

Sociology 497A: Sociology of Poverty

11:15-12:30 Tuesday/Thursday, 140 Fenske

Fall Semester 2009

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Office Hours: Monday 2-4 and by appointment.

Course Description and Goals

This class examines the nature and extent of poverty in the United States. Students will gain familiarity with poverty issues as we review topics such as people's views of poverty, poverty measurement, the characteristics of the poverty population, international comparisons, underlying causes of poverty, and government programs and policies that address poverty.

The types of questions we focus on include the following: How have views of poverty evolved? What are the different methods people use to measure and understand poverty? Who are the poor? Why does poverty remain so pervasive? How do economic processes contribute to poverty? Are people from particular racial and ethnic backgrounds or family types inevitably more likely to be poor? What are the goals and purposes of social welfare programs? What are the limits of policy?

Students will write a paper on a poverty-related topic. Students will also be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and participate in classroom discussion. A major objective of the course is to encourage students to gain analytic skills and use their abilities to think independently and critically.

Specific course goals (what you should be able to do on completion of the course) are to:

1. Describe and synthesize concepts, principles, and theories used to study poverty.
2. Analyze and discuss contemporary poverty issues and information.
3. Communicate the above effectively, both orally and in writing.

Reading Materials: There are two required books for this class that are available at the Penn State Book Store:

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*, 2nd Edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. ISBN: 0520248414

Lindsey, Duncan. 2009. *Child Poverty and Inequality: Securing a Better Future for America's Children*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-530544-9.

In addition, there are readings available on-line via the Penn State library course reserves. To access these, follow the "Course Reserves" link at the PSU library homepage:

<http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul.html>

Course Requirements:

1. Midterm (October 1): 20%
2. Final exam (December, time and location to be announced): 25%
3. Research paper (~10-12 pages): 40%
 - a. Proposal (September 24): 10%
 - b. Final paper (December 1): 25%
 - c. Paper presentations (December 8 and 10): 5%
4. Class participation: 15%

The purpose of the final paper is for students to gain experience writing a well-organized research paper that analyzes a poverty-related issue.

Class participation and discussion are a vital part of this class. Students will be expected to actively participate every week, as it is through the open exchange of ideas during class that important learning takes place.

Students should submit the research paper assignments on ANGEL at: <https://cms.psu.edu/default.asp>. Those who do not already have an ANGEL account should open one at the web address above.

All assignments are due on the date specified above. No late work will be accepted without penalty. Exceptions can be made if you are ill (with physician's certification), have a family emergency (also with written proof), or are excused beforehand due to an officially documented conflicting activity for which your presence is essential.

Accommodating students with disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss accommodations, please contact me by the second class session.

Students requiring religious accommodation: If you need academic accommodation by virtue of your religion (e.g. missing a class, rescheduling an examination), please see me as soon as possible to discuss your needs.

Code of Academic Integrity

“Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.”

—From Penn State's *University Faculty Senate Policy 49-20*. For more information, please visit <http://www.psu.edu/advising/integrit.htm>

Class Outline

- Week 1. August 25 and 27: Introduction and views of poverty in history
- Week 2. September 1 and 3: Measurement and meaning of poverty
- Week 3. September 8 and 10: Characteristics of the poor population and the dynamics of poverty
- Week 4. September 15 and 17: Poverty in the international context
- Week 5. September 22 and 24: Causes of poverty: economic processes
- Week 6. September 29 and October 1: Focus on low-wage work and the economic crisis
- Week 7. October 6 and 8: Causes of poverty: social stratification and race issues
- Week 8. October 13 and 15: Gender issues
- Week 9. October 20 and 22: Family structure and culture
- Week 10. October 27 and 29: Immigration issues
- Week 11. November 3 and 5: Past and current welfare programs
- Week 12. November 10 and 12: Effects of welfare reform and anti-poverty policy
- Week 13. November 17 and 19: Policy: current focus and future directions
- Week 14. December 1 and 3: Conclusion and review
- Week 15. December 8 and 10: Paper presentations

Detailed Class Schedule (Tentative) and Readings

(B)= reading in a required text book

(R)= in course reserves (available on-line via Penn State library course reserves)

(I)= Internet address provided

(L)= link to the article via Penn State library holdings is provided.

