

**Public Policy 495: Seminar on Social Welfare Policy in the U.S.  
Fall 2007, MW 4:00-5:30, 1220 Weill Hall**

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**Seminar Overview:** The course examines social welfare programs and policies that affect the nonelderly poor in the U.S., emphasizing how they have evolved over the last four decades and how they might be reformed so as 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 these policies. The goal of the course is to help the student become a policy analyst who understands the tradeoffs that are involved in choosing one policy over another. The course is not intended to train a policy advocate whose main interest is to claim that her/his policy choice should be chosen over all others.

The course begins by addressing some basic questions about the nature of poverty and the scope of our current social welfare programs. What is poverty? How do we measure it? What does it mean to be poor in the U.S. today? How do the extent of poverty and the scope of social welfare programs in the U.S. compare to those in other industrialized countries?

We will review the development of American social welfare programs and policies from the War on Poverty that was declared by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 to the present. We will also evaluate the anti-poverty proposals that have been put forward by candidates who are seeking to be elected president in 2008. Particular attention will be given to understanding trends in poverty and inequality, the origins and consequences of the War on Poverty, the Great Society, and a range of successful and unsuccessful welfare reform proposals—President Nixon’s Family Assistance Plan, President Carter’s Program for Better Jobs and Income, President Clinton’s 1992 promise to “make work pay and end welfare as we know it” and the transformation of that promise into the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (PRWORA). We will evaluate the legacy of the 1996 reform and the operation and effects of the new program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), including its effects on the work effort and well-being of current and former welfare recipients and other individuals who are not steadily employed or are employed at low wage rates.

Particular attention will be paid to analyzing a wide range of social policy reform options that might further reduce poverty—labor market policies, employment and training programs, child support reforms, family policies, tax policies, etc.

**Session topics (readings for each session are listed below):**

1. Sept. 5 Introduction to Seminar & Overview of Assignments
2. Sept. 10 Discussion exercise: Who Should Receive What Kind of Assistance?
3. Sept. 12 What is Poverty? How is it Measured? What Does it Mean to be Poor in America?

4. Sept. 17 Trends in Poverty and Income Inequality, 1949- present
5. Sept. 19 The Extent of Poverty and the Scope of Social Welfare Programs in Comparative Perspective
6. Sept. 24 Discussion of Format & Topics for Mock Congressional Hearings
7. Sept. 26 David Morse will discuss the Policy Analysis Writing Assignment
8. Oct. 1 The War on Poverty and the Expansion of Social Welfare Policies
9. Oct. 3 The Reagan Retrenchment and the Revolt Against Welfare, 1980-1986
10. Oct. 8 What Was the 1996 Welfare Reform?
11. Oct. 10 What Did the 1996 Welfare Reform Accomplish? Where do we go from here?
- Oct. 15. Fall Break-no seminar**
12. Oct. 17 Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings–How the Labor Market Operates
13. Oct. 22 Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings–What Works for the Least Skilled?
14. Oct. 24 Can Family Policy Reduce Poverty?
15. Oct. 29 Father’s Employment and the Ability to Pay Child Support
16. Oct. 31 Antipoverty Policy after Hurricane Katrina
17. Nov. 5 Antipoverty Policies of Presidential Candidates
18. Nov. 7 Discussion Exercise–How Would You Reallocate Antipoverty Spending?
- 19. Nov. 12 Exam Review**
- 20. Nov. 14 EXAM IN CLASS**
21. Nov. 19 Return Exam & Discuss “Mock” Congressional Hearings
22. Nov. 21 No seminar–students prepare for hearings
23. Nov. 26 Hearings I
24. Nov. 28 Hearings II
25. Dec. 3 Hearings III
26. Dec. 5 Hearings IV
27. Dec. 10 Hearings V
- Dec. 14 Final Papers due for students presenting at first four hearings.**
- Dec. 17 Final papers due for students presenting on December 10.**

**Required Readings:**

Jason De Parle, American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and the Nation’s Drive to End Welfare (2004). (Available in paperback at Shaman Drum Book Store on State St.)

