

# Sociology 3300

## Sociology of Poverty

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Section 100  
MWF 2:00-2:55  
Bentley Hall 304  
Fall Semester 2012

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*"Focusing on the poor and ignoring the system of power, privilege, and profit which makes them poor, is a little like blaming the corpse for murder."—Michael Parenti*

### Course Goals and Objectives

In this course we will survey the causes, components and consequences of poverty in the United States and throughout the world in addition to actions and policies for its alleviation. Poverty is an important and complex issue. There are dynamic and multi-faceted micro- and macro-level processes that reveal a world of vast differences and inequality among the global citizenry both within and between countries. This course is designed to provide insight on understanding and utilizing the sociological perspective to better grasp the complexities that these processes present for poverty in the contemporary world. Students will learn to analyze these processes using a variety of tools and concepts important to the sociological perspective including culture, methods, power, social structure, and theory among others. The objectives of the course are as follows:

1. Develop skills for understanding the tools, theories, and role of sociology in examining poverty and recognize the value of developing a "sociological imagination" for understanding poverty at home and abroad.
2. To utilize a broad lens and an informed perspective that incorporates different points of view so as to contemplate, discuss, and critically evaluate the theoretical foundations and contemporary debates regarding poverty.
3. To develop and utilize an informed perspective on poverty and engage in the critical analysis of the issue through independent research and action.

*The nature of a sociology course.* In this course we will deal with a number of topics that are controversial and hotly debated. You are free and encouraged to offer the class any comments and/or disagreement you may have. Dialogue and debate are essential to the active learning environment that I seek to create in this class of which you are the most important component. You will *not* be penalized for disagreeing with other students or the instructor, but please be certain your perspective is based on evidence from course or other readings. In addition, varied points of view must be expressed in a manner that is sensitive to differences in ability, class, ethnicity, gender, lifestyle preference, race, or religion and should not be expressed so as to be perceived as a personal attack. In short, having respect for others is the most important prerequisite for the course.

### Blackboard

This is a Blackboard-enabled course meaning that you can obtain course materials online in addition to utilizing message boards, blogs, and e-mail to communicate with other members of the class. You are responsible for regularly checking Blackboard for announcements, handouts, and other course materials in that the I will be updating the homepage throughout the semester. You can access the website through the Blackboard gateway page connected to via <https://blackboard.ohio.edu/> using your Oak ID and password. If you have not activated their Oak account you not be able to access course materials and must visit the Information Technology website regarding activation of your account: <https://technology.ohio.edu/myaccount/activate.html>.

## Required Texts and Readings

1. Eitzen, D. Stanley and Kelly Eitzen Smith. 2009. *Experiencing Poverty: Voices from the Bottom*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Boston: Pearson.
2. Winne, Mark. 2008. *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*. Boston: Beacon Press.
3. Bales, Kevin, Zoe Trodd, and Alex Kent Williamson. 2009. *Modern Slavery: The Secret World of 27 Million People*. Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications.
4. Articles and book chapters that are available from the instructor on Blackboard

In addition to the above, students can enhance the content, discussion, and understanding of the course by staying abreast of current issues relating to poverty through reading newspapers such as *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*, periodicals such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Economist*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, or *Yes!*, listening to *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, or *BBC News Hour* on National Public Radio (WOUB-FM Athens 91.3) or watching *Newshour with Jim Lehrer* nightly on WOUB-TV. In addition, students may also find that the Internet is a wonderful source of information on poverty and related issues that the mainstream media in the United States overlook or choose not to address.

## Course Requirements

1. *Attendance and Class Participation*. I will count 50 points of your final grade toward attendance and class participation. You are expected to attend class each time the course meets and participate in lecture, discussions, and exercises. You should have read the assigned readings *before* class, taken notes on them, and be prepared to contribute questions and ideas to the class. This is especially important as the course progresses and more discussion ensues. If you miss a class you are responsible for obtaining the notes from another student and materials on Blackboard, including PowerPoint slides which I post. Under no circumstances do I lend out my lecture outlines. Students should note the following:

a. *Attendance and absence policy*. At the beginning of each class you will be required to write and hand in a short (4-5 sentences) "sociological reflection" on a concept related to lecture or the readings. Students are responsible for making sure that they submit a reflection each class. This exercise serves several purposes:

- (1) To "jump start" the minds of the students with respect to thinking sociologically during class, thus facilitating learning and discussion.
- (2) To help develop students' critical thinking and writing skills, thus providing ongoing review and practice for examinations.
- (3) To help the instructor assess who is having difficulty understanding the material and/or expressing ideas in writing so that appropriate measures may be pursued.

