

Soc 55

Poverty and Public Policy in the US

Matissa Hollister

Silsby 104

Winter 2013

See the link on the Blackboard site for info about scheduling an office hour appointment with me

In 2011, 15.0% of Americans lived in poverty according to official government statistics. How do we measure poverty? Why does poverty persist? Why is there so little political discourse about poverty in America today? How effective are various poverty alleviation programs? This course explores the nature and extent of poverty in the United States and the role of the government in addressing poverty issues, with a particular emphasis on employment and training programs. This class is also a community research class, and we will learn through working on poverty-related research projects in the local area.

Research Projects

A central part of this class will be conducting a community research project for the Haven, a local homeless shelter. We will discuss the details on the first day of class. This project will involve considerable effort and collaborative work with your classmates. A portion of almost every class will be dedicated to discussing and working on the project.

Short Essays & Reflection Paper

There will be two take-home essays for the course covering the reading assignments and class discussions. These essays will be short and should not require major preparation as long as you have been keeping up with the readings. For a second year I am experimenting with flexible due dates. The suggested due date for these essays will be a week after I hand them out, but you can turn them in any time during the term. I will grade them within a week and a half of receiving them. If you turn an essay in by the suggested due date and you are not happy with the grade you will have the option to rewrite the essay and get the average of the two grades. *Please note: a re-written essay must involve substantial revisions. Papers with only minor changes will not receive an improved grade and will only serve to annoy me by making me read basically the same paper twice.*

At the end of the term I will ask you to write a brief reflection paper on the class research project. This paper will ask you to reflect on your experiences working on the research project and how these experiences tie into the topics we have covered in class.

Class Participation and Discussion Questions

This class is a seminar, so completing the readings and class participation are very important. Class participation means not only speaking in class and responding to questions, but also bringing your own ideas and questions to discuss in the class. For each class, therefore, I would like you to post to the blackboard discussion board a question about the readings that you think would be interesting to discuss in class. These questions should be posted by 9am on the morning of class. You should read over the questions already posted for the class to make sure your question isn't a repeat of something already posted, although it's fine to add a question that is similar but with a slightly different angle. You may skip posting questions for three of the classes.

You don't need to post a long discussion of your thoughts on the readings, I just want a single question. The question, though, should not be a factual question but should instead be something that you think would spark discussion among your classmates. You may also include in your post any number of clarification questions. These are questions about things you didn't understand in the reading that you'd like to have clarified. The clarification questions would be in addition to the discussion question.

In addition to class participation, attendance is also important. I allow three absences without penalty (missing the first class counts as half an absence). *Note that this allowance includes classes missed due to illness, recruiting, athletics, switching into the class late, etc., they are **not** "free" absences that you get in addition to absences for legitimate reasons.* The whole point is that I do not want to be in charge of deciding which absences are legitimate and which are not. Each

absence beyond these three will reduce your class participation grade by 20 points each time (out of a maximum of 100), so missing eight classes (3 plus another 5, almost half of our 18 sessions) will result in an automatic zero for class participation.

Grading

The final grade for the course will be based upon the following components:

Class participation	20%
Essay 1	20%
Essay 2	20%
Project	25%
Reflection paper	15%

Policies

Electronic devices

Laptops

I have found that laptops are a distraction in small seminars, so I'd strongly prefer that you don't use one in class. If you really rely on your laptop, you may contact me to get permission to bring it to class.

Cell phones

Please turn off your cell phones while in class. I reserve the right to answer any phone that rings in class.

Academic integrity

I expect students in the class to conduct themselves in accordance with Dartmouth's honor code and with academic and personal integrity. Explanations of Dartmouth's integrity rules and principles can be found at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~uja>. Students are expected to take responsibility for doing their own work, providing proper citations whenever using words or ideas borrowed from others. Details on citing sources are available at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources>.

I also expect you to be considerate to other students while in class. This does not mean that you should censor your opinions, but you should present your ideas in a respectful manner.

Disabilities & religious observances

Students with learning, physical, or psychiatric disabilities enrolled in this course that may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an office appointment to see me before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that fall during this academic term. Should you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please come speak with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Texts

- Wilson, WJ. 2009. *More Than Just Race*. ISBN: 039306705X
- Duncan, C. 2000. *Worlds Apart: Why Poverty Persists in Rural America*. ISBN: 0300084560
- DeVol, PE. *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World*. To be purchased from socy dept

Course Schedule & Readings

Measuring poverty & Experiences of Poverty

Class#1- Introduction

Class#2- An unemployed community

- Jahoda, Lazarsfeld & Zeisel. 1933(1981). *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*.

Class#3- Measuring poverty, Getting Ahead and Trip to the Haven

- John Iceland. *Poverty in America: A Handbook*. Ch. 2-4, pp. 10-69
- Heritage Foundation report, selected pages
- Introduction to Getting Ahead facilitator notes, PDF on blackboard
- Getting Ahead workbook: Introduction and Module 1: My life Now

Theories about the causes of poverty

Class#4- The Culture of Poverty.

