

Public Policy 495. Fall 2009
Seminar on Poverty and Social Welfare Policy in the U.S.
MW 2:30-4:00, (extra sessions in December)
1230 Weill Hall

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Seminar Overview: The course examines trends in poverty and income inequality and social welfare programs and policies that affect the nonelderly poor in the United States. It analyzes the evolution of the labor market and social welfare policies since the War on Poverty was declared by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964 and how current programs and policies might be reformed to further reduce poverty. The course emphasizes understanding what we know from social science research about the strengths and weaknesses and the intended and unintended effects of current and proposed policies. The goal is to help the student become a policy analyst who understands the tradeoffs that are involved in choosing one policy option over another. The course does not address the political process or policy advocacy.

The course begins by addressing some basic questions about the nature of poverty, how economic and demographic changes affect poverty, and the scope of current social welfare programs and poverty. These include: What is poverty? How do we measure it? What does it mean to be poor in the U.S. today? How does economic growth affect poverty—does a rising tide lift all boats? How does the extent of poverty and the scope of social welfare programs in the U.S. compare to those in other industrialized countries?

Then, we review changes in social welfare programs and policies from the War on Poverty to the present. Particular attention will be given to understanding trends in poverty and inequality, the origins and consequences of the War on Poverty and a range of successful and unsuccessful welfare reform proposals leading up to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. We will evaluate the legacy of the 1996 reform and the operation and effects of the new program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. We will analyze how it affected the work effort and economic well-being of current and former recipients and others who are not steadily employed or are employed at low wage rates.

Particular attention will be paid to the effects of the recession that began in December 2007 and the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 (economic stimulus package) on the poor and unemployed. We will examine the labor market and social welfare policies of the Obama Administration, including employment and training programs, child support reforms, family policies, tax policies, and other social welfare policies.

Session Topics (readings for each session are listed below):

1. Sep . 9 Introduction to Seminar Topics & Overview of Assignments
2. Sep . 14 Discussion exercise: Who Should Receive What Kind of Government Benefits?
3. Sep . 16 What is Poverty? How is it Measured? What Does it Mean to be Poor in America?
4. Sep . 21 Trends in Poverty and Inequality, 1949- present
5. Sep . 23 David Morse: Preparing an abstract for your policy analysis research paper
6. Sep. 28 No seminar: work on abstracts which are due on Oct. 5 by 10pm.
7. Sep. 30 The Extent of Poverty and Income Inequality in Comparative Perspective
8. Oct. 5 The War on Poverty and the Expansion of Social Welfare Policies
9. Oct. 7 The Reagan Retrenchment and the Revolt Against Welfare, 1980-1986
10. Oct. 12 What Was the 1996 Welfare Reform? What Did it Accomplish?
11. Oct. 14 **First in-class exam**
- Oct. 19. Fall Break-no seminar**
12. Oct. 21 David Morse: Preparing your policy analysis research paper
13. Oct. 26 Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings–How the Labor Market Operates
14. Oct. 28 Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings–What Works for the Least Skilled?
14. Nov. 2 Can Family Policy Reduce Poverty?
15. Nov. 4 Father’s Employment and the Ability to Pay Child Support
16. Nov. 9 Hurricane Katrina and the Role of Race-neutral vs. Race-specific policies
17. Nov. 11 Changing Antipoverty Policies for the 21st Century–What Leading Policy Analysts are telling President Obama
18. Nov. 16 President Obama’s Social Policy Agenda–Can He Make the Changes?
19. Nov. 18 Discussion Exercise–How Would You Reallocate Antipoverty Spending?
20. **Nov. 23 Second in-class exam**
21. Nov. 25 No seminar: prepare policy analysis research papers for hearings
22. Nov. 30 Hearings I
23. Dec. 2 Hearings II (II-a, 2:30-4:00; II-b, 6:00-7:30)
24. Dec. 4 Hearings III (Friday, 3:00-5:00)
25. Dec. 7 Hearings IV
26. Dec. 9 Hearings V (V-a, 2:30-4:00; V-b, 6:00-7:30)
27. Dec 11 Hearings VI (Friday, 3:00-5:00)
28. Dec. 14 Last day of class; Hearings VII (if needed)

Dec. 14 **Final papers due @ 10am for all students presenting before December 11**

Dec. 16 **Final papers due @ 10am for students presenting on or after December 11**

Required Readings:

Jason De Parle, American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and the Nation’s Drive to End Welfare (paperback, 2004) and a course pack in two sections available from Excel Test Preparation on South University.

