

**This is the perspective of what a graduate social work course on poverty presented by (in alphabetical order) Larry Bresler, Daniel Brisson, Elena Delavega**

**Encountering Poverty: Concepts and Interventions for Social Workers**

**MSW Elective on Poverty**

**(3 Credit Hours)**

**Semester Year**

**Prerequisite(s): Completion of MSW Foundation Curriculum or instructor approval**

**Instructor:**

**Day – Time:**

**Office Phone:**

**Office Hours:**

**Email:**

**Place:**

**Office Location:**

**Course Description**

This course examines the causes and consequences of poverty. Students will learn the terminology and analyze the philosophical, conceptual, and theoretical frameworks utilized by diverse agents to understand and address poverty. Specific interventions are explored and analyzed. The goal of this course is to develop social work professionals who understand the problem of poverty from a variety of disciplines, understand key concepts, and will be prepared and willing to intervene regardless of area of practice.

**Objectives**

By the end of the course students will understand, analyze, and apply:

1. The definition, scope, and theories of poverty
2. The different philosophical orientations underpinning of diverse views on the causes of poverty
3. The measure of poverty and its impact on policies, programs and families
4. The impact (consequences) that poverty has on individuals, families and children
5. The impact of major social policies on poverty with a focus on disadvantaged populations
6. Social work's role in addressing poverty.

## **Core Competencies**

### **Ethics: Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.**

- Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and its relevant laws.
- Social workers conduct themselves ethically and engage in ethical decision-making.
- Ethical practice involves distinguishing between personal and professional values and understanding the values of clients across age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Practice involves an awareness of ethical dilemmas and conflicts that occur in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

### **Critical Thinking: Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.**

- Critical thinking is informed by principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. It is also augmented by creativity and curiosity.
- Critical thinking requires the examination, analysis, synthesis, and communication of relevant information.

### **Diversity: Engage diversity and difference in practice**

- Engaging diversity and difference in practice involves understanding how the intersectionality of age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation shape human experience and are critical to identity formation.
- Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim.

### **Social & Economic Justice: Advance human rights and social and economic justice.**

- Social workers: recognize that each person has basic human rights; recognize the global interconnections of oppression; are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights; and incorporate social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice.

**Policy: Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work practice**

- Social workers understand that policy affects service delivery, and they actively engage in policy practice.
- Social workers know the history and current structures of social policies and services; the role of policy in service delivery; and the role of practice in policy development.

**Intervene: Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities**

- Social workers use a theory- and research-informed knowledge base to identify, analyze, and implement evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals for diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

**Course Assessment**

**Recommended Grading Criteria**

Active Participation	10%
Assignment 1	15%
Assignment 2	20%
Assignment 3	30%
Final Exam	25%
	100%

## Course Outline

Session	Content and Class Exercises	Readings
<b>1</b>	<p><b>What is Poverty?</b></p> <p>Why does poverty matter?</p> <p>Correlates of Poverty</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Crime, violence, social breakdown</p> <p><b>Class Activities:</b></p> <p>What is your family income?</p> <p>How much income is needed to live per month?</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b></p> <p>Assignment Option 1A:</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Enwonwu, C. O. (2006). Noma: The ulcer of extreme poverty. <i>New England Journal of Medicine</i> 354(3), 221-224.</p> <p>Swimming Against the Tide, Alice O’Conner</p> <p>Shipler, D. ( 2006). Connecting the Dots from Ending poverty in America (2007) edited by Edwards, John, Crain, Marion, and Kallenberg, Anne, Pages 13-22</p> <p><b>Videos:</b></p> <p>American Winter. <a href="http://www.americanwinterfilm.com">www, americanwinterfilm.com</a></p> <p><b>Presentations:</b></p> <p>Haveman, R. The Causes of American Poverty, an Overview: Labor Markets, Family Structure, Racial Discrimination, and Culture.</p> <p>Magnuson, K. Early Childhood Experiences and Poverty</p>

