

The Politics of Poverty

Political Science 4017
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Tues, Thurs 9:00-10:20
1069 Tureaud 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 county. 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 120 points and will consist of forty 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

There will be 8 pop quizzes or homework assignments scattered throughout the course. Each quiz or assignment is worth 20 points. Only 5 quizzes/assignments will count towards your grade so if you take all 8, I will count the best 5 of the 8 grades. Quizzes may consist of information from previous class lectures or the assigned reading. THERE ARE NO MAKEUPS ON QUIZZES/HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS without a doctor's note, an obituary, or a University excuse.

Group Legislative Project

You will be placed in a group of 4-5 students. As a group, you will produce a position paper on a bill being considered by the Louisiana Legislature. The Legislature will be in session from March 12th to June 4th. In March, your group will be assigned its bill. Each group must produce a position paper that includes the following:

Description of the bill

Description of the policy problem the bill is addressing

Why does this legislator care about this problem?

Is this problem specific to Louisiana or are other states experiencing (have experienced) the problem? What actions have they taken? Is this the first time the legislature has considered action on this problem? If not, give a brief history of previous attempts to deal with the problem.

What is the "treatment" or mechanism by which the legislation will fix the problem?

Does your group think this is a good solution? If there is dissent among members, each side should present its argument.

Executive Summary (one page) that addresses each of the aforementioned topics

Power point presentation for the class

The position paper and presentation are worth 120 points. The paper should be typed, double spaced using 12 Times New Roman font and be between 15 and 20 pages in length with one inch margins. Graphs and charts should be used when possible to convey information.

Ten points of the total depend on students attending a committee hearing or floor debate on one of the bills being discussed by the class. Ideally, you will attend your bill's debate. However, since work and class schedules may make this difficult, you will be given the option to attend other bills' debates. Proof of attendance is a photo of you in the committee room or on the floor and a picture of the bill's call on the screen (explained in greater detail later).

Grading Scale

579-600 A+	519-536 B+	559-476 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 11: Syllabus; What is public policy?
- January 16: What is poverty? How do we measure it?
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2017/12/21/extreme-poverty-returns-to-america/?utm_term=.6c3beede5edc
<http://www.heritage.org/welfare/report/five-myths-about-welfare-and-child-poverty>
- January 18: How is income inequality different from poverty? From economic mobility?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQnijnsM>
<http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/multimedia/video/2011/economic-mobility-and-the-american-dream>
http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2015/07/fsm-irs-report_artfinal.pdf?la=en
- January 23: Does the cause of poverty (or what we think causes it) matter?
Ingram, Helen and Anne Schneider. 1990. Behavioral assumptions of policy tools. *Journal of Politics*, 52(2), 510-529.
https://www.ted.com/talks/paul_piff_does_money_make_you_mean
- January 25: Research Methods
Berry, William and Mitchell Sanders. 2000. Chapter One and Part of Two from *Understanding Multivariate Research: A Primer for Beginning Social Scientists*.
- January 30: Research Methods
Berry, William and Mitchell Sanders. 2000. Chapter One and Part of Two from *Understanding Multivariate Research: A Primer for Beginning Social Scientists*.
- February 1: Is the playing field really level? The vicious cycle of poverty
<http://www.pnas.org/content/112/51/15530.full>
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/poor-kids/>
- February 6: Is the playing field really level? The vicious cycle of poverty
Hansen, et al. 2013. "Family Poverty Affects the Rate of Human Infant Brain Growth." *PLoS One* 8(12).
- February 8: Is the playing field really level? The vicious cycle of poverty

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

February 13: Mardi Gras Holiday

February 15: Exam One

Section Two: The Social Safety Net

February 16: The U.S. Tax Code

<http://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/eitc-and-child-tax-credit-promote-work-reduce-poverty-and-support-childrens>

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

<http://www.cbpp.org/blog/state-by-state-look-estate-tax-repeal-benefits-only-wealthiest-few>

<http://time.com/5007611/trump-tax-plan-republican-reform/>

February 20: Health Care in the United States

<http://www.uta.edu/faculty/story/2311/Misc/2013,2,26,MedicalCostsDemandAndGreed.pdf>

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

February 22: Health Care in the United States

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

<https://www.kff.org/report-section/the-impact-of-the-childrens-health-insurance-program-chip-issue-brief/>

February 27: 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

March 1: Workers Compensation, Unemployment Insurance

<http://www.npr.org/2015/03/06/391149235/as-workers-comp-varies-from-state-to-state-workers-pay-the-price>

<https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/workers-compensation-benefits-by-limb>

March 6: Food Stamps and WIC
Reading to be announced.

March 8: Education
<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/03/23/520997010/kids-who-suffer-hunger-in-first-years-lag-behind-their-peers-in-school>

Kahnlberg <https://tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-turnaround.pdf>

March 13: Cash Assistance: Aid to Families with Dependent Children

March 15: Cash Assistance: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

March 20: Exam Two

Section Three: The Intersection of Race and Poverty

March 27: Spring Break

March 29: Spring Break

April 3: Gilens, Martin. Race Coding and White Opposition to Welfare. 1996. *American Political Science Review* 90 (3): 593-604.

April 5: Bill Project Meetings

April 10: Garand, James, Ping Xu, and Belinda Davis. 2016. "Immigrants and Eroding Support for the Welfare State." *American Journal of Political Science*

April 12: 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 17: Housing Segregation and Poverty Reading TBA

April 19: Lee, Matthew. 2000. "Concentrated Poverty, Race and Homicide." *Social Science Quarterly* 41:189-200.

April 24: Poverty, Race, and Education Reading TBA

April 26: Round Table Class Discussion

May 3: Final Exam 12:30, Thursday