Suggested Supplemental Readings: (May be useful as background for policy analysis papers.)

Maria Cancian and Sheldon Danziger, eds., Changing Poverty, Changing Policies (2009)

William Julius Wilson, More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City (2009)

Richard Freeman, America Works (2007).
Kristin Seefeldt, Working After Welfare (2008)
James T. Patterson, America's Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century (2000).
Ron Haskins, Work Over Welfare: The Inside Story of the 1996 Welfare Reform Law (2006).
William Julius Wilson, When Work Disappears (1996).
Ann Chih Lin and David R. Harris, eds. The Colors of Poverty: Why Racial and Ethnic Disparities Persist (2008).
Rebecca Blank and Ron Haskins, eds., The New World of Welfare (2001).
Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, Promises I Can Keep (2005).
Peter Edelman, Harry Holzer and Paul Offner, Reconnecting Disadvantaged Young Men (2006).
Lee Rainwater and Timothy Smeeding, Poor Kids in a Rich Country (2003)
Kevin Lang, Poverty and Discrimination (2007)
Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk, America Unequal (1995).

Web sites that have working papers or data relevant to course or papers:

White House Policy Issues: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/>
Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity <http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/>
National Poverty Center <http://www.npc.umich.edu>
Michigan Program on Poverty and Social Welfare Policy:
<http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/research/poverty/index.php>
Institute for Research on Poverty <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp>
MDRC <http://www.mdrc.org>
Urban Institute <http://www.urban.org>
Administration for Children and Families <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov>
Assistant. Secy. of HHS for Planning and Evaluation <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov>
Brookings Institution <http://www.brookings.edu>
U.S. Census Bureau <http://www.census.gov>
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://www.bls.gov>
U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, 2008 Green Book,
<http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Documents.asp?section=2168>
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities <http://www.cbpp.org>
Center for Law and Social Policy <http://www.clasp.org>
Fragile Families and Child Well-Being <http://www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/>
Heritage Foundation <http://www.heritage.org>
Future of Children www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/journals
Institute for Women's Policy Research <http://www.iwpr.org>

Seminar Attendance

Students are expected to attend all sessions of the seminar and to have completed the reading assignment for that day prior to class so that they can participate in the discussion. **More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade by 1/3 of a grade (for example, from B+ to B).** Please e-mail me in advance of any absence and provide the reason why you are absent (for example, medical problems, family emergencies). **If you do not send me an e-mail with 24 hours of missing a session, I will assume that the absence is unexcused.** If you are

going to be absent, please ask one of your classmates to tape record the session for you.

Seminar Assignments & Grading

Grades will be based on:

- a) exam given in class on **Wednesday, October 14** (25 percent of your total grade);
- b) exam given in class on **Monday, November 23** (25 percent of your total grade);
- c) participation in class sessions—exercises, discussion assignments (10 percent);
- d) oral presentation of your policy analysis research paper and final version of the paper that responds to my comments on your draft paper (about 18-20 pages double-spaced) that must be submitted on time. Students who present prior to December 11 have a deadline of **Monday, December 14 @10am**; students who present on or after December 11 have a deadline of 10am on **Wednesday, December 16** (40 percent).

I will provide you with sample exam questions before each exam.

We will discuss the structure and format for the Mock Congressional hearings and the choices of topics for your policy analysis research paper in class during the first few sessions. I will offer some suggested topics for the paper, but you are encouraged to discuss with me other topics that are of interest to you. Examples of topics where there are multiple options for changing current social welfare programs and policies include those dealing with child care, preschool programs, health insurance, employment and training programs, the minimum wage, welfare, food stamps, child support, and housing.

Because I can only cover a limited number of topics in the seminar, this assignment is designed to provide you with the opportunity to prepare a policy analysis research paper on a topic that is of most interest to you.

Here are some paper titles from the students who were enrolled in the seminar in Fall 2007:

“The U.S. and the United Kingdom: Comparative Welfare Reform.”

“Gentrification, the Poor and Public Policy.”

“School Choice and Underprivileged Students: Publicly Funded Vouchers for Private Schools.”