Week 1. August 25 and 27: Introduction and views of poverty in history

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapters 1-2: pp. 1-19. **(B)**

Patterson, James T. 2000. *America's Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Chapter 3, "The Poor in the Depression": 37-54. **(R)**

NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Poll. 2001. [*Poverty in America*](#). (~5 pages) **(I)**

Week 2. September 1 and 3: Measurement and meaning of poverty

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 3: pp. 20-37. **(B)**

Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books, Chapter 4 ("Poverty as Capability Deprivation"): 87-110. **(R)**

DeParle, Jason. 2006. "[Orphaned.](#)" *New York Times Magazine*, August 27, 2006. (~5 pages) (L)

Benson, Clea. 2009. "[Changing Standards of 'Poor'](#)." *Congressional Quarterly Politics*, March 23, 2009. (~8 pages) (L)

Kakwani, Nanak. 2006. "[What is Poverty?](#)" United National Development Programme, International Poverty Center One Pager (September). (1 page) (I)

Week 3. September 8 and 10: Characteristics of the poor population and the dynamics of poverty

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 4: pp. 38-59. (B)

Isaacs, Julia B. 2007. "[Economic Mobility of Families Across Generations.](#)" The Brookings Institution Report, Economic Mobility Project, (~13 pages). (I)

Boo, Katherine. 2006. "[Swamp Nurse.](#)" *The New Yorker*. February 6: 54-65 (L)

Corcoran, Mary. 2001. "Mobility, Persistence, and the Consequences of Poverty for Children: Child and Adult Outcomes." In *Understanding Poverty*, edited by Sheldon Danziger and Robert Haveman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001, Chapter 4: 127-161. (R)

Week 4. September 15 and 17: Poverty in the international context

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 4: pp. 59-69. (B)

Isaacs, Julia B. and Isabel V. Sawhill. 2008. "[Reaching for the Prize: The Limits on Economic Mobility.](#)" *The Milken Institute Review* Fourth Quarter 2008: 18-27. (I)

Kristof, Nicholas. 2007. "[Wretched of the Earth.](#)" *New York Review of Books*, 5/31/2007, Vol. 54 Issue 9 (May 31): 34-36. (A few pages) (L)

Ferguson, Niall. 2007. "[The Least Among Us.](#)" *New York Times Sunday Review of Books* July 1, 2007. (~5 pages) (I)

Firebaugh, Glenn. 2003. *The New Geography of Global Income Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Chapters 1 and 2, "Massive Global Inequality: When Did Arise and Why Does It Matter" and "The Reversal of Historical Inequality Trends": (R)

Week 5. September 22 and 24: Causes of poverty: economic processes
Research proposal due September 24

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 5: pp. 70-79. (B)

Lindsey, Duncan. 2009. *Child Poverty and Inequality: Securing a Better Future for America's Children*. New York: Oxford University Press, Chapter 2: pp. 34-63. (B)

World Bank. 2001. [*World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*](#). Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 3: pp. 45-59. (I)

Sen, Amartya. 2009. "[Capitalism Beyond the Crisis](#)." *New York Review of Books* 56, 5: 27-30. (L)

Week 6. September 29 and October 1: Focus on low-wage work and the economic crisis
Midterm on October 1

Wilson, William Julius. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Chapter 2, "Societal Changes and Vulnerable Neighborhoods": pp. 25-50. (R)

Schwartzman, Paul. 2009. "[For Many Americans, Nowhere to Go but Down](#)." *The Washington Post*, August 4 (A few pages) (I)

Packer, George. 2009. "[The Ponzi State](#)." *The New Yorker* 85, 1: 81. (A few pages). (L)

Shipler, David K. 2005. *The Working Poor*. New York: Vintage Books, Chapter 2, "Work Doesn't Work": pp. 39-76. (R)

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2009. "[Too Poor to Make the News](#)." *New York Times*, June 13. (A few pages) (I)

Week 7. October 6 and 8: Social stratification and race issues

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 5: pp. 79-87. (B)

Lindsey, Duncan. 2009. *Child Poverty and Inequality: Securing a Better Future for America's Children*. New York: Oxford University Press, Chapter 1: pp. 11-33. (B)

Conley, Dalton. 2003. "Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America." In *Wealth and Poverty in America: A Reader*, edited by Dalton Conley. Malden,

MA: Blackwell Publishing, Chapter 8, “Being Black and Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America”: pp 83-95. **(R)**

Pager, Devah. 2008. “The Dynamics of Discrimination.” In *The Colors of Poverty: Why Racial and Ethnic Disparities Persist*, edited by Ann Chih Lin and David R. Harris. New York: Russell Sage, Chapter 2, pp. 21-51. **(R)**

Week 8. October 13 and 15: Gender issues

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 5: pp. 87-94. **(B)**

Blau, Francine D., Marianne A. Ferber, and Anne E. Winkler. 1998. *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*. Sadle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Chapter 7, “Differences in Occupations and Earnings: The Role of Labor Market Discrimination”: pp. 185-233. **(R)**

McDonald, Judith A. and Robert J. Thornton. 2007. “[Do New male and Female College Graduates Receive Unequal Pay?](#)” *Journal of Human Resources* 42, 1: 32-48. **(L)**

CONSAD. 2009. [An Analysis of Reasons for the Disparity in Wages Between Men and Women](#). CONSAD report prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor, January 12, *read only the Foreword, pp. 1-2*. **(I)**

Week 9. October 20 and 22: Family structure and culture

No class October 20!