A course pack available from Excel Test Preparation on South University.

**Suggested Supplemental Book and Web sites:** (These may be useful as background for your policy analysis papers.)

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).

Sheldon Danziger and Robert Haveman, eds., Understanding Poverty (2002).

William Julius Wilson, When Work Disappears (1996).

Rebecca Blank, Sheldon Danziger and Robert Schoeni, Working and Poor: How Economic and Policy Changes are Affecting Low-Wage Workers (2006).

Kevin Lang, Poverty and Discrimination (2007).

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).  
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 Institute <http://www.brookings.edu>  
U.S. Census Bureau <http://www.census.gov>  
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>  
Institute for Women's Policy Research <http://www.iwpr.org>  
Future of Children <http://www.futureofchildren.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 the session for you.

### **Seminar Assignments & Grading**

Grades will be based on:

- a) exam given in class on **Wednesday, November 14** (40 percent of your total grade);
- b) participation in class sessions (10 percent);
- c) oral presentation of your policy analysis paper and your participation in "Mock" Congressional Hearings (10 percent);
- d) final version of the policy analysis paper (about 12-15 pages) that must be submitted no later than **Friday, December 14 at 5pm for students presenting at the first four hearings and Friday, December 17 at 5pm for those presenting on December 10** (40 percent).

The exam will cover all of the assigned readings and all of the issues discussed in sessions through the November 7<sup>th</sup> class. On Monday November 12, the seminar will be devoted to an exam review where I will be available to answer any questions that you might have. I will also provide you with some sample exam questions.

We will discuss the structure and format for the Mock Congressional hearings and the choices of topics for your paper in class on **Monday, September 24**. I will offer some suggested topics for the policy analysis 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, child support, and housing.

Here is a hypothetical example of a Mock Congressional Hearing that would involve four students. The policy question is, “Should the government provide public jobs of last resort to welfare recipients or absent fathers who seek but can not find jobs in the regular labor market?” One student’s assignment would be to review the policy history and research evidence on previous and current policies on the provision of jobs. A second student would review the social science evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of this policy and make a specific proposal about implementing a public jobs program. A third student might review the same social science evidence and instead propose that government provide skills training and not a job of last resort so that those who cannot find regular jobs would have a better chance of doing so. A fourth student might want make the case that the mothers of young children should be able to stay home and care for her children and not have to participate either in jobs or training programs as is currently the case under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF).

Because I can only cover a limited number of topics in the seminar, this assignment is designed to provide you with the opportunity to write a policy analysis paper on a topic that is of most interest to you. For example, I am not discussing programs designed to raise the skills of students and reduce high school dropout, but I expect that a number of students might be interested in writing about these educational policy issues.

On **Wednesday, September 26**, Ford School Writing Instructor, David Morse, will lead a session on the principles of writing policy analysis papers and will discuss tools that can help you prepare for your oral presentation at the Hearing and the written assignment.

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 some initial proposed references) must be submitted no later than the **October 3** session. This will not be graded. The goal of this first assignment is for you to identify your topic early in the term, get my suggestions on shaping your topic and suggestions for a more complete list of references so that you can do the necessary background research by mid November.

The policy analysis paper is **not** an assignment that can be successfully completed in a short period. Papers should present a 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 positions. You will be graded on the *quality* of the evidence you present in your paper, not on any position taken. The paper will involve additional reading and analysis on your

part, as most of you will be writing on topics not covered by the required readings. It should demonstrate mastery of the relevant literature and present alternatives to current programs and policies. The paper should **not** be an advocacy document. I will be happy to discuss your topic, suggest additional references and read partial drafts of your paper at any time during the semester; e-mail me at any time while you are doing your background reading or come to office hours.

A first draft of your paper must be submitted at least 5 days prior to the session at which you will make your oral presentation. I will prepare critical, but constructive, comments and suggestions for revision based on your written 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 5pm Friday, December 14** for all students except those presenting at the hearing on **December 10**. Their papers are due **no later than 5pm on Monday, December 17**.