“Reconnecting Absent Fathers”

“Analyzing the Healthy Marriage Initiative”

“Implications of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM)”

“Teen Pregnancy, Poverty and Welfare”

“The Minimum Wage and Employment”

“Deconcentrating Poverty”

“The Effects of Welfare Reform on Children”

On **Wednesday, September 23**, Ford School Writing Instructor, David Morse, will lead a discussion about how to prepare the abstract for your project. On **Wednesday, October 21**, he will return to talk about how to outline and draft your paper. He will also discuss how you can prepare for your oral presentation. David is also available to read drafts of your abstracts and papers. Sign-up on-line for appointments at:

www.fordschool.umich.edu/current/academic_resources.php

Students are encouraged to discuss potential paper topics with me during office hours and/or via e-mail interchanges at any time during the month of September. A brief abstract/outline of your paper topic (2 pages including about 5-8 references) must be submitted via e-mail attachment no later than **October 5 at 10pm**. I will not grade your abstract. The goal of this first assignment is to help you identify your topic early in the term, get my suggestions on shaping your topic and suggestions for additional references so that you can do the necessary background research by mid November and write the first draft of your paper by late November/early December.

The policy analysis research paper will require a substantial amount of work on your part. It is not an assignment that can be successfully completed in a short period of time. Papers should present a thoughtful policy analysis of the issue under study based on a *careful* review of the relevant empirical literature, with data and research evidence that documents the pros and cons of the policy reform you are analyzing. You will be graded only on the *quality* of the evidence you present in your paper not on any particular position taken. That is, it does not matter to me if a paper on the minimum wage proposes to increase the minimum wage or to eliminate it altogether; it does not matter to me if a paper wants to extend welfare benefits or to eliminate welfare. What matters is that the paper is well-researched, refers to recent data and policy analyses on the issues, and that your analysis is sound and that your conclusions are well-documented.

The paper will involve additional reading and analysis on your part. It should demonstrate mastery of the relevant literature and present creative policy alternatives. I will be available throughout the term to discuss your topic as it evolves, suggest additional references and read partial drafts of your paper.

A first draft of your paper must be submitted to me via email as a word document (and to the students who will be asking you questions at the Hearings) about 5 days prior to the session at which you will make your oral presentation. The specific due dates for first drafts are listed below. Note that students presenting at the first Hearing on Monday, November 30, have a deadline for the first draft at noon on Saturday, November 28.

I will prepare detailed, critical, but constructive, comments and suggestions for revision based on this draft and the discussion at the hearing and return this to you at the end of the hearing. The revised paper that responds to my comments and those from the open discussion is due no later than **Monday, December 14** for students presenting prior to December 11; it is due no later than **Wednesday, December 16** for students presenting on or after December 11.

Reading Assignments

All readings except the De Parle book are in the course pack. Students are expected to complete the readings prior to the session for which they are assigned so that they can thoughtfully participate in the class discussion.

September 9: Introduction to Seminar, Review Syllabus and Assignments

September 14: Discussion exercise: Who Should Receive What Kind of Government

Benefits? The exercise will be distributed at the first class. Each student should come to class with a copy of the exercise filled out. All students will be called on discuss their responses to the exercise; there are no “right” or “wrong” answers.

D. Ellwood. 1988. “Values and the Helping Conundrums,” Chapter 2 in Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family, pp.14-44.

September 16: What is Poverty? How is it Measured? What Does it Mean to be Poor in America?

J. Iceland. 2003. “Early Views of Poverty in America,” chapter 2 and “Methods of Measuring Poverty, Chapter 3 in Poverty in America: A Handbook, pp. 10-37.

U.S. Census Bureau. Poverty Thresholds 2008 (1 page)

R. Blank and M. Greenberg. 2008. “Improving the Measurement of Poverty,” Brookings Institution, Hamilton Project..

R. Rector “Understanding and Reducing Poverty in America,” Testimony before Joint Economic Committee, September, 25, 2008. Heritage Foundation.

D. Brown, 2009. “The Hidden Costs of Living Below the Poverty Line.” Washington Post News Service.

September 21: Trends in Poverty and Inequality, 1949- present

P. Krugman. 2007. “Introducing this Blog,” New York Times, 2007.

L. Uchitelle, “Is there (Middle Class) Life After Maytag? New York Times, August 26, 2007.

M. Bansal.”Conservative Activist Blames Poverty on Liberalism.” crosswalk.com, September 18, 2007.

S. Danziger and P. Gottschalk. 2004. “Diverging Fortunes: Trends in Poverty and Inequality,” The American People, Census 2000. Population Reference Bureau.

S. Danziger. 2009. “The Economy, Public Policy and Poverty,” unpublished.

G. Acs and S. Zimmerman. 2008. “U.S. Intragenerational Economic Mobility” excerpted from Economic Mobility Project papers: <http://www.economicmobility.org/>.

September 23: David Morse: Preparing an Abstract for your Policy Analysis Research Paper. Examples of abstracts from students who were enrolled in 2007 will be distributed prior to this session. Please read them prior to this session.

