Overview:

This class is an introduction to some of the issues and topics in law and poverty. From the syllabus you will see that this class is not a survey of the existing poverty programs or of the ways different groups experience poverty. Though there is equal merit in a class presenting all that is, or is not, being done on behalf of the poor, this class will be more theoretical, although current practices do form the backdrop for the work of the course. The class also mixes traditional legal readings with social science articles on poverty, as such the readings may have a different style from your readings in other classes. The law school offers a number of other courses that relate to this course and I encourage you to explore them all.

Expectations:

The expectation is that you will come to class on time, prepared to discuss the readings and prepared to participate actively and respectfully in discussions. You are also expected to check blackboard for course related announcements. You can expect that I will do my best to answer any questions you have during class or in the subsequent class. If any questions do arise but you thought of them outside of class, email me.

In order to ensure an engaged classroom dynamic, you must come to class prepared throughout the semester. I reserve the right to bump up final grades that are bordering between two grades for classroom participation and involvement, for example a borderline B+/A- can become an A- for classroom participation and involvement.

A word about classroom respect: this class attracts people of all political backgrounds and beliefs and central to the success of the class is an atmosphere of intellectual and personal honesty. As a professor, I rely upon students to express different perspectives on the issues; what this means is that if you feel the tone of the class is skewing too far in one direction – along conservative or liberal lines or with regard to a particular issue – it is up to you to interject your own perspective. Each year there are people that see the class as too conservative and others who see it as too liberal; yet, the class will be made up of a range of views and I will rely upon you to make sure these views are expressed. Though class discussions may expose you to ideas you find wrong or even distasteful, lack of respect for peers hampers the learning environment. If during the course you become concerned about any issue involving the class, do not hesitate to speak with me.
Assignments and Grading:

The readings are found on Blackboard and online. I have decided to organize the readings in a manner more similar to a graduate course rather than normal law school classes. I have done this because of my assumption that Poverty Law is something you are passionate about and that you may therefore choose to read more than is strictly necessarily. I will indicate which readings to prioritize in class. The assignments are grouped according to topic and in order to allow our discussion to be flexible, I will let you know specific daily assignments in class. There are three assessment options: (1) a service project, (2) a research paper, or (3) a standard final exam.

(1) Service

Should you choose to do a service project in law and poverty, the project must be approved in advance. The requirement is that the project not be something that you are committed to outside of this class or with an organization you have a prior history of involvement (it can be within a field you have knowledge of but cannot be simply a repeat of prior experiences). The work you do must be uncompensated; however, the choice of project and group you work with (though you could design your own independent work as well) is entirely up to you. The total time commitment is 60 hours. At the conclusion of the project, a 15 page paper (double spaced, size 12 Times font) which describes your work, experiences, and understanding of your organization and your role (1/2 the paper) and places your service in the context of existing literature (1/2 the paper) is due to my email account before the start of the final exam.

(2) Research

Should you choose to do a research paper, I must approve the paper topic and we must individually discuss your paper during office hours or by appointment within the first three weeks of the start of the semester. The choice of topic is yours and can span a wide range of topics but must relate to some area of law and poverty. Do discuss with me any topic you are interested or passionate about within the first four weeks of the start of class and email an outline or overview to my email account within eight weeks of the start of class.

Papers must be well written, well edited, with all authorities properly cited using footnotes, not endnotes. They should be roughly 30 pages long, double spaced, Times 12 font, but quality matters more than quantity. As with your work in all classes, all work must conform to the honor code and be your own work, not someone else’s work passed off as your own. For these papers, I will more highly value work that is new or original to work that simply repeats the existing debate in the literature. Finally, work for this class can be used to count towards your Upper Level Writing Requirement, but this must be discussed with me early in the semester and come with slightly higher expectations. Research papers are due to my email account before the start of the final exam.
(3) Final Exam

The final exam in this class will be a closed book exam made up of two essays. Ability to demonstrate a comfort with the course materials and ideas will be rewarded in grading the exams. Given the ability to alternatively write a research paper or do a service project, there will be no flexibility with regard to exam date and time as set by the Registrar’s Office. Examsoft is not required but you are bound by the honor code to respect the closed book nature of the final.
List of Materials

NOTE: Not all of these readings will be required, but if you are interested in any particular topic the list below should help you find readings on that topic. The required readings will be identified in advance both in class and on blackboard and depend upon where we get each class.

For the first class read A1, A5, A8, and A9.

A. INTRODUCTION TO U.S. POVERTY


B. MEASURING POVERTY


C. Causes of Poverty


D. International Poverty


E. Welfare


**F. Welfare Litigation**


**G. Welfare Conditionality**


**H. Societal Privilege**

I. DELIVERY ALTERNATIVES

1. Muhammad Yunus, Banker to the Poor (2003), Ch. 10, “Applications in the United States and Other Wealthy Countries,” p174-192.


3. R. Kent Weaver, Ending Welfare as We Know It (2000), EITC p78-84.


J. HOUSING


K. Health


L. Education


M. MARKET APPROACHES


N. WORKING POOR


O. IMMIGRATION

1. SONIA NAZARIO, ENRIQUE’S JOURNEY (2007).


P. HURRICANE KATRINA

Q. ECONOMIC MOBILITY

   Background available at: http://www.bowlingalone.com/


R. RACE AND POVERTY


S. GENDER


T. ROLE OF THE LAWYER


U. INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCES

1. JACK KNIGHT, INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL CONFLICT 1-47 (1992), Ch. 1 – Ch. 2.


V. LOCAL MATERIALS