The reflections from the previous class will be returned to the students and are graded only as "complete" or "incomplete" and should be considered more as practice than as evaluation by the instructor. The reflections will also serve as a record of class attendance. Students arriving late to class are responsible for informing the instructor of her or his tardiness if reflection is not completed. Students are given six free-pass, "no questions asked" absences for the semester without penalty. With the seventh absence a student will lose 7 points from their participation grade and then one point for each additional class that they miss. I am sympathetic to family emergencies, illnesses, legitimate school activities, and other extenuating circumstances that create the need for missing class and the four permitted absences will hopefully account for such situations except in extremely rare and exceptional cases that can be addressed to the instructor. In short, missing class is strongly discouraged—not only because of the participation grade falling but the effect that absences will have on performance on exams, projects, and the course overall.

2. *Imagination assignments*. I will base a total of 300 points of your grade on four written assignments, each worth 75 points. The first assignment (**Due September 10**) will involve developing a familiarity with the state of poverty in your hometown, home-state, and the United States, in addition to using your sociological imagination

to reflect on how you have arrived at where you are today. The project is intended to empower students to begin to think critically about the theories and dynamics of poverty and become familiar with resources to help one assess the issue. The second (**Due October 3**) will explore the working poor and near-poor and the multiple issues they are facing. This project will involve interviewing a family member or acquaintance about their situation and struggles. The third assignment (**Due November 7**) will analyze modern slavery and one's "slavery footprint", building on the work of Bales, Trodd, and Williamson and the global connections of poverty to our individual lives. Finally, the fourth assignment (**Due November 30**) will address the poverty-conflict connection and the trap ensnaring some of the world's poorest countries.

In the assignments students will be expected to expand upon the course materials into new realms so as to critically evaluate poverty in the contemporary world and begin to use the tools of sociology to examine it. More detailed instructions for each will be posted on Blackboard where students are responsible for obtaining them. The assignments are due electronically at 11:59 p.m. on their respective due dates. *Late work will be accepted, but only at the cost of a 5-point deduction per each workday late.* Completion of all assignments is required to any receive credit for this course, regardless of the grade that would be received without doing so.

3. *Examinations.* There will be two take-home exams in this course, one midterm worth 100 points due electronically at 11:59 on **October 15** and a final exam worth 100 points due electronically at 11:59 p.m. on **December 10**, the day of the regularly scheduled final exam. Exams will consist of short essays that focus on key concepts and ideas pertaining to the section of the course leading up to each exam. Students are responsible for all handouts, readings, films, and exercises, as well as material covered in lectures and class discussion. Course materials will be made available on Blackboard. Lectures will cover a large amount of material not in the readings, and the readings will not all be covered in the lectures. Therefore, optimal performance will only occur by both attending class and doing the assigned readings. *Late examinations will be accepted, but only at the cost of a 5-point deduction for each workday late. Extensions for examinations will be allowed only for serious, documented, medical and family emergencies and students must inform the instructor no later than the scheduled due date as to their needs.*

### Determination of Final Grades

1. *Grade breakdown.* The breakdown for final grades is as follows:

Class participation	50 points (9.1%)
Imagination Assignment 1	75 points (13.6%)
Imagination Assignment 2	75 points (13.6%)
Imagination Assignment 3	75 points (13.6%)
Imagination Assignment 4	75 points (13.6%)
Take-home Midterm Examination	100 points (18.2%)
Final Examination	<u>100 points (18.2%)</u>
	550 points (100%)

2. *Grading scale.* Final grades will be determined using the following grading scale:

A	93-100% (509 points or more)	C	73-76 (399 to 420 points)
A-	90-93 (493 to 508 points)	C-	70-72 (383 to 398 points)
B+	87-89 (476 to 492 points)	D+	67-69 (366 to 382 points)
B	83-86 (454 to 475 points)	D	63-66 (344 to 365 points)
B-	80-82 (438 to 453 points)	D-	60-62 (328 to 343 points)
C+	77-79 (421 to 437 points)	F	Below 60 (327 points or less)

3. *Academic misconduct.* Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated, and all cases of academic misconduct will be immediately addressed using standard university policy and procedures to ensure a student's right of due process. According to Section 3 of the Ohio University Student Code of Conduct, academic misconduct is "Dishonesty or deception in fulfilling academic requirements. It includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, un-permitted collaboration, forged attendance, fabrications, using advantages not approved by the instructor, knowingly permitting another student to plagiarize or cheat from one's work, or submitting the same assignment in different courses without consent of the instructor." In

short, assignments, exams, and other means of evaluation for the course are a reflection of an individual's ability to comprehend and complete the course material and students are responsible for understanding what the various forms of academic misconduct entail. The instructor may impose a grade penalty for academic misconduct and/or file a judicial referral. Academic misconduct is subject to a maximum sanction of disciplinary suspension or expulsion from the university, as well as a grade penalty in the course.