September 28: No seminar: work on abstracts, which are due October 5 by 10pm

September 30: The Extent of Poverty and Income Inequality in Comparative Perspective
J. Scholz and K. Levine. 2000. "The Evolution of Income Support Policy in Recent Decades," Focus, Newsletter of the Institute for Research on Poverty.

T. Smeeding, "Poverty, Work and Policy: the United States in Comparative Perspective." Testimony for the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, Committee on Ways and Means, Congress of the United States, February 13, 2007.

T. Smeeding and J. Waldfogel. "Fighting Poverty: Attentive Policy Can Make a Huge Difference," mimeo, August 2009

C. Jencks, "Does Inequality Matter?" Daedalus, Winter 2002.

J. Isaacs and I. Sawhill. "Reaching for the Prize: The Limits on Economic Mobility." Milken Institute Review, 4th Quarter 2008.

October 5: The War on Poverty and the Expansion of Social Welfare Policies

R. Nixon, "Welfare Reform: A Message from the President, 1969." Reprinted as "The Nixon Administration's Welfare Reform: The Family Assistance Plan."

R. Moffitt, "The Idea of a Negative Income Tax: Past, Present, and Future," Focus, Newsletter of the Institute for Research on Poverty, Summer 2004.

U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means "Appendix I: Spending for Need-Based Benefits, Fiscal Years 1968-2004," The 2008 Green Book, <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Documents.asp?section=2168>

Jason De Parle, American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and the Nation's Drive to End Welfare, chapters 1-5, pp. 1-100.

October 7: The Reagan Retrenchment and the Revolt Against Welfare, 1980-1996

M. Novak. "The New War on Poverty," from The New Consensus on Family and Welfare, American Enterprise Institute, 1987, excerpted in Focus, Newsletter of the Institute for Research on Poverty, 1988.

C. Murray, 1984. "Incentives to Fail I: Maximizing Short-Term Gains," Ch. 12 in Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980, pp. 154-166.

W. E. Williams, "Prepared Statement, "Hearings before the Joint Economic Committee,

Congress of the United States, Sept. 25, 1991.

L. Mead, 1997. "The Rise of Paternalism," Ch.1, The New Paternalism: Supervisory Approaches to Poverty, pp. 1-38.

October 12: What Was the 1996 Welfare Reform? What Did it Accomplish?

Jason De Parle, American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and the Nation's Drive to End Welfare, chapters 6-18 & Epilogue, pp. 101-338.

Comparison of AFDC and TANF/PRWORA (2 page chart)

S. K. Danziger and K. Seefeldt, "Barriers to Employment and the Hard to Serve." Focus, Newsletter of the Institute for Research on Poverty, 2002.

R. Rector, "The Impact of Welfare Reform," Statement Before the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, " July 19, 2006.

S. Parrott and A. Sherman, "TANF at 10: Program Results are More Mixed than Often Understood," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, August 17, 2006.

October 14: First in-class exam. Please bring at least 3 blue books for your answers.

October 19: Fall-Break, no seminar.

October 21: David Morse: Preparing your Policy Analysis Research Paper. Sample papers from students who were enrolled in 2007 will be distributed prior to this session. Please read them prior to this session.

October 26: Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings–How the Labor Market Operates

R. Freeman. 2007. America Works: The Exceptional U.S. Labor Market, Introduction, Ch. 1 & 2, pp. 1-40.

F. Levy. 2007. "Institutions and Income Inequality in 20th Century America," unpublished.

C. Goldin and L. Katz. 2009. "The Future of Inequality: The Other Reason Education Matters So Much," Milken Review.

"Inequality in America: What Role for Human Capital Policies?" Focus, Newsletter of the Institute for Research on Poverty.

October 28: Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings–What Works for the Least Skilled?

P. Edelman, H. Holzer and P. Offner. 2005. Reconnecting Disadvantaged Young Men. Urban Institute, 2005, Chapters 1, 3 & 7, pp. 1-9, 37-66, 123-132.

J. Bendor, J. Bordoff, J. Furman. 2007. "An Education Strategy to Promote Opportunity, Prosperity, and Growth," Brookings Institution, Hamilton Project.

November 2: Can Family Policy Reduce Poverty? (Guest Lecture: Kristin Seefeldt, Assistant Director, National Poverty Center)

K. Boo, "The Marriage Cure: Is Wedlock Really a Way Out of Poverty?" The New Yorker, August 18, 2003.

K. Edin. 2000. "What Do Low-Income Single Mothers Say About Marriage?" Social Problems, V.47/1.

R. Rector and M. Pardue. 2004. "Understanding the President's Healthy Marriage Initiative," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder, No. 1741.