<b>Session</b>	<b>Content and Class Exercises</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<p data-bbox="228 390 253 422"><b>2</b></p>	<p data-bbox="342 390 711 422"><b>Measures of Poverty</b></p> <p data-bbox="342 499 623 531"><b>Class Activities:</b></p> <p data-bbox="342 554 711 779">Discussion or exercise on the effects of changes in the poverty line at the policy, program, and individual levels.</p> <p data-bbox="342 856 581 888"><b>Assignments:</b></p> <p data-bbox="342 911 711 1020">Assignment Option 2A: Measuring Poverty Instruments</p>	<p data-bbox="748 390 911 422"><b>Readings</b></p> <p data-bbox="748 445 1406 476">Iceland, J Poverty in America, Chapter 3</p> <p data-bbox="748 499 1433 688">Quigley, W. (2003) Ending Poverty as We Know It, Chapters 4-5 Air Conditioning, Cable TV, and an Xbox: What Is Poverty in the United States Today? Backgrounder, The Heritage Foundation</p> <p data-bbox="748 711 1422 821">Kanbur, R. (2005). Growth, inequality and poverty: Some hard questions. <i>Journal of International Affairs</i> 58(2), 223-232</p> <p data-bbox="748 844 1446 1033">Haveman, R., and E. N Wolff. "The Concept and Measurement of Asset Poverty: Levels, Trends and Composition for the US, 1983-2001." <i>Journal of Economic Inequality</i> 2, no. 2 (2004): 145-169.</p> <p data-bbox="748 1056 1003 1087"><b>Presentations:</b></p> <p data-bbox="748 1110 1406 1178">Meyer &amp; T. Smeeding: Approaches to the Study of Poverty</p> <p data-bbox="748 1201 1422 1268">Haveman &amp; T. Smeeding: Perspectives on Measuring Poverty in the United States</p>

Session	Content and Class Exercises	Readings
3	<p data-bbox="342 394 662 506"><b>Description of Poverty and The Political Economy</b></p> <p data-bbox="342 579 672 615">A - Political Systems</p> <ul data-bbox="391 636 639 783" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="391 636 639 667">• Communism</li> <li data-bbox="391 674 589 705">• Socialism</li> <li data-bbox="391 711 605 743">• Capitalism</li> <li data-bbox="391 749 565 783">• Fascism</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="342 804 678 840">B - The role of Policy</p> <ul data-bbox="391 861 607 1087" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="391 861 607 934">• Market Regulation</li> <li data-bbox="391 940 529 972">• Labor</li> <li data-bbox="391 978 529 1010">• Trade</li> <li data-bbox="391 1016 529 1047">• Taxes</li> <li data-bbox="391 1054 586 1087">• Transfers</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="748 394 922 430"><b>Readings:</b></p> <p data-bbox="748 451 1446 598">Pressman, S. (2011). Microeconomics after Keynes: Post Keynesian economics and public policy. <i>American Journal of Economics and Sociology</i>, 70(2), 512-539.</p> <p data-bbox="748 619 1455 766">Adam Smith on poverty in George, V. Major Thinkers in Welfare: Contemporary Issues in Historical Perspective. Policy Press, 2010. Chapter 8. 155-178</p> <p data-bbox="748 787 1446 823">Iceland, J Poverty in America, Chapters 4-6</p> <p data-bbox="748 844 1422 991">De Soto, H. The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Succeeds in the West and Fails Everywhere Else. New York: Basic Books, 2000. Chapter 1</p> <p data-bbox="748 1012 1003 1047"><b>Presentations:</b></p> <p data-bbox="748 1068 1398 1180">Wallace, G: Who is Poor in the US and Across Nations, How Poor, and What are the trends? Video: Commanding Heights</p>

