

Poverty and Public Policy in the US

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Silsby 104
Winter 2008

In 2006, 12.3% of Americans lived in poverty according to official government statistics. How do we measure poverty? Why does poverty persist? Why is there so little political discourse about poverty in America today? How effective are various poverty alleviation programs? This course explores the nature and extent of poverty in the United States and the role of the government in addressing poverty issues, with a particular emphasis on federal employment and training programs. We will apply the class readings and discussions to an analysis of the poverty and employment situation in a local area.

Research Projects

A central part of this class will be an examination of the situation in Berlin, NH. Located in northern New Hampshire, Berlin has been struggling for the last few decades with the decline of the paper industry. There will be two parts to this class project. These projects will be conducted in groups.

For the first assignment, you will conduct research to examine some aspect of the nature, history and/or extent of poverty or employment issues in Berlin. Projects may include:

- an examination of historical census data for the area
- a comparison of help-wanted ads in Berlin over time

- interviews with local residents, officials and/or employers We will discuss additional ideas for project in class over the first few weeks.

In the second assignment, you will examine a poverty or employment policy program and how this program is working in Berlin. This project will require you to examine the literature on this policy, I have a list of potential readings, and then interview one or more social service providers in Berlin about their experiences. Possible policies to explore include:

- Welfare (TANF) and welfare reform
- Job retraining programs for displaced workers
- The Workforce Investment Act
- School-to-work programs
- Economic development programs

Field Trips We will take one, possibly two, field trips to Berlin during the term. The first field trip is tentatively scheduled for February 5. Since Berlin is pretty far away, the field trip will have to extend beyond class meeting times. We will work together to try to arrange a time that works for as many people as possible. The field trip will not be mandatory, but will be strongly recommended. It will be one of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of the class.

Take-Home Essays

There will be two timed take-home essays for the course covering the reading assignments and class discussions. These essays will be short, just two hours, and should not require major preparation as long as you have been keeping up with the readings. As discussed below, you can choose how much these essays will count towards the final grade.

Class Participation and Reading Questions

This class is a seminar, so completing the readings and class participation are very important. For each class I will provide some questions to think about as you do the readings. In class I will expect you to be ready to discuss your thoughts on these questions. You may be called upon randomly to start discussion on any of these topics.

In addition to class participation, attendance is also important. I allow three absences without an automatic penalty (missing the first class counts as half an absence). *Note that this allowance includes classes missed due to illness, recruiting, athletics, switching into the class late, etc., they are **not** “free” absences that you get in addition to absences for legitimate reasons.* The whole point is that I do not want to be in charge of deciding which absences are legitimate and which are not. Each absence beyond these three will reduce your class participation grade by 20 points each time (out of a maximum of 100), so missing eight classes (3 plus another 5, almost half of our 18 sessions) will result in an automatic zero for class participation (which means it will be impossible to get better than a B- in the class).

Extra Credit

The syllabus notes several events related to class topics that will be occurring throughout the term. You can earn extra credit for class by attending one of these events and writing a short 2-3 page paper about how the event relates to topics discussed in class. You may earn extra credit for up to two events. You may also propose other events to be included.

Grading

You get to decide how the different components of the course will contribute to the final grade. I will ask you to decide by January 24th how you want to weight each assignment. Keep in mind that the research projects will likely be group projects. I will ask members of the group to evaluate the contributions of the group members, including your own contributions. These evaluations may impact your grade on the assignment. The ranges of possible weights for the assignments are:

Class participation 15-20% Essay 1
10-25% Essay 2 10-25% Project 1
15-30% Project 2 15-30%

I grade out of 100 points using the following scale: 100-93: A 92.99-90: A- 89.99-87: B+ 86.99-83: B 82.99-80: B- 79.99-77: C+ 76.99-73: C Etc.

Note that the ranges go all the way to .99 (e.g. 89.99) and I don't round up (i.e. an 89.98 is still a B+).

