



© Echo Perlman, DNP '17, assistant professor of nursing, left, and Adam Sundberg PhD, assistant professor of history, at the former site of the ASARCO lead refinery plant in downtown Omaha.

## Course Brings Students Face-to-Face with Environmental Justice

Students in Adam Sundberg's service-learning course on the history of environmental inequalities not only learn of the negative effects of urban industrialization on racial minorities, they visit homes where lead poisoning remains an issue.

"Week by week, we learn what environmental inequality means, its history and what makes it a justice issue," says Sundberg, PhD, assistant professor of history, whose course is one of 58 to receive service-learning designation from Creighton's Office of Academic Service-Learning since its inception in 2017.

Academic service-learning is an experiential educational strategy that

integrates community service into academic courses — for the benefit of student learning and community partners. Sundberg's students visit homes across the metro where lead poisoning is still a problem, and accompany Creighton nursing students on trips to north and south Omaha, where they screen children for lead by administering finger-prick blood tests.

According to Environmental Protection Agency figures, just over 1,000 residential properties in Omaha, once home to a major lead refinery, remain in need of decontamination, a process that is being pursued by the city of Omaha.

The students accompany Dupree Claxton, a case coordinator with Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance, a nonprofit that seeks to improve child health by improving housing. By shadowing Claxton as he tours and analyzes homes, they learn to identify environmental hazards.

Echo Perlman, DNP '17, assistant professor of nursing, invites Sundberg's students to visit neighborhoods where, for the past three years, she has screened young children for lead levels. This year, she says, she expects to screen about 1,500 elementary schoolchildren.

It is an opportunity, she says, for the students to immerse themselves in a different world.

"The nursing students say it's an education just to see the neighborhoods and the schools," Perlman says. "It's a socio-economic world they may not know. For most of them, this is their first exposure into diverse, socially economically challenged populations and so they live and learn."

Sundberg and Perlman say they hope a permanent database will result from the students' research into lead pollution. Their findings will eventually be posted permanently, available to the public and constituting a useful guide to future researchers and to medical professionals like Perlman, who expects the students' research will enable her to target lead screenings more effectively.

## Flannery Next Holder of Waite Chair



KEVIN FLANNERY, SJ ▶

The Rev. Kevin Flannery, SJ, is a renowned professor, author and lecturer.

The next holder of Creighton's Anna and Donald Waite Endowed Chair in Jesuit Education for the 2020-2021 academic year is the Rev. Kevin Flannery, SJ.

A renowned professor, author and lecturer, Fr. Flannery's areas of academic expertise include the ethics of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas and Christian morality. He is a professor of the history of ancient philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University and a member of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, both in Rome, and the author of several books, including *Christian and Moral Action* and *Action and Character According to Aristotle: The Logic of the Moral Life*. His most recent work, published in late 2019, is *Cooperation with Evil: Thomistic Tools of Analysis*.