

The Politics of Poverty

Political Science 4000 (01)
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Tues, Thurs 9:00-10:20
218 Coates
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Monday 9-11
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. An * next to a class date indicates a reading assignment. 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.).

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 6 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 10th to June 2nd. In early February, 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

The position paper is worth 120 points. It 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 bonus points will be given to the group if a member attends a committee hearing and offers testimony in support or opposition to the bill.

Bonus

Each of you starts out with 5 bonus points. These 5 points are yours to lose. You may lose some or all of these points for the following offenses.

-Emailing me and asking me questions that can be answered using the syllabus or that can be answered using LSU's website. Some examples are "Where is your office?"

"When are your office hours?" "When is the final?"

- Emailing me some form of the following questions: "Can you give me a B? If you don't I'll lose my TOPS," or "Can you give me a [insert grade]? I won't graduate without it."

Grading Scale

Total Assignments		Exam	
540-600	A	108-120	A
480-539	B	96-107	B
420-479	C	84-95	C
360-419	D	72-83	D
0-359	F	0-71	F

Readings Schedule and Topic Outline

Section One: What is public policy? What is poverty?

January 16 th	What is public policy and the policy making process?
January 21 ^{st*}	Behavioral Assumptions Ingram, Helen and Anne Schneider. 1990. Behavioral assumptions of policy tools. <i>Journal of Politics</i> , 52(2), 510-529.
January 23 ^{rd*}	What is poverty? Rector, Robert. "How Poor Are America's Poor: Examining the 'Plague' of Poverty in America"
	Homework Due: Fill out budget assignment and bring to class. Play the game at http://playspent.org/ At the bottom of the budget assignment page fill in the amount of money you had left or the day you ran out of money.
January 28 th	Income Inequality
January 30 ^{th*}	Income Inequality

- February 4th* Economic Mobility
http://www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/PCS_Assets/2012/Pursuing_American_Dream.pdf
http://www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/PCS_Assets/2013/Mobility-and-the-Metropolis.pdf
- February 6th* Research Methods: DO NOT PANIC!
 Berry, William and Mitchell Sanders. 2000. Chapter One from *Understanding Multivariate Research: A Primer for Beginning Social Scientists*.
- February 11th* Research Methods: DO NOT PANIC!
 Berry, William and Mitchell Sanders. 2000. Parts of Chapters Two and Three from *Understanding Multivariate Research: A Primer for Beginning Social Scientists*.
- February 13th* Poverty and the Brain
 Hansen, et al. 2013. "Family Poverty Affects the Rate of Human Infant Brain Growth." *PLoS One* 8(12).
 Homework Due: Complete the understanding regression assignment.
- February 18th Is the Playing Field Really Level?
- February 20th Exam One
Section Two: Policy Solutions to the Problem of Poverty
- February 25th* The U.S. Tax Code: Who Really Pays Taxes
 "Policy Basics: The Earned Income Tax Credit"
 "Policy Basics: The Estate Tax"
- February 27th* Social Security and the Elderly
 "Policy Basics: Top Ten Facts about Social Security"
 "Can the Rich and Famous Save Social Security?"
http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-05-31-taxing-rich_x.htm
- March 6th* Health Care in the United States
 Bisgaier, Joanna and Karin Rhodes. "Auditing Access to Specialty Care for Children with Public Insurance." *New England Journal of Medicine* 2011; 364: 2324-2333.
<http://kff.org/health-reform/video/youtoons-obamacare-video/>
- March 11th* Food Stamps
 "Policy Basics: Introduction to SNAP"
- March 13th AFDC and Why America Hated It

- March 18th* Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Rector, Robert and Sarah Youssef. 1999. "The Determinants of Caseload Decline."
Cook et al. 2002. "Welfare Reform and the Health of Young Children." *Arch Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* Vol. 156:678-684.
- March 20th* Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Powers, Michelle et al. 2010. "Failing to Make Ends Meet: Dubious Financial Success Among Employed Former Welfare to Work Program Participants." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*.
- March 25th* Poverty and Education: Finding the Way Forward.
http://www.ets.org/s/research/pdf/poverty_and_education_report.pdf
- March 27th* Economic Diversity and Education
Kahlenberg, Richard. "Turn Around Schools That Work"
- Section Three: How do race and poverty intersect in America?*
- April 1st Race and Welfare: News Media and Race
Gilens, Martin. 1996. "Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the News Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60:515-527.
- April 3rd* EXAM II: The reading from April 1st will not be covered on Exam II.
- April 8th* Immigration
Garand, James, Ping Xu, and Belinda Davis. "Immigrants and Eroding Support for the Welfare State."
- April 10th* Race and Welfare: Distributing Discipline
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 22nd Crime and Poverty
Lee, Matthew. 2000. "Concentrated Poverty, Race and Homicide." *Social Science Quarterly* 41:189-200.
- April 24th Presentations
- April 29th Presentations
- May 1st Presentations
- May 9th Final Exam 7:30 am