Having made this statement I still encourage you to work together outside of class to prepare for exams and do assignments, because peer cooperation, review, and support are important components of higher education and academic research. However, be careful to make certain that final work that you turn in is clearly your own and not *stolen* from anyone else or that no one *has stolen* from you. For more information on academic misconduct, examples, policies, and procedures I encourage you to consult the University Judiciaries website at: <http://www.ohio.edu/judiciaries/academic-misconduct.cfm#academic>. Students can also consult the following for tutorials, links, and additional information on plagiarism: <http://www.ohio.edu/linguistics/info/plagiarism.html>.

4. *Extra-credit*. Opportunities for extra credit may arise over the course of the semester but are not guaranteed pending university events. If available, extra credit is rewarded as additional points for a student's class participation grade meaning that students can "make-up" for missed classes beyond the allotted absences. The final due date for all extra credit is **December 7**, the last Friday of the semester prior to the start of exams.

### Student Services

I am more than willing to discuss student concerns and progress throughout the semester during office hours or individual appointments, and will make every effort to assist those who are experiencing difficulty in this course. In addition there are several other options available on campus for students who need extraordinary assistance, and I encourage you to take advantage of the following services as needed:

Academic Advancement Center	Career Services	Counseling and Psychological Services
Alden Library 101	Baker Center 533	Hudson Health Center, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor
593-2644	593-2909	593-1616

### Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require services and accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (348 Baker University Center, 593-2620) to make arrangements for having disability addressed in this course. I am happy to accommodate student needs and students with documented disabilities should make their needs known to the instructor and seek available assistance in a timely manner.

### Cell Phones and Laptops

Out of respect for the instructor and other students please turn off cell phones during class. If it is absolutely necessary that such devices remain on (e.g., in times of an extreme emergency) then please sit near the exit of the room, turn off ringer or set to vibrate, and remove oneself from the classroom when answering. Students are welcome to use laptops in lectures for taking notes and other course-related activities that do not distract other students during lecture. Thank you for your cooperation on these fronts!

## Course Outline

Note—this is only a guide. There may be points over the semester where we may move slightly faster or slower than indicated below. The instructor will inform students of any deviations from this outline in person and on Blackboard. To permit students to plan ahead days for examinations and due dates for projects will remain unchanged.

Week	Date	Topic/Readings/Tasks
1	8/27	<i>Course Introduction</i>
	8/29	<i>The Sociology of Poverty: Foundations and Beginnings</i>  Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise." Chapter 1 in <i>The Sociological Imagination</i> . New York: Oxford University Press. (On Blackboard) Eitzen and Eitzen Smith, Part I (pp. 1-9) and "The Empty Christmas" by Tamicia Rush, pp. 123-124
	8/31	<i>Studying Poverty: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Theory</i>  Sen, Amartya. 1999. "Poverty as Capability Deprivation." Pp. 87-110 in <i>Development as Freedom</i> New York: Anchor Books. (On Blackboard) Skim and be familiar with DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith. 2011. <i>Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010</i> . Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau. (On Blackboard and also online at <a href="http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-239.pdf">http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-239.pdf</a> )
2	9/3	<i>No Class: Labor Day</i>
	9/5	<i>Studying Poverty: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Theory</i>  Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2012. "How We Cured 'The Culture of Poverty,' Not Poverty Itself." <i>Mother Jones</i> . Available online at <a href="http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/03/barbara-ehrenreich-what-causes-poverty">http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/03/barbara-ehrenreich-what-causes-poverty</a> Eitzen and Eitzen Smith, Chapters 1, 2, and 4
	9/7	<i>Studying Poverty: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Theory</i>
3	9/10	<i>Poverty in the United States: Concentration and Social Isolation</i>  Lichter, Daniel T. Domenico Parisi, and Michael C. Taquino. 2012. "The Geography of Exclusion: Race, Segregation, and Concentrated Poverty." <i>Social Problems</i> 59: 364-388. (On Blackboard) Landphair, Juliette. 2007. "The Forgotten People of New Orleans': Community, Vulnerability, and the Lower Ninth Ward." <i>The Journal of American History</i> 94: 837-845. (On Blackboard)
		<b>Imagination Assignment 1 is due electronically at 11:59 p.m.</b>
	9/12	<i>Poverty in the United States: Concentration and Social Isolation</i>  Sarnoff, Susan. 2003. "Central Appalachia-Still the Other America." <i>Journal of Poverty</i> 7:123-139. (On Blackboard)
	9/14	<i>Poverty in the United States: Concentration and Social Isolation</i>