<b>Session</b>	<b>Content and Class Exercises</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<p data-bbox="228 388 253 420"><b>4</b></p>	<p data-bbox="342 388 607 617"><b>Multiple Perspectives, Philosophy or Landscape for Understanding Poverty</b></p> <p data-bbox="342 695 716 764">History of deserving vs. non deserving poor</p> <p data-bbox="342 785 672 896">The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</p> <p data-bbox="342 917 461 949">Hobbes</p> <p data-bbox="342 970 496 1001">Rousseau</p> <p data-bbox="342 1022 418 1054">Kant</p> <p data-bbox="342 1136 623 1167"><b>Class Activities:</b></p> <p data-bbox="342 1188 716 1299">Debate a current controversial topic from both perspectives</p>	<p data-bbox="748 388 922 420"><b>Readings:</b></p> <p data-bbox="748 441 1435 594">Lakoff, G. (1995). Metaphor, morality, and politics or why conservatives have left liberals in the dust. <i>Social Research</i> 62(2), 177 – 213.</p> <p data-bbox="748 615 1354 684">Rank, M One Nation Underprivileged, Chapter 2</p> <p data-bbox="748 705 1446 900">Small ML, Newman K. (2001). Urban poverty after <i>The Truly Disadvantaged: the rediscovery</i> of the family, the neighborhood, and culture. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 27:23–45.</p>

<b>Session</b>	<b>Content and Class Exercises</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Theories of Poverty</b></p> <p>Deficiency</p> <p>Capability Poverty</p> <p>Institutional Poverty</p> <p>Structural Explanations</p> <p>Social capital</p> <p>Race and Ethnicity</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Capability Approaches, DeFilippis, J., and S. Saegert. <i>The Community Development Reader</i>. New York: Taylor &amp; Francis, 2007. Chapter 36 by Amartya Sen, 319-327</p> <p>Midgley, J. &amp; Livermore, M. 1998 "Social capital and local economic development: implications for community social work practice". in Sherraden, M.S., &amp; Ninacs, W.A. (Ed.). (1998). <i>Community economic development and social work</i>. New York: Haworth. p. 29-40.</p> <p>Lewis, O. "The Culture of Poverty" from <i>Scientific American</i> pp 19-25</p> <p>Rank, M, <i>One Nation Underprivileged</i>, Chapter 3</p> <p>Issa, P., &amp; Zedlewski, S.R. (2011). <i>Poverty among older Americans, 2009</i>. The Urban Institute. Retirement Security Data Brief Number 1.</p> <p>Arimah, B.C. (2010). <i>The face of urban poverty: Explaining the prevalence of slums in developing countries</i>. United Nations University and the World Institute for Economics Development Research. Working Paper 2010/30.</p>

Session	Content and Class Exercises	Readings
6	<p><b>Poverty and Place</b></p> <p>Low-income neighborhoods, poverty and place, concentrated disadvantage</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Breaking stereotypes of the poor</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Neighborhoods and Poverty, Brooks-Gunn, 1997</p> <p>Rank, M One Nation Underprivileged, Chapters4-6</p> <p>Yates, Michael. 2004. Poverty and inequality in the global economy. Monthly Review 55, no. 9 (February). &lt;<a href="http://www.monthlyreview.org/0204yates.htm">http://www.monthlyreview.org/0204yates.htm</a>&gt; (11 February 2004).</p> <p>Silver, Hillary and Miller, S.M., From poverty to social exclusion: Lessons from Europe from poverty and race in America, (2006) edited by Hartman, Chester, Pages 57-70</p> <p>Ludwig, J., Duncan, G., J., Gennetian, L. A., Katz, L. F., Kessler, R., C., Kling, J. R., &amp; Sanbonmatsu, L. (2012). Neighborhood effects on the long-term well-being of low-income adults. <i>Science</i>, 337 doi:10.1126/science.1224648.</p> <p>Yates, M. D. (Ed.). (2007). <i>More unequal: Aspects of class in the United States</i>. New York: Monthly Review Press.</p>