- Lewis, O. (1969). "The Culture of Poverty." in *On Understanding Poverty*, Patrick Moynihan editor.
- William J. Wilson. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Selected pages.
- Orlando Patterson. "A Poverty of the Mind", op-ed in *The New York Times*. March 26, 2006.
- William J. Wilson. *More than just race*. "Understanding the impact of cultural forces" p. 14-23, "The role of cultural factors" p. 42-46, "The role of cultural factors" p. 78-92.
- Module 2: Theory of Change in GA workbook

Class#5- Structural factors behind poverty

- William J. Wilson. *More than just race*. "The forces shaping concentrated poverty" p. 25-42. "The economic plight of inter-city black males" p. 62-78
- Selected pages (364-369) from John Yinger, "Housing Discrimination and Residential Segregation as Causes of Poverty," in Sheldon H. Danziger and Robert H. Haveman, editors, *Understanding Poverty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001)
- David K. Shipler. 2004. *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Ch 1: Money and Its Opposite
- Module 3: Rich/Poor Gap in GA workbook

Class#6- The class divide & Getting Ahead

- A number of articles around Murray's *Coming Apart*, available on blackboard
- Paul Tough "The Class-Consciousness Raiser" *New York Times*. June 10, 2007 (pdf on blackboard)
- In GA workbook:
 - Module 4: Hidden Rules
 - Module 5: The Importance of Language
 - Module 6: Eleven Resources
 - Module 7: Self-Assessment of Resources
 - Module 8: Community Assessment

Class#7- Changing family structures

- David T. Ellwood and Christopher Jencks, "The Spread of Single Parent Families in the United States since 1960," John F. Kennedy School of Government, Working Paper RWP04-008 selected pages
- William J. Wilson. *When Work Disappears*, Ch. 4 "The Fading Inner City Family"

- Kathryn Edin, "Few Good Men," *The American Prospect* vol.11(4), January 3, 2000, pages 1-8
- In GA workbook:
 - Module 9: Building Resources
 - Module 10: Personal and Community Plans

Class#8- The labor market & the workplace

- David K. Shipler. 2004. *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Introduction "At the Edge of Poverty", Chapter 5 "The Daunting Workplace"
- Moss & Tilly. 2001. *Stories Employers Tell*. Ch. 3 (selected pages)

Class#9- Rural poverty

- Cynthia Duncan. *Worlds Apart: Why Poverty Persists in Rural America*. Selected pages.

Class#10- Urban poverty

- Alex Kotlowitz 1991. *There Are No Children Here*. Chapters 1-4, pp.3-42.
- Additional reading TBA

Public policies

Class#11- Historical Roots of Poverty Policy

- "Public Assistance & Social Welfare" Lower East Side Tenement Museum online encyclopedia (Mostly a summary of Katz's *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*). (TenementSummary.pdf on Blackboard)
- Sigrun Kahl. "The Religious Roots of Modern Poverty Policy: Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Protestant Traditions Compared" *European Journal of Sociology* Vol. XLVI, 1 (2005), pp. 91-126.
- D. Ellwood. 1988. "Values and the Helping Conundrums," Chapter 2 in *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family*.

Class#12- Theories behind the policies

- Lawrence Mead. 1986. *Beyond Entitlement*. Chapter 1: "The Problem of Obligation in Social Policy"
- Theda Skocpol "Targeting within Universalism: Politically Viable Policies to Combat Poverty in the United States" and Robert Greenstein "Universal and Targeted Approaches to Relieving Poverty: An Alternative View" in *The Urban Underclass*. 1991. Christopher Jencks & Paul Peterson editors.
- Jason DeParle. 2009. "The 'W' Word, Re-Engaged" *The New York Times*. February 8, 2009.

Class#13- Welfare reform

- Jason DeParle *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare* Penguin Books, selected pages
- Scott W. Allard "The Changing Face of Welfare during the Bush Administration" *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 37(3): 304-332
- Gias & al. 2001. "Implementation of the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996" *The New World of Welfare*.
- New York Times article.

Class#14- Education-based & youth programs

- *New Yorker*. "The Quarterback Problem"
- Jonathan Kozol. *The Shame of the Nation*. Introduction
- Brian Jacob & Jens Ludwig. "Improving educational outcomes for poor children" 2009. *Changing Poverty, Changing Policies*
- Heinrich & Holzer. 2009 "Improving Education and Employment for Disadvantaged Young Men: Proven and Promising Strategies." <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412086-disadvantaged-young-men.pdf>

Class#15- Job training

- Robert J. LaLonde. "The Promise of Public Sector-Sponsored Training Programs" *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 9, No. 2. (Spring, 1995), pp. 149-168.
- Gordon Lafer. 2002. *The Job Training Charade*. Chapter 1: "Introduction"
- Holzer "Workforce Development as an Antipoverty Strategy" 2009. *Changing Poverty, Changing Policies*.

Class#16- WIA, displaced workers, and unemployment insurance

- Louis Uchitelle. "Retraining Laid-Off Workers, but for What?" *The New York Times*. March 26, 2006
- O'Leary, Christopher, Robert Straits, Stephen Wadner. *Job Training Policy in the United States*. **Chapter 4:** "Implementation Issues to Delivering Training Services to Adults under WIA"
- Additional reading on unemployment insurance TBA.

Class#17- Place-based programs: Modernization/economic development, empowerment zones, and mobility programs

- Alice O'Connor. "Modernization and the Rural Poor: Some Lessons from History" in *Rural Poverty in America* edited by Cynthia Duncan
- Ronald F. Ferguson, "Community Revitalization, Jobs and the Well-being of the Inner-City Poor," in Sheldon H. Danziger and Robert H. Haveman, editors, *Understanding Poverty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 417–443.
- Greg J. Duncan & Anita Zuberi. "Mobility Lessons from Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity" *Journal of Law and Social Policy*, 1(1) Summer 2006.
- William J. Wilson. *More than just race*. Discussion of neighborhood effects" p. 46-56.

Class#18- Project presentations and wrap-up