Policies Academic honesty and conduct: I expect students in the class to conduct themselves in accordance with Dartmouth's honor code and with academic and personal integrity. Students are expected to take responsibility for doing their own work, providing proper citations whenever using words or ideas borrowed from others. I also expect you to respect other students while in class and when working together on projects.

Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak to me *by the end of the second week of the term*. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Disabilities Coordinator may be consulted to verify the documentation of the disability.

Course Schedule

Class	Date	Subject	Assignments
1	8-Jan	Introduction	
2	10-Jan	Measuring poverty & trends	
3	15-Jan	An unemployed community	
4	17-Jan	Urban poverty	
5	22-Jan	Rural poverty	
6	24-Jan	The culture of poverty	Decide on grade distrib.
7	29-Jan	Structural factors behind poverty	
8	31-Jan	The class divide	
9	5-Feb	FIELD TRIP TO BERLIN	Take-home essay due
10	7-Feb	Changing family structures	
11	12-Feb	The labor market & the workplace	
12	14-Feb	Historical roots of poverty policy	First paper due
13	19-Feb	Theories behind the policies	
14	21-Feb	Welfare reform	
15	26-Feb	Job training	
16	28-Feb	Other federal employment programs	
17	4-Mar	Place-based programs	Take-home essay due
18	6-Mar	Making work pay	
	13-Mar		Project report due

Text

When Work Disappears William Julius Wilson. Available at Wheelock & the Dartmouth Bookstore.

Readings Measuring poverty & Experiences of Poverty

Class#1- Introduction Class#2- Measuring poverty & trends

- . John Iceland. *Poverty in America: A Handbook*. Ch. 2-4, pp. 10-69
- . Heritage Foundation report. <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Welfare/bg2064.cfm> Read the introduction (up to but not including “What is Poverty”), glance over the rest.
- . Read Wikipedia on the Capabilities Approach http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capability_approach

Class#3- An unemployed community

. Jahoda, Lazarsfeld & Zeisel. *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*.

Wednesday, January 16 - "COLOR OF WEALTH: The Story Behind the US Racial Wealth Divide" 6 - 7:30 pm, Collis Commonground. Winter term Pan Asian Community Dinner, RSVP to "PAC"

Class#4- Urban poverty

- . Alex Kotlowitz 1991. *There Are No Children Here*. Chapters 1-4, pp.3-42.
- . Katherine Newman. 1999. *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. New York: Knopf/Russell Sage. Chapter 1. "Working Lives"

Sunday, January 20 – "The Grapes of Wrath" Movie at the HOP, 7:00pm

Class#5- Rural poverty

In class movie: Country Boys

- . Cynthia Duncan. *Worlds Apart: Why Poverty Persists in Rural America*. Chapter 1 "Blackwell", Chapter 2 "Dahlia"

Theories about the causes of poverty

Class#6- The Culture of Poverty

In class movie clip: Trading Places

- . Lewis, O. (1969). "The Culture of Poverty." in *On Understanding Poverty*, Patrick Moynihan editor.
- . William J. Wilson. *When Work Disappears*. Ch. 3 "Ghetto Related Behavior"
- . Orlando Patterson. "A Poverty of the Mind", op-ed in *The New York Times*. March 26, 2006.

Class#7- Structural factors behind poverty

- . W.A. Darity and P.L. Mason, 1998 "Evidence on Discrimination in Employment: Codes of Color, Codes of Gender," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12(2) selected pages
- . Wilson, William J. 1996. *When Work Disappears*. Ch. 2, "Societal Changes and Vulnerable Neighborhoods"
- . Selected pages (364-369) from John Yinger, "Housing Discrimination and Residential Segregation as Causes of Poverty," in Sheldon H. Danziger and Robert H. Haveman, editors, *Understanding Poverty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001)
- . David K. Shipler. 2004. *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Ch 1: Money and Its Opposite

Sunday, January 27, 7pm. "Waging a Living" showing at the HOP

Class#8- The class divide

Visit by Andrew Kolker & Louis Alvarez, producers of "People Like Us"