S. Coontz and N. Folbre, 2002. "Marriage, Poverty, and Public Policy," A Discussion Paper from the Council on Contemporary Families.

November 4: Father's Employment and the Ability to Pay Child Support

I. Garfinkel, 2001. "Child Support in the New World of Welfare," Ch. 17 in The New World of Welfare, Brookings.

C. Murray. "Keep It in the Family," London Sunday Times, November 14, 1993.

D. J. Pate, "The Life Circumstances of African American Fathers with Children on W-2: An ethnographic inquiry." Focus, Newsletter of the Institute for Research on Poverty, 2002.

L. Kaufman, "When Child Support is Due, Even the Poor Find Little Mercy," New York Times, February 19, 2005.

E. Eckholm, "Mothers Scrimp as States Take Child Support," New York Times, December 1, 2007.

L. Mead, "Toward a Mandatory Work Policy for Men," The Future of Children, Fall 2007.

November 9: Hurricane Katrina and the Role of Race-neutral vs. Race-specific Policies

M. Tanner, "No Longer out of Sight: Chance for an Effective War on Poverty," Washington Times, September 9, 2005.

S. Danziger and S. K. Danziger, 2006. "Poverty, Race and Antipoverty Policy Before and After Hurricane Katrina," Du Bois Review, V.3/1.

W. J. Wilson, 2007. "A New Agenda for America's Ghetto Poor," Ch. 7 in Ending Poverty in America.

I. Sawhill, 2003. "The Behavioral Aspects of Poverty," The Public Interest.

November 11: Changing Antipoverty Policies for the 21st Century—What Leading Policy Analysts are Telling the Obama Administration

R. Rector, "Reducing Poverty by Revitalizing Marriage in Low-Income Communities: A memo to President-Elect Obama," January 13, 2009. Heritage Foundation.

D. Besharov, "Social Welfare Conservatism," American Enterprise Institute, January 2008.

S. Parrott. "Reducing Poverty: Four Key Policy Areas that Need More Policy and Foundation Attention." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 5, 2008.

G. Berlin. "Poverty and Philanthropy: Strategies for Change." MDRC, October 2, 2008.

K. Newman. "The Next Time Around: Some Thoughts on Poverty Policy in the Next Administration." August 2008.

M. Cooper. "To Create Jobs, Tennessee Looks to New Deal Model." New York Times, July 29, 2009.

November 16: President Obama's Social Welfare Policy Agenda—Can He Make the Changes?

B. Obama, "Changing the Odds for Urban America," July 2007.

Issue statements at: www.whitehouse.gov/issues/

Poverty

Family

Education

Urban

B. Obama. "We Need Fathers to Step Up," Parade Magazine, 06/21/2009.

B. Obama. "Remarks by the President at Urban and Metropolitan Policy Roundtable," 07/13/2009.

November 18: Discussion Exercise—How Would You Reallocate Antipoverty Spending?

The exercise will be distributed several days prior to this session.. Each student should come to class with a copy of the exercise filled out. All students will be called on discuss their responses to the exercise; there are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

November 23: Second in-class exam. Please bring at least 3 Blue Books

November 25: No seminar today—students prepare for hearings

November 30: Hearings I. Students presenting today must turn in their draft paper by noon, Saturday, November 28.

December 2: Hearings II-a & II-b. Students presenting today must turn in their draft paper by 10pm, Sunday, November 29

December 4: Hearings III. Students presenting today must turn in their draft paper by 10pm, Tuesday, December 1.

December 7 : Hearings IV. Students presenting today must turn in their papers by 10pm, Wednesday December 2.

December 9 : Hearings V-a and V-b. Students presenting today must turn in a draft of their paper by noon, Saturday, December 5.

December 11: Hearings VI. Students presenting today must turn in a draft of their paper by 10pm, Monday , December 7.

December 14: Hearings VII. Students presenting today must turn in a draft of their paper by 10pm, Thursday, December 10.

December 14--Final papers due by e-mail attachment by 10am for those presenting prior to December 11.

December 16--Final papers due by e-mail attachment by 10am for those presenting on or after December 11.

NOTE: When you submit your final paper, you should include a cover memo that reports how your paper has addressed my comments. If you have not incorporated all of my suggestions for revisions, be sure that the memo provides a strong rationale as to why you rejected my suggestions.