Week	Date	Topic/Readings/Tasks
4	9/17	<i>Poverty in the United States: Opportunity Structures and Education</i>  Murnane, Richard. 2007. "Improving the Education of Children Living in Poverty." <i>Future of Children</i> 17:161-182. (On Blackboard) Eitzen and Eitzen Smith, Chapter 8
	9/19	<i>Poverty in the United States: Opportunity Structures and Education</i>
	9/21	<i>Poverty in the United States: Health Care and Housing</i>  Emerson, Eric. 2009. "Relative Child Poverty, Income Inequality, Wealth, and Health." <i>Journal of the American Medical Association</i> 301:425-426. (On Blackboard) Seccombe, Karen. 2007. "Living Poorly: Poverty's Effects on Children and Their Parents." Chapter 3 in <i>Families in Poverty</i> . New York: Pearson. (On Blackboard)
5	9/24	<i>Poverty in the United States: Health Care and Housing</i>
	9/26	<i>Poverty in the United States: Health Care and Housing</i>  Martin, Leslie. 2011. "Good Deals for Homebuyers, Not for the Poor: Erasing Poverty from Affordable Housing Discourse." <i>Journal of Poverty</i> 15:3-21. (On Blackboard) Eitzen and Eitzen Smith, Chapter 6
	9/28	<i>Poverty in the United States: The Working Poor</i>  Thompson, Derek. 2011. "Squeezed Dry: Why Americans Work So Hard but Feel So Poor." <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i> . Available online at <a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/07/squeezed-dry-why-americans-work-so-hard-but-feel-so-poor/241252/">http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/07/squeezed-dry-why-americans-work-so-hard-but-feel-so-poor/241252/</a> Eitzen and Eitzen Smith, Chapters 3 and 9
6	10/1	<i>Poverty in the United States: The Working Poor</i>
	10/3	<i>Poverty in the United States: The Working Poor</i>  <b>Imagination Assignment 2 is due electronically at 11:59 p.m.</b>
	10/5	<i>Poverty in the United States: Hunger, Welfare Reform, and Policy</i>  Henderson, Debra A. and Ann R. Tickamyer. 2008. "Lost in Appalachia: The Unexpected Impact of Welfare Reform on Older Women in Rural Communities." <i>Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare</i> XXXV: 153-171. (On Blackboard) Eitzen and Eitzen Smith, Chapter 7 Winne, Introduction and Chapters 1 (skim) and 2
7	10/8	<i>Poverty in the United States: Hunger, Welfare Reform, and Policy</i>  Winne, Chapters 3 to 5
	10/10	<i>Poverty in the United States: Hunger, Welfare Reform, and Policy</i>  Winne, Chapters 6 to 8

Week	Date	Topic/Readings/Tasks
	10/12	<i>Poverty in the United States: Hunger, Welfare Reform, and Policy</i> Winne, Chapters 9 and 10, and Conclusion
8	10/15	<i>Poverty in the United States: Hunger, Welfare Reform, and Policy</i> Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity. 2012. "Poverty, the Media and Election 2012: What Do Voters Think?" (On Blackboard) Dispatch, Tom. 2011. "The War against the Poor." <i>Mother Jones</i> . Available online at <a href="http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/11/occupy-wall-street-war-against-poor">http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/11/occupy-wall-street-war-against-poor</a>  <b>Take-home Midterm Examination is due electronically at 11:59 p.m.</b>
	10/17	<i>Globalization and Poverty: The Global-Local Connections</i> Kacowicz, Arie M. 2007. "Globalization, Poverty, and the North-South Divide." <i>International Studies Review</i> 9:565–580. (On Blackboard) McCune, Caitlin. 1998. "The Story of Ruth: Why the Suffering of Those in Other Countries Should Matter to Us." <i>The Humanist</i> 58:29-30. (On Blackboard)
	10/19	<i>Globalization Poverty: The Global-Local Connections</i>
9	10/22	<i>Globalization Poverty: The Global-Local Connections</i>
	10/24	<i>Global Poverty: Overview, Theories, and Debates</i> Isbister, John. 2006. "A World of Poverty." Chapter 2 in <i>Promises Not Kept: Poverty and The Betrayal of Third World Development</i> , 7 <sup>th</sup> ed. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press. (On Blackboard)
	10/26	<i>Global Poverty: Overview, Theories, and Debates</i> Isbister, John. 2006. "Explanations of Underdevelopment." Chapter 3 in <i>Promises Not Kept: Poverty and The Betrayal of Third World Development</i> , 7 <sup>th</sup> ed. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press. (On Blackboard)
10	10/29	<i>Global Poverty: Overview, Theories, and Debates</i>
	10/31	<i>Poverty and the Political Economy of the World System</i> Silverstein, Ken. 2010. "Shopping for Sweat: The Human Cost of a Two Dollar T-Shirt." <i>Harper's Magazine</i> 320:36-44. (On Blackboard) Bales, Trodd, and Williamson, Chapters 1 to 3
	11/2	<i>Poverty and the Political Economy of the World System</i> Bales, Trodd, and Williamson, Chapters 4 to 6
11	11/5	<i>Poverty and the Political Economy of the World System</i> Bales, Trodd, and Williamson, Chapters 7 and 8

