

PUBLIC POLICY AND AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS 1700B
SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

Monday 9-11:20
Spring 2011
Taubman Center for Public Policy, Room 103

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Office Hours: Monday 12-2
67 George Street, Room 109

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will introduce students to the social welfare policies and programs that affect low-income populations in the United States. Through readings, weekly discussions, a class presentation, and two short papers, students will gain an understanding of the nature and extent of poverty, its causes and consequences, and the historical and contemporary response of the government. In a final research paper, students will have the opportunity to apply insights gained from the course to a social welfare policy problem of their choosing.

The first section of the course will provide an overview of poverty in the United States. In this section, we will ask basic questions about the responsibility of the government to help people in need, and examine the nature and extent of poverty across the country. We will consider alternate ways to define who is poor and in need of assistance, and explore different theories about the causes of economic disadvantage.

The second section of the course will place contemporary social welfare policies in a historical context by examining the national government's response to poverty over time. This three-week section will examine policies enacted before President Lyndon Johnson's declaration of a "War on Poverty" (pre-1964), policies enacted between the "War on Poverty" and the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1964-1996), and policies currently in place to assist low-income populations (1996-present).

The final section of the course will focus on four specific social welfare policy topics: welfare, family and child wellbeing, homelessness, and race and poverty. In this section, we will focus on specific problems in greater detail, and analyze actual and potential government solutions to each problem. During these weeks, emphasis will be paid to the extent to which social science research can inform our thinking about the problem and the real or potential effectiveness of policy solutions.

READINGS & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are seven required texts. All are available at the Brown University Book Store and on reserve at the Rock Library. All other required readings will be available through OCRA and MyCourses. The password for OCRA is: *poverty*.

Blank, Rebecca. *It Takes a Nation: A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1997.

Danziger, Sheldon and Robert Haveman. *Understanding Poverty*. Cambridge, MA/New York: Harvard University Press/Russell Sage Foundation. 2001

Mead, Lawrence. *Beyond Entitlement*. New York, NY: Free Press. 1986.

Patterson, James T. *America's Struggle Against Poverty in the 20th Century (4th Edition)*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2000.

Trattner, Walter. *From Poor Law to Welfare State*. New York, NY: Free Press. 1974.

Wilson, William Julius. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Vintage Books. 1997.

Wilson, William Julius. *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. 2009.

Success in this class requires a combination of reading, discussion, and writing. Your final grade will be based on the following components:

- (1) Participation (20%): There are several components to your participation grade: your attendance, your preparation and contributions to class discussion, and your courtesy and respect for others. Regular attendance is essential to doing well in this course. If you anticipate missing a class or important deadline, please notify me ahead of time. More than one unexcused absence will impact your participation grade. Because materials covered in the readings will serve as a springboard for discussion, I expect you to have read and thought about the readings *before* class and to arrive ready to participate. Laptop and cell phone use is not permitted in class.
- (2) Presentation (20%): You will be responsible for presenting and facilitating discussion for one class period of your choosing. Presentations may be individual or group-based (groups can include up to 3 students). To facilitate class discussion on the day of your presentation, you are required to submit comments (on MyCourses) on the assigned readings by 6pm on the Sunday before class. Comments should be approximately 1-2 pages double-spaced, and may highlight readings or parts of readings that you found interesting, critique an author's argument, or apply concepts covered in the reading to a contemporary social welfare policy problem. In addition, comments should include questions for the class to consider and discuss. Presentations will begin during Week 5 (March 7th). Please sign up for a presentation on MyCourses.

- (3) Short Papers (15% each – 30% total): There will be two short (5-7 pages) papers. Paper prompts will be posted online two weeks before the due date. Paper #1 is due Friday March 11th at 5pm (via email) and paper #2 is due Friday April 8th at 5pm (via email).
- (4) Final Paper (30%): Each student is required to prepare a 15-20 page research paper on a topic of his/her choice. The paper should evaluate a policy or program that addresses (or tries to address) a contemporary social welfare problem. All papers must carefully define the problem being addressed, explain the policy that is either in place or has been proposed to address the problem, assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the policy, and ultimately argue for or against the policy or program.

In this paper, you will be graded on the quality of the your analysis, the evidence presented, and the clarity and presentation of your writing. You may take any position on a policy (for example, you may argue for or against the minimum wage, or for or against cash subsidies to needy families), but your position must be supported by supplemental readings, references to empirical research, and analysis.

Students must discuss potential topics with me (either in office hours or via email) by Monday, March 7th. A short overview of your paper (2-3 pages) and initial bibliography (5-8 references) is due by Friday April 15th. This overview will not be graded, but I will provide comments and suggest additional sources. Failure to submit a draft will automatically lower your final paper by one letter grade. The final paper is due Monday May 16th by 5pm.