Session	Content and Class Exercises	Readings
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<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Present Reality: Welfare Reform to Current Entitlement  Feminization of Poverty</b></p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Trends in Income Support,” with Robert Moffitt and Benjamin Cowan, in Changing Poverty, Changing Policies, M. Cancian and S. Danziger, editors, Russell Sage Foundation, New York: New York, 2009, 203-241</p> <p>Trends in the Level and Distribution of Income Support,” with Robert Moffitt, in Tax Policy and the Economy, J. Brown (ed.), MIT Press and NBER, 24, 2010, 111-152</p> <p>An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Anti-Poverty Programs in the United States,” with Yonatan Ben-Shalom and Robert Moffitt, in Oxford Handbook of Economics of Poverty, P. Jefferson, editor, Oxford University Press, 2012, 709-749</p> <p>Chapters 1 and 4 (by Brehm) in Giloth, R., and C. Austin. Mistakes to Success: Learning and Adapting When Things Go Wrong. iUniverse, 2010.</p> <p><b>Presentations:</b></p> <p>J. K. Scholz,, Impact of Anti-Poverty Programs in the United States</p> <p>T. Smeeding, The Labor Market and Its Role in Poverty/ Inequality Growth</p>
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<b>Session</b>	<b>Content and Class Exercises</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Social Work Approaches to Poverty</b></p> <p>Community organizing; Community and local economy development Advocacy Direct practice</p> <p><b>Class Activities:</b></p> <p>Organizational examination, presentation and discussion</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b></p> <p>Assignment Option 2A - Organizational Examination Presentation</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Weil and Gamble, 2001, typology of community practice</p> <p>Chaskin, R. "Building Community Capacity." <i>Urban Affairs Review</i> 36, no. 3 (2001): 291.</p> <p>Botes, L., &amp; van Rensburg, D. (2000). Community participation in development: Nine plagues and twelve commandments. <i>Community Development Journal</i>, 35(1), 41-58</p> <p>Blakely, E. J, and N. G Leigh. <i>Planning Local Economic Development: Theory and Practice</i>. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc, 2009.</p> <p>Michael Teitz, "Neighborhood economics: Local communities and regional markets," <i>Economic Development Quarterly</i>, Vol.3, No.2 (May 1989), 111-122.</p> <p>Ohmer, M.L., and W.S. Korr. "The Effectiveness of Community Practice Interventions: A Review of the Literature." <i>Research on Social Work Practice</i> 16, no. 2 (2006): 132.</p> <p>NASW (2009). <i>Social Work Speaks, NASW Policy Statements, 2006-2009</i> (7th Edition). Washington DC: NASW Press.</p> <p><b>Videos:</b></p> <p>Movie: Dudley Street Initiative</p>

<b>Session</b>	<b>Content and Class Exercises</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Social Development and Financial Capabilities</b>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Blank, R. M., &amp; Barr, M. S. (2009). Insufficient funds: Savings, assets, credit, and banking among low-income households. New York: Russell Sage Foundation Publications. Chapter 1</p> <p>Midgley, J., and M. Sherraden. "The Social Development Perspective in Social Policy." In <i>The Handbook of Social Policy, Second</i>: 279–294. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009.</p> <p>Lusardi, A., Schneider, D. J., &amp; Tufano, P. (2011). Financially fragile households: Evidence and implications (No. w17072). National Bureau of Economic Research.</p> <p><b>Presentations:</b></p> <p>Michael Collins, <i>Self-Sufficiency, Assets, and Poverty</i></p>

<b>Session</b>	<b>Content and Class Exercises</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Contemporary and Future Poverty Issues</b></p> <p>Recession Housing Crisis Neurobiology</p> <p><b>Assignments::</b> Assignment 3 – Concluding Paper</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Kingsley, Pettit, and Hendey (2010) Addressing the foreclosure crisis: Action oriented research in three cities. Urban Institute</p> <p>[to be entered Smeeding on recession.]</p> <p>Readings from Center for Developing Child; <a href="http://developingchild.harvard.edu/">http://developingchild.harvard.edu/</a></p> <p><b>Presentations:</b></p> <p>Slides: Magnuson, Early Childhood Experience and Poverty</p>

## Assignments

### **Assignment 1 Instructor Options**

#### **Option 1A: Defining What Poverty Means**

Describe what you think the definition of poverty should be in the United States using references and citations from class readings and other resources. Give your definition, reasoning, how it would be implemented, and the potential impact on U.S. policy. The paper should be a minimum of five pages (double spaced).