### **Reading Assignments**

(All readings except the De Parle book are in the course pack. All readings should be completed for the session for which they are assigned so students can participate in the discussion.)

#### **September 5: Introduction to Seminar Topics & Overview of Assignments**

#### **September 10: Discussion exercise: Who Should Receive What Kind of Assistance?**

Please come to class with your copy of the exercise filled out. You will be expected to discuss how you have chosen to allocate the funds among the five individuals.

D. Ellwood. 1988. "Values and the Helping Conundrums," Chapter 2 in Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family.

#### **September 12: 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.

U.S. Census Bureau. Poverty Thresholds 2006 (1 page).

R. Rector and K. Johnson, "Understanding Poverty in America," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder #1713 (January 2004).

M. Federman et al., "What Does It Mean To Be Poor in America?" Monthly Labor Review, pp. 3-17 (May 1996).

#### **September 17: Trends in Poverty and Income Inequality, 1949- present**

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

L. Uchitelle, "The Richest of the Rich, Proud of a New Gilded Age," New York Times, July 16, 2007.

I. Sawhill and J. Morton, Economic Mobility: Is the American Dream Alive and Well? [www.economicmobility.org](http://www.economicmobility.org), 2007.

S. Danziger and P. Gottschalk, "Diverging Fortunes: Trends in Poverty and Inequality," The American People, Census 2000. Population Reference Bureau (December 2004).

L. Barrow and C. Rouse. "Does College Still Pay?" The Economist's Voice, 2005.

### **September 19: The Extent of Poverty and the Scope of Social Welfare Programs in Comparative Perspective**

J. K. Scholz and K. Levine, "The Evolution of Income Support Policy in Recent Decades," Focus, Fall 2000.

T. Smeeding, Poverty, Work and Policy: The United States in Comparative Perspective," Testimony to Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. Congress, February 13, 2007.

N. Glazer, "On Americans and Inequality," Daedalus, Summer 2003.

### **September 24: Discussion of Format & Topics for Mock Congressional Hearings**

Each student should come prepared to discuss her/his topic area. You should choose any topic that is of interest to you that is related to social welfare policies targeted on the disadvantaged. I will provide information about the content and length of the oral presentation, questioning of presenters by other students, etc.

### **September 26: David Morse, Ford School Writing Instructor, will discuss the Policy Analysis Writing Assignment**

Examples of abstracts and policy analysis papers by students who have taken this seminar are included in the coursepack. Please read them prior to this session.

Abstracts: "The Effect of Welfare Reform on Men and Children" and "Health Insurance Coverage for Welfare Leavers."

"Quality Child Care: The Next Chapter in making Work Pay for Families Transitioning off Welfare" Elizabeth Oltmans

"An Analysis of the Costs and Benefits of Public Service Employment Programs," Brooke DeRenzis

### **October 1: 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, "Appendix K: Spending for Income-Tested Benefits, Fiscal Years 1968-2002," The Green Book.

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

### **October 3: The Reagan Retrenchment and the Revolt Against Welfare, 1980-1996**

**Abstract for policy analysis paper is due today.**

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.

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

W. E. Williams, "Prepared Statement, "The War on Poverty." Hearings before the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Sept. 25, 1991.

L. Mead, "The Rise of Paternalism," Ch.1, The New Paternalism: Supervisory Approaches to Poverty, Brookings Institution, 1997.

### **October 8: What Was the 1996 Welfare Reform?**

J. De Parle, American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and the Nation's Drive to End Welfare, chapters 6-9, pp. 101-172.

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

### **October 10: What Did the 1996 Welfare Reform Accomplish? Where do we go from here?**

J. De Parle, American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and the Nation's Drive to End Welfare, chapters 10-18 & Epilogue, pp. 175-338.

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 15: Fall Break-no seminar**

**October 17: Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings—How the Labor Market Operates**

R. Freeman, Introduction, Chapter 1, “The U.S. Market-Driven Labor System” & Chapter 2, “When Markets Drive Outcomes,” America Works: The Exceptional U.S. Labor Market, 2007.