IMPORTANT DATES/DEADLINES

- Monday, March 7th: Deadline for proposing a paper topic
- Friday March 11th: Paper #1 is due by 5pm (via email)
- Friday April 8th: Paper #2 is due by 5pm (via email).
- Friday April 15th: Overview/short draft of final paper is due by 5pm (via email)
- Monday May 16th: Final paper is due by 5pm (via email)

OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

Office hours are a great chance to ask questions or raise concerns you have about lectures, assignments, readings, or public policy in general. My scheduled office hours are on Monday between 12 and 2 in the Taubman Center for Public Policy (67 George Street, Rm 109). If you cannot make office hours, I am happy to setup an appointment.

You may email me with questions or concerns, and I will do my best to respond to you within 24 hours if your email is received Sunday-Thursday. Messages received Friday or Saturday may have to wait until Monday. Please note that I will not summarize lectures, discussions, readings, or missed classes via email.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Students that require academic accommodations based on a disability should contact Disability Support Services (DSS) at 401-863-9588 or dss@brown.edu for information on registration and accommodation. Further information about this process is available on the DSS website: http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Office_of_Student_Life/dss/.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, is absolutely unacceptable. Papers, assignments, and exams that violate standards of academic integrity are subject to penalties under Brown's Academic Code, which is available here:

http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/documens/principles.pdf

If you are unsure of the meaning of plagiarism, please discuss the matter with your professor or graduate student instructor. Penalties for academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, noncredit for an assignment, a failing grade, and/or direct referral to the Dean.

LECTURE, READING, & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

PART 1: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Week 1 (January 31st): Social Welfare Policy in the United States

- Ellwood, David. 1989. *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family*. New York: Basic Books. "Chapter 2: Values and Helping Conundrums" (pp. 14-44) (OCRA)
- Bennett, Drake. 2003. "Doing Disservice; The Benefits and Limits of Volunteerism" *American Prospect*. Volume 14(9): October: A10-A11. (OCRA)
- Starobin, P. 1998. "The Daddy State." *National Journal* (March 28): 678-683. (OCRA)
- Blank, Rebecca. 1997. *It Takes a Nation*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. "Chapter 5: Who Should Help the Poor" (pp. 191-219)
- Mead, Lawrence. 1986. *Beyond Entitlement*. New York, NY: Free Press. "Chapter 1: The Problem of Obligation in Social Policy." (pp. 1-17)

Week 2 (February 7th): Defining and Measuring Poverty

- Blank, Rebecca. 1997. *It Takes a Nation*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. "Chapter 1: The Changing Face of Poverty" (pp. 3-51)
- Burtless, Gary and Timothy Smeeding. "The Level, Trend, and Composition of American Poverty." In *Understanding Poverty*. Chapter 1 (pp. 27-68)
- Iceland, John and Kurt Bauman. 2007. "Income Poverty and Material Hardship: How Strong Is the Association?" *Journal of Socio-Economics* 36(3): pp. 376-396. (OCRA)
- Blank and Greenberg. 2008. "Improving the Measurement of Poverty," Brookings Institution, Hamilton Project. (OCRA)

Week 3 (February 14st): The Causes of Poverty

- Blank, Rebecca. 1997. *It Takes a Nation*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. "Chapter 2: A Changing Economy" (pp. 52-82)
- Freeman, Richard. "Chapter 3: The Rising Tide Lifts...?" In *Understanding Poverty*. (pp. 97-126)
- Wilson, William Julius. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Vintage Books. 1997. Chapters 1-5.
- Lewis, Oscar. "The Culture of Poverty," *Scientific American*, October 1966. (OCRA)
- Mead, Lawrence. 1986. *Beyond Entitlement*. New York, NY: Free Press. Chapters 4 and 11 (pp. 69-90 and 241-258)

Week 4 (February 21th): No class

PART 2: THE US RESPONSE TO POVERTY

Week 5 (February 28th): The Origins of America's Response to Poverty

- Trattner, Walter. *From Poor Law to Welfare State (6th Edition)*. New York, NY: Free Press. 1974.
- Patterson, James T. *America's Struggle Against Poverty in the 20th Century (4th Edition)*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2000. Chapters 1-5 (pp. 3-96)

Week 6 (March 7th): From the War on Poverty to Welfare Reform (1960-1996)

- Patterson, James T. *America's Struggle Against Poverty in the 20th Century* (4th Edition). Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2000. Chapters 6-14 (pp. 97-216)
- Danziger, Sheldon. 2001. "Welfare Reform Policy from Nixon to Clinton, What Role for Social Science?" In *Social Science and Policy Making*. edited by D. Featherman and M. Vinovskis. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. (pp. 137-164) (OCRA)
- Scholz, John Karl and Kara Levine. "Chapter 6: The Evolution of Income Support Policy in Recent Decades." In *Understanding Poverty*. (pp. 193-228)

PAPER #1 DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 11TH BY 5PM TO [ROBIN PHINNEY@BROWN.EDU](mailto:ROBIN_PHINNEY@BROWN.EDU)