- . Ruby Payne. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Chs. 3 & 4
- . Paul Tough "The Class-Consciousness Raiser" *New York Times*. June 10, 2007 (pdf on blackboard)
- . Read the Wikipedia article on Cultural Capital http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_capital

Thursday, January 31, 7pm: Showing of "People Like Us" and discussion

Class#9- Field trip to Berlin

Class#10- Changing family structures

- . David T. Ellwood and Christopher Jencks, "The Spread of Single Parent Families in the United States since 1960," John F. Kennedy School of Government, Working Paper RWP04-008 selected pages
- . William J. Wilson. *When Work Disappears*, Ch. 4 "The Fading Inner City Family"

Kathryn Edin, "Few Good Men," *The American Prospect* vol.11(4), January 3, 2000, pages 1-8

Class#11- The labor market & the workplace

- David K. Shipler. 2004. *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Introduction "At the Edge of Poverty", Chapter 5 "The Daunting Workplace"
- Daniel Dohan 2003. *The Price of Poverty*. Ch 4 "The Experience of Low Wage Work" and Ch 5 "Networks and Work"

Wednesday, February 13, "The Last Laugh" Movie at the HOP, 7pm

Public policies

Class#12- Historical Roots of Poverty Policy

- "Public Assistance & Social Welfare" Lower East Side Tenement Museum online encyclopedia (Mostly a summary of Katz's *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*). (TenementSummary.pdf on Blackboard)
- Sigrun Kahl. "The Religious Roots of Modern Poverty Policy: Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Protestant Traditions Compared" *European Journal of Sociology* Vol. XLVI, 1 (2005), pp. 91-126.
- D. Ellwood. 1988. "Values and the Helping Conundrums," Chapter 2 in *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family*.

Class#13- Theories behind the policies

In class movie clip: Dave

- Lawrence Mead. 1986. *Beyond Entitlement*. Chapter 1: "The Problem of Obligation in Social Policy"
- Theda Skocpol "Targeting within Universalism: Politically Viable Policies to Combat Poverty in the United States" and Robert Greenstein "Universal and Targeted Approaches to Relieving Poverty: An Alternative View" in *The Urban Underclass*. 1991. Christopher Jencks & Paul Peterson editors.

Class#14- Welfare reform

- Jason DeParle *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare* Penguin Books, selected pages
- Scott W. Allard "The Changing Face of Welfare during the Bush Administration" *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 37(3): 304-332

Class#15- Job training

- Robert J. LaLonde. "The Promise of Public Sector-Sponsored Training Programs" *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 9, No. 2. (Spring, 1995), pp. 149-168.
- Judith M. Gueron and Gayle Hamilton "The Role of Education and Training in Welfare Reform" WR&B Brief #20 — April 2002
- Gordon Lafer. 2002. *The Job Training Charade*. Chapter 1: "Introduction"

Class#16- Other federal employment programs: WIA, unemployment insurance, displaced workers & youth

- Louis Uchitelle. "Retraining Laid-Off Workers, but for What?" *The New York Times*. March 26, 2006
- O'Leary, Christopher, Robert Straits, Stephen Wadner. *Job Training Policy in the United States*. **Chapter 4:** "Implementation Issues to Delivering Training Services to Adults under WIA"
- Osterman, "Is There A Problem With The Youth Labor Market, And If So How Should We Fix It?," in Katherine McFate, Roger Lawson, and William Julius Wilson, eds., *Poverty, Inequality, and The Future of Social Policy*

Class#17- Place-based programs: Modernization/economic development, empowerment zones, and mobility programs

. Alice O'Connor. "Modernization and the Rural Poor: Some Lessons from History" in *Rural Poverty in America* edited by Cynthia Duncan

. Ronald F. Ferguson, "Community Revitalization, Jobs and the Well-being of the Inner-City Poor," in Sheldon H. Danziger and Robert H. Haveman, editors, *Understanding Poverty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 417–443.

. Greg J. Duncan & Anita Zuberi. "Mobility Lessons from Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity" *Journal of Law and Social Policy*, 1(1) Summer 2006.

Class#18- Making work pay: EITC, minimum wage, subsidized employment

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