#### **Option 2A: Measuring Poverty Instruments**

Search the internet for instruments that measure one aspect of poverty. Write a two-page analysis evaluating the instrument. You must follow APA guidelines.

### **Assignment 2 Instructor Options**

#### **Option 2A: Organizational Examination Presentation**

Students select an agency or organization that through its services or activities is addressing the issues of poverty or the needs of those who are poor. It could be a current or past agency of employment, field placement agency, an agency with which you have volunteered or an agency or organization with which you have an interest. Through your own research, interviews with people at the organization, and your own observations

- Explain the programs provided and/or issues addressed by the organization. Why were the services, programs or activities started?
- What are the poverty issues being addressed e.g. homelessness, affordable housing, health care, child care etc.?
- How does the agency/organization's services, programs or activities help to alleviate or not alleviate the issues of poverty in the community?
- Analyze and evaluate the success of the services or activities of the agency in meeting the poverty needs of the community served.

In preparation for the class presentation the students, in consultation with the instructor will assign readings on their subject area prior to their class presentations. Students should use power point or slides for their presentations. A two page synopsis should be a summary of the key points of the presentation.

## **Option 2B: Program Brief**

The first step in assessing whether anti-poverty programs work or not is to understand them thoroughly. Prepare a program brief describing and evaluating an anti-poverty program that interests you and write a program or policy "brief." This brief should be a maximum of two single-spaced pages not including a cover page and references.

Your brief must include:

- Problem that necessitates the program or policy
- Program description
- History of the program
- Arguments in favor and against the program
- Program evaluation including statistics
- Program recommendations

Note that this is a very brief paper, so you must present the information in a concise manner. The purpose of this brief is to provide the best and most relevant information about a program.

## **Assignment 3: Final Assignment Options**

### **Option 3A: Poverty Strategies for Social Workers Concluding Paper**

Drawing from your past experiences, class readings, and class discussions, answer the following five questions.

1. Of the five theories of poverty discussed in class, which one theory resonates with you the most? Also identify an approach to ending poverty that arises out of that theory that resonates with you. Explain why you have chosen that theory and approach.
2. What do you as view as the biggest misconception of poverty by the public (if any) in the United States? Explain your reasoning for selecting that misconception and the impact of policy and practice of that misconception. What role (if any) should social workers have in changing that misconception?

3. Describe the meaning of social exclusion as you see it existing in the United States? What do you see is the role of social workers toward eliminating social exclusion and promoting social inclusion?
4. Describe how you believe (or do not believe) U.S. concepts of worthy vs. unworthy poor exist in the United States today, and how it is part of policy and practice. What should be the role of social workers in addressing or applying the concept?
5. Select the one area that you believe is most important toward the elimination of poverty in the U.S. Explain why you have selected that area. What is a role for social workers toward working toward the elimination of poverty in that area?

### **Option 3B: Final Reflection Paper on Social Worker Approaches to Issues of Poverty**

Based upon your professional direction/interests upon graduation from the school of social work, explore as a social worker how you would address the issues of poverty (micro practice, macro practice or both). Use appropriate citations and references as appropriate. The paper should be about five pages (double spaced)

### **Option 3C: Book Review**

The purpose of the book review is for the student or group of students to create an in-depth critical position on an influential book within the field of Poverty. The writer should be guided by addressing the following question: Does the author meet his/her objectives and were those objectives worth undertaking?

The book review must go beyond simply summarizing the book; "book reviews are not supposed to make up somebody else's mind. They are supposed to help him make up his own mind as to whether a book is for him or not." Orville Prescott –Co-editor of Books of the Times (New York Times).

If students would like to review a book that is not listed on the site they should consult with me.

Strict word limit: Max 2500

APA style. No title page necessary.

Writing should be clear and concise.

Suggested Organization

Intro (1 paragraph)

Description (1/3- 1/4)

Analysis and critique (2/3 – 3/4)

Conclusion (1 paragraph)

\* You will present a detailed (2page) outline of your book review to the class on (date). The presentation is an important opportunity to gather formative feedback on the book review analysis. Students are expected to prepare seriously for the presentation and incorporate feedback into their final written review.