrete examples of theoretical concepts (e.g., new urbanism) and connect both these concepts and related public policies (e.g., welfare housing policies, public-private partnerships) to their own experiences. Students love Jerry's energetic and provocative teaching style. A student in one of his Introduction to Sociology classes wrote: "It was very eye opening. I'm a science major and at first I wasn't really into the whole sociology as a science thing but the teacher made it very enjoyable. I learned a lot of new things and to think differently about certain topics. I also liked the student led discussion. It made me understand the article…"

Jerry is a dedicated and accessible teacher. He is very capable of working with students with a wide range of academic skill levels and life experiences. As a graduate of NEIU, he knows first hand the challenges facing non-traditional students and has an excellent rapport with students. At the same time, he has high expectations of his students and asks that they challenge themselves academically. As one student in his Social Movements course reported, "Be prepared to work your ass off in this class… This is a class for people who have a willingness to work and be dedicated."

In addition to being an amazing teacher, Jerry is an excellent colleague. He seeks out and applies constructive feedback to continue to improve his own teaching. In turn, he is generous in sharing his own pedagogical strategies with others. In addition to being extremely responsible and organized, he has a great sense of humor. Jerry would be a wonderful addition to any department that prioritizes teaching sociology and values student success. Please feel free to contact me by phone (773-442-4772) or email (b-stockdill@neiu.edu), if I can provide further information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Brett Stockdill
Professor & Chair