Week 7 (March 14th): Welfare Reform and Beyond

- Pavetti, LaDonna. "Chapter 7: Welfare Policy in Transition." In *Understanding Poverty*. (pp. 229-277)
- Hacker, Jacob. "Privatizing Risk without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States." *American Political Science Review*, 98(2): May 2004. (pp. 243-260) (OCRA)
- Berry, Jeffrey and David Arons. *A Voice for Nonprofits*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press. Chapter 1: The Age of Nonprofits (pp. 1-23) (OCRA)
- Rector, Robert. "Reducing Poverty by Revitalizing Marriage in Low-Income Communities: A memo to President-Elect Obama." Heritage Foundation, January 13, 2009. (<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2009/01/reducing-poverty-by-revitalizing-marriage-in-low-income-communities>) (OCRA)
- Parrott, Sharon. "Reducing Poverty: Four Key Policy Areas that Need More Policy and Foundation Attention." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 5, 2008. (<http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/~//media/F3088E86B55D4F56B316808A96419B8F.ashx>) (OCRA)
- Newman, Katherine. "The Next Time Around: Some Thoughts on Poverty Policy in the Next Administration." August 2008. Milken Institute Review. (OCRA) (http://www.brookings.edu/~//media/Files/events/2008/0929_poverty/newman_paper.pdf)

PART 3: SPECIAL TOPICS IN SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY

Week 8 (April 21st): Welfare and Work

- Blank, Rebecca. "Evaluating Welfare Reform in the United States." *Journal of Economic Literature*, 40(4): December 2002. (OCRA)
- Blank, Rebecca. 1997. *It Takes a Nation*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. "Chapter 3: Changing Policy: America's Efforts to Provide a Social Safety Net" (pp. 83-132) and "Chapter 4: What do Antipoverty Programs Do?" (pp. 133-190)
- Turner, Lesley, Sheldon Danziger, and Kristin Seefeldt. "Failing the Transition from Welfare to Work," *Social Science Quarterly* 2006. (OCRA)
- Bloom, Dan and Charles Michalopoulos. *How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Employment and Income: A Synthesis of Research*. MDRC. 2001 (OCRA)
- Clark-Kauffman, Elizabeth, Greg J. Duncan, and Pamela Morris. "How Welfare Policies Affect Child and Adolescent Achievement." *American Economic Review* 93(2). May 2003. (OCRA)

Week 9 (April 4th): Family Structure & Child Wellbeing

- Cancian, Maria and Deborah Reed. "Chapter 2: Changes in Family Structure: Implications for Poverty and Related Policy." In *Understanding Poverty*. (pp. 69-98)
- Corcoran, Mary. "Chapter 4: Mobility, Persistence, and the Consequences of Poverty for Children: Child and Adult Outcomes." In *Understanding Poverty*. (pp. 127-161)
- Karoly, Lynn. "Chapter 9: Investing in the Future: Reducing Poverty through Human Capital Investments." In *Understanding Poverty*. (pp. 314-358)
- McLoyd, Vonnie. 1998. "Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Child Development," *American Psychologist* 53(2): 185-204. (OCRA)

PAPER #2 DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 8TH BY 5PM TO [ROBIN PHINNEY@BROWN.EDU](mailto:ROBIN_PHINNEY@BROWN.EDU)

Week 10 (April 11th): Housing Instability and Homelessness

- Rossi, Peter. 1990. "The Old Homeless and the New Homeless in Historical Perspective." *American Psychologist* 45(8): 954-959. (OCRA)
- Jencks, Christopher. 1994. *The Homeless*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. "Chapter 10: Do Shelters Cause Homelessness?" (pp. 103-106). (OCRA)
- Burt, Martha, Laudan Aron, Edgar Lee, and Jesse Valente. 2001. *Helping America's Homeless: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing?* Washington DC: Urban Institute Press. Chapters 1 and 3 (pp 1-22 and 56-96). (OCRA)
- Phinney, Robin, Sheldon Danziger, Harold Pollack, and Kristin Seefeldt. 2007. "Housing Instability among Current and Former Welfare Recipients." *American Journal of Public Health* 97(5). (OCRA)
- Elisabeth Gerber, Sarah Haradon, and Robin Phinney. 2006. "Reforming the System of Care A Review of the Literature on Housing and Service Arrangements for Homeless Populations." Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. (pp. 1-12) (OCRA)
- Cunningham, Mary. 2009. *Preventing and Ending Homelessness: Next Steps*. Washington DC: Urban Institute Press. (pp. 1-8). (OCRA)

OVERVIEW/SHORT DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 15TH BY 5PM

Week 11 (April 18th): Race and Poverty

- Wilson, William Julius. *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. 2009.
- Yinger, John. "Housing Discrimination and Residential Segregation as Causes of Poverty." In *Understanding Poverty*.
- Pettit, Becky and Bruce Western. April 2004. "Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in U.S. Incarceration." *American Sociological Review*, 69 (2): 151-169. (OCRA)

Week 12 (April 25th): Wrap Up (no readings)