SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY, PP746
Winter 2008, Monday and Wednesday, 4:00-5:30pm, 1230 Weill Hall

Section 1: January 7-March 5, 2 credits (paper due March 5)
Section 2: January 7-April 14, 3 credits (paper due April 14)

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Course Overview:
This 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 and how they are influenced by and how they affect labor market outcomes and family structure.

The course begins by addressing some basic questions about the nature of poverty and the scope of current social welfare programs. 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 then 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. 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 evaluate the legacy of the 1996 reform and the operation 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. Are employers willing to hire welfare recipients? Are recipients finding and keeping jobs? What are the consequences of the new law for welfare recipients, their children, the absent parents of their children?

The course ends by analyzing a 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.
**Topics by Date:**

January 7: Introduction to Course and Overview of Assignments; Discussion exercise—Who Should Receive What Kind of Assistance?

January 9: What Does It Mean to Be Poor in America? Trends in Poverty and Income Inequality


January 21: Martin Luther King Day, no class. Please attend the M.L. King Day Symposium hosted by the National Poverty Center, 3-5:00 pm on “Jobs and Housing: Trust, Distrust, and Social Class in the Black Community.” Presentations by Sandra Smith, University of California-Berkeley, and Mary Pattillo, Northwestern University. Comments by David Harding, UM Sociology Department.

January 23: How did the 1996 Reform “End Welfare as We Knew It”?

January 28: The Extent of Poverty and the Scope of Social Welfare Programs in Comparative Perspective

January 30: The Labor Market and Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings

February 4: Promoting Marriage, Reducing Poverty

February 6: “The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America,” Speaker, Katherine Newman, Princeton University

February 11: Fathers’ Employment and Ability to Pay Child Support

February 13: Exam Review; Discussion Exercise: Reallocating Antipoverty Spending

February 18: Reforming Social Welfare Policy for the 21st Century

February 20: EXAM IN CLASS- TWO HOURS, 4:10-6:10 pm

All students are expected to attend all class sessions, including the Martin Luther King Day Symposium. **More than 1 unexcused absence will result in a lowering of your grade.**

**Required Books:**


A course pack will be available from Excel Test Preparation on South University. Part I should be available on January 8. Part II will be available by mid-January.

**Suggested Supplemental Readings:**


**Web Sites for background reading and research for policy analysis paper:**

National Poverty Center: http://www.npc.umich.edu
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
Asst. Secy. of HHS for Planning and Evaluation: http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov
Brookings Institution: http://www.brookings.edu
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

**Class Assignments and Grading for students registered for 2 credits:**

Grades will be based on the Wednesday February 20 in-class exam (50 percent), class participation (10 percent), and a 10-15 page policy analysis paper due after winter break, Wednesday, **March 5** (40 percent).

The policy analysis paper should focus on the successes and failures of a current poverty-related social policy and how you would modify the policy to more effectively meet its goals. Policies include, but are not limited to, policies related to child care, preschool programs, health insurance, job training, child support, family policy, income support policies, and housing. For example, someone might take the position that government should provide public jobs of last resort to welfare recipients or absent fathers who seek but can not find jobs or that TANF is too lenient and that recipients should not be allowed to receive cash benefits for more than 3 years or that mothers ought to have the choice to stay home and care for young children or that states should provide more access to education and training programs or that participation in marriage promotion activities should be made mandatory. You will be graded on the **quality** of the analysis you present in your paper not on any position taken. The paper should not be an advocacy document. While it should propose a social welfare policy reform, it should recognize the limits as well as strengths of the proposal.

Students should discuss potential paper topics with me in January during office hours and/or via e-mail interchanges and should submit a brief (1-2 page) abstract with selected references via e-mail no later than 10 pm on Monday, **January 28.**

**Class Assignments and Grading for Students registered for 3 credits:**

Grades will be based on the Wednesday, February 20 in-class exam (40 percent), class participation (10 percent), and a 25-30 page policy research/policy analysis paper (50 percent).
Each student will prepare a research/analysis paper (25-30 pages). These papers can cover topics similar to those described above. However, these longer papers should present a research/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 social policy issue. You will be graded on the **quality** of the evidence and analysis you present in your paper not on any position taken. The evidence should be drawn from the recent literature on your topic, especially rigorous evaluations of the kinds of policies and programs discussed during the class. The paper will involve extensive additional reading and analysis on your part. It should demonstrate mastery of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature. The paper should **not** be an advocacy document.

Students should discuss potential paper topics with me in January during office hours and/or via e-mail interchanges and should submit a brief (2 page) abstract for their paper with selected references via e-mail no later than 10pm on **Monday, February 4**.

A first draft of the paper is due to me no later than 10pm on **Monday, March 17**. Students registered for 3 credits will meet on March 24, March 26, March 31 and April 2 during the regular class time. Each student will have 15 minutes to make an oral presentation of her/his paper; this will be followed by open discussion and comments. Depending on the number of students who take the course for 3 credits, we may need to extend some of these sessions. Please reserve time until 6pm for each of these class sessions. We will select presentation dates for each student prior to the winter break.

I will prepare **detailed critical, but constructive**, comments and suggestions for revision based on your written draft and the class discussion and return that to you no later than one day after your oral presentation. The revised draft that responds to my comments and those from the open discussion is due by 10pm on **Monday, April 14**.

### Reading Assignments

(All readings except the De Parle book are in the course pack)

**January 7**  
Introduction to Course and Overview of Assignments; In-class Discussion Exercise, “Who should receive what kind of assistance?”

**January 9**  
What Does it Mean to Be Poor in America? Trends in Poverty and Income Inequality


J. DeParle, American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and the Nation’s Drive to End Welfare, Chapters 1-5, pp. 1-100.


January 21 Jobs and Housing: Trust, Distrust and Social Class in the Black Community.

Martin Luther King Day Symposium, 3:00-5:00, Annenberg Auditorium, followed by reception and book signing.


**January 23**  
**How did the 1996 Reform “End Welfare as We Knew It?”**

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


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.

There are many papers on the Women’s Employment Study available on line. A few are included in the course pack. See others on the web: [www.fordschool.umich.edu/research/poverty/publications.htm](http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/research/poverty/publications.htm)


**January 28**  
**The Extent of Poverty and the Scope of Social Welfare Programs in Comparative Perspective. Abstracts due for students enrolled for 2 credits.**


**January 30**  
**Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings: What Works?**


**February 4**  
**Promoting Marriage, Reducing Poverty, Guest Speaker, Kristin Seefeldt, National Poverty Center. Abstracts due for students enrolled for 3 credits.**


**February 6**  
**Guest Speaker, Katherine Newman, Princeton University, Annenberg Auditorium**


**February 11**  
**Father’s Employment and Ability to Pay Child Support**


February 13 Exam Review; Discussion Exercise: Reallocation Antipoverty Spending
Some sample exam questions will be distributed in advance. Please come to class with any questions you have on readings, speakers, class discussion


February 20 Exam—2 hours, 4:10-6:10 pm
March 5 Papers due in class for students enrolled for 2 credits; exams returned
March 17 Draft papers due by 10pm for students enrolled for 3 credits
March 24 Presentations by students enrolled for 3 credits, I
March 26 Presentations by students enrolled for 3 credits, II
March 31 Presentations by students enrolled for 3 credits, III
April 2 Presentations by students enrolled for 3 credits, IV
April 14 Revised papers due by 10pm for students enrolled for 3 credits