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapters 5 and 6: pp. 94-117. **(B)**

Rector, Robert, Kirk A. Johnson, and Patrick F. Fagan. 2002. “[The Effect of Marriage on Child Poverty](#).” The Heritage Foundation, Center for Data Analysis Report #02-04, April 15, 2002. (10 pages) **(I)**

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. 2000. “[Child Poverty in Rich Nations](#).” *Innocenti Report Card* No. 1, June 2000: *focus on pp. 1-2, 11, top of page 13*. **(I)**

Ludwig, Jens and Susan Mayer. 2006. “[Culture and the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty: The Prevention Paradox](#).” *The Future of Children* 16, 2: 175-196. **(I)**

McLanahan, Sara and Christine Percheski. 2008. “Family Structure and the Reproduction of Inequalities.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 257-276. **(Optional)**

Week 10. October 27 and 29: Immigration issues

Samuelson, Robert J. 2004. "[The Changing Face of Poverty](#)." *Newsweek*. October 18, 144(16): 50. (L)

Rector, Robert. 2006. [Importing Poverty: Immigration and Poverty in the United States](#). Heritage Foundation Special Report, SR-9 (October 25) (~29 pages): (I)

Emeka, Amon. 2006. "[The Incidence of Poverty across Three Generations of Black and White Immigrants in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Assessing the Impacts of Race and Ancestry](#)." National Poverty Center Working Paper Series, University of Michigan, #06-17 (May): (I)

Kasinitz, Philip, John H. Mollenkopf, Mary C. Waters, and Jennifer Holdaway. 2008. *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 6, "The Second Generation Goes to Work." Pp. 173-204. (R)

Preston, Julia. 2009. "[A Slippery Place in the U.S. Work Force](#)." *New York Times*, March 22, 2009. (A few pages) (I)

Week 11. November 3 and 5: Past and current welfare programs in the U.S. No class November 5!

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 7: pp. 118-132. (B)

Lindsey, Duncan. 2009. *Child Poverty and Inequality: Securing a Better Future for America's Children*. New York: Oxford University Press, Chapter 3 and part of chapter 4: pp. 64-84. (B)

Secombe, Karen. 2007. *Families in Poverty*. New York: Pearson Education, Inc. Chapter 6, "Building Resiliency: Programs and Policies for Families": pp. 137-161. (R)

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2009. "[A Homespun Safety Net](#)." *The New York Times*, July 11. (A couple of pages) (I)

Week 12. November 10 and 12: Effects of welfare reform and anti-poverty policy

Rector, Robert. 1995. "[Why Congress Must Reform Welfare](#)." The Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder # 1063 (December 4). (A couple of pages) (I)

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 7: pp. 132-141. (B)

Lindsey, Duncan. 2009. *Child Poverty and Inequality: Securing a Better Future for America's Children*. New York: Oxford University Press, the rest of chapter 4: pp. 84-100. (B)

Haskins, Ron. 2006. "[The Outcomes of 1996 Welfare Reform.](#)" Testimony of Ron Haskins before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means (July 19). (12 pages) **(I)**

Hays, Sharon. 2003. *Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 8, "The 'Success' of Welfare Reform." Pp. 215-240. **(R)**

Week 13. November 17 and 19: Policy: current focus and future directions

Lindsey, Duncan. 2009. *Child Poverty and Inequality: Securing a Better Future for America's Children*. New York: Oxford University Press, Chapters 5-6: pp. 101-159. **(B)**

Horn, Wade F. 2001. "[Wedding Bell Blues: Marriage and Welfare Reform.](#)" *The Brookings Review* 19(3): 39-42. **(I)** (4 pages)

Lichter, Daniel T. 2001. "[Marriage as Public Policy.](#)" Progressive Policy Institute, Policy Report (September). **(I)** (12 pages)

Besharov, Douglas J. 2008. "[Social Welfare Conservatism.](#)" American Enterprise Institute Outlooks & On the Issues report (January 8) (3 pages). **(I)**

Smolensky, Eugene. 2007. "Children in the Vanguard of the U.S. Welfare State: A Review of Janet Currie's *The Invisible Safety Net* and Jane Waldfogel's *What Children Need.*" *Journal of Economic Literature* 45 (December): 1011-1023. **(Optional)**

Week 14. December 1 and 3: Conclusion and review Final paper due December 1

Iceland, John. 2006. *Poverty in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 8: pp. 142-147. **(B)**

Lindsey, Duncan. 2009. *Child Poverty and Inequality: Securing a Better Future for America's Children*. New York: Oxford University Press, Chapters 5-6: pp. 101-159. **(B)**

Week 15. December 8 and 10: Paper presentations 10 minute oral presentations

Final exam: time and location to be announced