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Readings/Tasks</b>
	11/7	<p><i>Global Poverty: Population, Health, and the Environment</i></p> <p>Brown, Lester R. 2009. "Eradicating Poverty and Stabilizing Population." Chapter 7 in <i>Plan B 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization</i>. Washington, D.C.: The Earth Policy Institute. (On Blackboard)</p> <p>Davis, Mike. 2004. "Planet of Slums." <i>Harper's Magazine</i> pp. 17-22. (On Blackboard)</p> <p><b>Imagination Assignment 3 is due electronically at 11:59 p.m.</b></p>
	11/9	<p><i>Global Poverty: Population, Health, and the Environment</i></p> <p>Mabogunje, Akin L. 2002. "Poverty and Environmental Degradation: Challenges within the Global Economy." <i>Environment</i> 44:8-18 (On Blackboard)</p>
12	11/12	<i>No Class—Veteran's Day</i>
	11/14	<i>Global Poverty: Population, Health, and the Environment</i>
	11/16	<p><i>Poverty and World Hunger</i></p> <p>Kaufman, Frederick. 2010. "The Food Bubble: How Wall Street Starved Millions and Got Away with It." <i>Harper's Magazine</i> (On Blackboard)</p> <p>Frances Moore Lappé, Joseph Collins, and Peter Rosset. 1998. "Myth 3: Too Many Mouths to Feed." Chapter 3 in <i>World Hunger: Twelve Myths</i>, 2nd ed. New York: Grove Press. (On Blackboard)</p> <p>Scanlan, Stephen J., J. Craig Jenkins, and Lindsey Peterson. 2010. "The Scarcity Fallacy." <i>Contexts</i> 9:34-39. (On Blackboard)</p>
13	11/19	<i>Poverty and World Hunger</i>
	11/21	<i>No Class—Thanksgiving Break</i>
	11/23	<i>No Class—Thanksgiving Break</i>
14	11/26	<p><i>Global Poverty: Conflict, Violence, and the Poverty Trap</i></p> <p>Atwood, J. Brian. 2004. "The Link between Poverty and Violent Conflict." <i>New England Journal of International Affairs</i> 19:159-165. (On Blackboard)</p>
	11/28	<i>Global Poverty: Conflict, Violence, and the Poverty Trap</i>
	11/30	<p><i>Global Poverty: Policy, and the Millennium Development Goals</i></p> <p>Sachs, Jeffrey. 2005. "Can Extreme Poverty Be Eliminated?" <i>Scientific American</i> (On Blackboard)</p> <p>International Forum on Globalization. 2002. <i>A Better World is Possible! Alternatives to Economic Globalization</i>. San Francisco: IFG. (On Blackboard)</p> <p><b>Imagination Assignment 4 is due electronically at 11:59 p.m.</b></p>
15	12/3	<i>Global Poverty: Policy, and the Millennium Development Goals</i>

Week	Date	Topic/Readings/Tasks
	12/5	<p><i>Poor Peoples' Movements, Social Justice, and the Future</i></p> <p>Eitzen and Eitzen Smith, Chapter 10            Gelder, Sarah. 2011. "Introduction: How Occupy Wall Street Changes Everything."            Chapter 1 in <i>This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement</i>. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers. (On Blackboard)            World Social Forum. 2001. <i>Porto Alegre Call for Mobilisation</i>. Sao Paolo, Brazil: World Social Forum. (On Blackboard)</p>
	12/7	<p><i>Poor Peoples' Movements, Social Justice, and the Future</i></p>
<b>Exam Week</b>		<b>Take-home Final Exam due at 11:59 p.m. on Monday, December 10</b>

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