

The Politics of Poverty

Political Science 4017
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Tues, Thurs 9:00-10:20
220 Coates Hall
Office Hrs: by appointment
Monday 10:00-11:00
Thursday 1:00-2:30

The purpose of this course is to introduce poverty as the key to understanding some of the most important problems facing our country. The class will start by defining public policy and its origins. We will then move to a discussion of how we define poverty, its causes, and our choice of solutions. Because poverty has been defined as a problem worthy of national government attention since the 1930s, any discourse on poverty is inherently a political one.

Course Requirements

You are expected to come to class prepared to participate in the discussion of the day's reading assignment. This means that you should read the day's assignment prior to class. A three hour course is associated with 9 total hours of work per week.

There is no textbook for this course. All of the class readings can be downloaded from the Moodle website or found via a link on the Moodle website. I reserve the right to swap out readings but will always give you two weeks advance notice before doing so. All students must abide by the Student Academic Honor Code. Cheating will not be tolerated. All electronic devices (cell phones, ipads, laptops, etc) must be placed inside a zipped backpack during exams. Failure to place electronic devices inside a zipped backpack will be considered cheating.

Exams

There are three exams in the course. Each exam is worth 140 points and will consist of fifty multiple choice questions (2 points each) and four short answer questions (10 points each). You must bring a scantron to class for the exam. Exams are not cumulative. Make up exams may be taken in emergency situations (illness, death in the family, etc.). If an exam is missed, I should be notified within 24 hours (unless you are locked up or in a coma) of the exam's scheduled time in order to discuss the makeup exam.

Quizzes

At the start of every class period there will be a 5 point quiz. Your quiz answers will be written on a 3 X 5 business card. You will receive 2 points for writing your name on the card. The remaining 3 points will be earned by answering questions on the day's reading (ex. What was the research question from today's article?) THERE ARE NO MAKEUPS ON QUIZZES without a doctor's note, an obituary, or a University excuse. There are a total of 22 classes where a card may be turned in. Only 90 points are counted towards your grade. This means there are 4 skips available to you over the course of the semester.

Policy Solutions Group Project

Each of you will be placed in a group of 4 to 5 students. Your group will be tasked with choosing a solution for one of the problems we encountered in the course. Each paper will

- 1) Describe the problem
- 2) Briefly discuss possible solutions
- 3) Pick the best solution and justify its choice.

More details along with a project rubric will come later in the course. Possible policy problems include but are not limited to:

- How do we solve social security's financial crisis?
- Should Medicaid recipients be subject to work requirements?
- Should SNAP recipients be subject to work requirements?
- Should welfare participants be drug tested?
- Should the minimum wage be raised?

The position paper and presentation are worth 90 points. The paper should be typed, double spaced using 12 Times New Roman font and be between 10 pages in length with one inch margins. Graphs and charts should be used when possible to convey information.

Grading Scale

579-600 A+	519-536 B+	459-476 C+	399-416 D+	356 and below F
555-578 A	495-518 B	435-458 C	381-398 D	
537-554 A-	477-494 B-	417-434 C-	357-380 D-	

Honors Option

For honors students who would like to take the course for Honors Credit, please see me for a book assignment. You will produce a 7-10 page summary of the book's major findings and do a video book presentation for the class that will be uploaded to the class Moodle page.

Section One: Understanding Poverty

January 10: Syllabus; What is public policy?

January 15: What is poverty? How do we measure it?

<https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/social-inequality/social-class/v/absolute-and-relative-poverty>

http://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2011/pdf/bg2607.pdf

January 17: What is income inequality? How is it different than economic mobility?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQnijnsM>

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/video/2011/economic-mobility-and-the-american-dream>

January 22: Research Methods

Berry and Sanders. Statistics Primer: Introduction

January 24: Why are poor people poor? Does the answer matter?

Ingram, Helen and Anne Schneider. 1990. Behavioral assumptions of policy tools. *Journal of Politics*, 52(2), 510-529.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/pernicious-effects-of-economic-inequality-1379022648/>

January 29: Are the poor just bad decision makers?

Mullainathan and Shafir. Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much.

January 31: Is the playing field really level? Brain Development

<https://www.pnas.org/content/112/51/15530.full>

Review study guide for Exam One

February 5: Is the playing field really level? Adverse Childhood Experiences

https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2016/03/08/peds.2015-4016.full.pdf>

February 7: Exam One

Section Two: The Social Safety Net

February 12: Tax Policy

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/policy-basics-tax-exemptions-deductions-and-credits>

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/policy-basics-the-earned-income-tax-credit>

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/policy-basics-the-federal-estate-tax>

February 14: Social Security

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/policy-basics-top-ten-facts-about-social-security>

https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-05-31-taxing-rich_x.htm#

February 19: Health Care: What does it look like in the US?

https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/an-overview-of-medicare/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAsdHhBRCwARIsAAhRhsIP9BU8zjeYtYKurcZDOxNxJDe lLn8hig3HaS9-eJHmW5Z-NkScL0aAuf9EALw_wcB

<https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/10-things-to-know-about-medicaid-setting-the-facts-straight/>

<https://www.kff.org/health-reform/video/youtoons-obamacare-video/>

February 21: Health Care: What are the current major issues?

Bigaier, Joanna and Karin Rhodes. "Auditing Access to Specialty Care for Children with Public Insurance." *New England Journal of Medicine* 2011; 364: 2324-2333.

February 26: SNAP and WIC

TBA

February 28: Minimum Wage

TBA

March 5: Mardi Gras Holiday

March 7: No Class

March 12: Education

Kahlenberg, Richard. "Turn Around Schools That Work"

Review study guide for Exam Two

March 14: Cash Assistance

Michelle Livermore & Rebecca Powers & Belinda Davis & Younghee Lim, 2011. "Failing to Make Ends Meet: Dubious Financial Success Among Employed Former Welfare to Work Program Participants," *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, Springer, vol. 32(1).

March 19: Exam Two

Section Three: The Intersection of Race and Poverty

March 21: How the Poor Became Black

Gilens, Martin. 1996. "Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the News Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60:515-527.

March 25: Race and Support for Welfare

Wetts and Willer. 2018. Privilege on the Precipice. *Social Forces*

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/2f07d4_78349e270aea4239a5c4ff196716f316.pdf

March 27: Immigration and Welfare

Garand, James, Ping Xu, and Belinda Davis. 2016. "Immigrants and Eroding Support for the Welfare State." *American Journal of Political Science*.

April 2: Race and Discipline in Welfare Policies

Schram et al. 2009. "Deciding to Discipline: Race, Choice, and Punishment at the Frontlines of Welfare Reform." *American Sociological Review* Vol. 74:398-422.

April 4: Housing

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/poverty-politics-and-profit/>

April 9: Poverty and Crime

Lee, Matthew. 2000. "Concentrated Poverty, Race and Homicide." *Social Science Quarterly* 41:189-200.

April 11: Education and Race

Reading TBA

April 16: Spring Break

April 18: Spring Break

April 23: Group Presentations

April 25: Group Presentations

Review study guide for Exam Three

May 2: Final Exam 12:30