E. Applebaum, A. Bernhardt, and R. J. Murnane, Chapter 1, Low-Wage America: How Employers are Reshaping Opportunity in the Workplace, Russell Sage Foundation, 2003.

**October 22: Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings—What Works for the Least Skilled?**

“Inequality in America: What Role for Human Capital Policies?” Focus, Spring 2005.

M. Fifer and A. Krueger, “Summer Opportunity Scholarships: Narrowing the Skills Gap,” Brookings Institution, Hamilton Project, April 2006.

P. Edelman, H. Holzer and P. Offner. Chapter 1, “Introduction”, Chapter 3 “Education and Training Policies” and Chapter 7 “Summary and Conclusion ” Reconnecting Disadvantaged Young Men. Urban Institute, 2005.

**October 24: Can Family Policy Reduce Poverty? (Guest Lecture: Kristin Seefeldt, Assistant Director, National Poverty Center)**

K. Edin, “What Do Low-Income Single Mothers Say about Marriage?” Social Problems, 2000.

S. McLanahan, “Diverging Destinies: How Children are Faring Under the Second Demographic Transition,” Demography, November 2004. (recommended, not required)

R. Rector and M. Pardue, “Understanding the President’s Healthy Marriage Initiative,” Heritage Foundation Backgrounder, No. 1741, March 26, 2004.

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

**October 29: Father’s Employment and the Ability to Pay Child Support**

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

C. Murray, “Keep it in the Family,” London Sunday Times, November 14, 1993.

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

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.

**October 31: Antipoverty Policy after Hurricane Katrina**

S. Danziger and S. K. Danziger, “Poverty, Race and Antipoverty Policy Before and After



Hurricane Katrina,” DuBois Review, 2006.

Michael Tanner, “No Longer out of sight; Chance for an Effective War on Poverty,” Washington Times, September 9, 2005.

W. J. Wilson, “A New Agenda for America’s Ghetto Poor.” in J. Edwards, M. Crain & A. Kalleberg, Ending Poverty in America, 2007.

Center for American Progress, Task Force on Poverty, From Poverty to Prosperity: A National Strategy to Cut Poverty in Half, April 2007.

**November 5: Antipoverty Policies of Presidential Candidates**

I am hoping to add additional readings if other candidates make statements about poverty between the time this reading list was finalized and this session of the course.

M. Bloomberg, New York City Commission for Economic Opportunity. Increasing Opportunity and Reducing Poverty in New York City. 2007.

J. Edwards, “Ending Poverty in America,” 2007.

B. Obama, “Changing the Odds for Urban America,” 2007.

**November 7: Discussion Exercise—How Would You Reallocate Antipoverty Spending?**

Please come to class with your copy of the exercise filled out. You will be expected to discuss how you have chosen to allocate the funds among a range of social welfare programs.

**November 12: Exam Review**

Please come to class with any questions that you might have on readings, any additional issues presented in class, etc.

**November 14: EXAM IN CLASS**

**Please bring your own blue books; you may take until 6pm to complete the exam**

**November 19: Give Back Exam & Discuss “Mock” Congressional Hearings**

**November 21: NO seminar today—students prepare for hearings**

**November 26\*: Hearings I**

**Students presenting today must turn in a draft of their paper by November 21.**

**November 28\*: Hearings II**

**Students presenting today must turn in a draft of their paper by November 23.**

**December 3 \*: Hearings III**

**Students presenting today must turn in a draft of their paper by November 28.**

**December 5\* : Hearings IV**

**Students presenting today must turn in a draft of their paper by November 30.**

**December 10\*: Hearings V**

**Students presenting today must turn in a draft of their paper by December 5.**

\*Please note—depending on the number of students who take the course, we may have to extend class on days when we have Mock Congressional Hearings to end at 6pm instead of 5:30 pm or schedule an extra session for presentations..

**December 14 Final papers due by e-mail attachment by 5pm for students presenting at the first four hearings.**

**December 17 Final papers due by e-mail attachment by 5pm for students presenting at the fifth hearing.**