This course examines trends in poverty and income inequality and social welfare programs and policies that affect the nonelderly poor in the United States. We will examine how these programs and policies have evolved over the last five 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 goal of the course is to help the student become a policy analyst who understands the tradeoffs that are involved in choosing one policy over another. The course is not intended to train a policy advocate whose main interest is to claim that her/his policy choice should be chosen over all others.

The course begins by addressing some basic questions about the nature of poverty and the scope of current social welfare programs. These include: What is poverty? How do we measure it? 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 1964 to the present. Particular attention will be given to understanding trends in poverty, mobility and inequality, the origins and consequences of the War on Poverty, the Great Society, and several major welfare reform proposals that did not pass—President Nixon’s Family Assistance Plan, President Carter’s Program for Better Jobs and Income.

We then review the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (PRWORA) and evaluate how the cash welfare program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), that replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), has affected 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. The questions addressed include the following: Are employers willing to hire welfare recipients? Are recipients finding and keeping jobs? What are the consequences of the new work-oriented safety net for welfare recipients, their children, the absent parents of their children?

Particular attention will also be paid to the effects of the Great Recession that officially lasted from December 2007 through June 2009 on workers and families and the extent to which the stimulus bill, The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, offset some of the negative effects of the rising unemployment rate and falling value of household assets. We will also focus on the future of social welfare spending given that so much attention is now being
given to reducing the federal deficit. The course concludes with an analysis of social policy reform options that might further reduce poverty, including labor market policies, employment and training programs, child support reforms, family policies, income tax policies.

Students are expected to attend each session, participate in class discussion, take two in-class exams (one on Wednesday, October 12, the other on Wednesday, November 16) and prepare a 20-page (double-spaced) policy analysis research paper.

Each student will present her/his draft paper in class sessions that start Monday, November 28 and then submit a revised paper on Monday, December 19. Each student will also serve as a “Congressional Panelist” at one of the hearings. The assignments are described in detail below.

Session Topics by date:
1. Sept 7  Introduction to Seminar Topics & Overview of Assignments
3. Sept 14 What is Poverty? How is it Measured? What Does it Mean to be Poor?
4. Sept 19 Trends in Poverty, Mobility and Inequality, 1949- present
5. Sept 21 David Morse, Ford School Writing Instructor: Preparing abstracts and policy analysis research papers
6. Sept 26 Poverty and Social Welfare Policies in Comparative Perspective
8. Oct 3 The Historical Context: Views about Welfare Programs and the Poor
11. Oct 12 In-class Exam
October 17 Fall Break-no class
14. Oct 26 Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings–Programs for the Least Skilled
15. Oct 31 Disconnected Men, Incarceration and the Labor Market
16. Nov 2 Family Policies as Anti-poverty Policy
17. Nov 7 Father’s Employment and the Ability to Pay Child Support
20. Nov 16 In-class exam
21. Nov 21 Discussion of procedures for Mock Congressional Hearings
22. Nov 23 No class—students prepare drafts of policy analysis research papers
23. Nov 28 Mock Congressional Hearings I
24. Nov 30 Mock Congressional Hearings II
25. Dec 5 Mock Congressional Hearings III and IIIB (5:30-7:30)
26. Dec 7 Mock Congressional Hearings IV and IVB (5:30-7:30)
27. Dec 12 Mock Congressional Hearings V (cancelled if we meet on Friday December 9 from 4:00-7:00)
Dec 19 Final papers due @ noon

We need to schedule three additional 90 minute sessions so that all students have sufficient time
to present their papers. Also, because students are expected to revise their papers after they present them, in the past we have cancelled the last day of class. This means that we need four additional sessions. I am proposing that we meet from 5:30-7:30pm on Monday December 5, 5:30-7:30pm on Wednesday December 7 and in a double session from 4:00-7:00 on Friday December 9. I will provide food at these last three additional sessions

**Seminar Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all sessions of the seminar and to have completed the readings for that day prior to class so that they can participate in the discussion. **More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade by 1/3 of a grade (for example, from B+ to B).** Please e-mail me in advance of any absence with the reason (for example, medical problem, family emergency). If I do not receive an e-mail within 24 hours after the session, I will assume that the absence is unexcused. If you are absent, it is acceptable to have a classmate tape record the session for you.

**Class Assignments and Grading**

Grades will be based on the two in-class exams (50 percent total—25 percent each exam), participation in class discussion and participation in mock congressional hearings (10 percent), and a 20-page double spaced paper (text limit; references and tables can be in addition to the text) policy analysis research paper (40 percent).

I will provide sample exam questions from previous years about one week before each exam.

**Policy Analysis Research Paper**

Each student will prepare a research/analysis paper on a topic of her/his choice. The topics include issues covered in the course and related ones that are not covered. For example, we do not study issues related to health insurance coverage of the poor or early childhood education in class, but these are excellent topics. The paper should present a research/policy analysis of the social welfare policy 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 issue.

You will be graded on the **quality** of the evidence and analysis you present in your paper not on any position taken. That is, it does not matter to me if a paper on the minimum wage proposes to increase the minimum wage or to eliminate it altogether; it does not matter to me if a paper wants to extend welfare benefits or to eliminate welfare. What matters is that the paper is well-researched, refers to recent data and policy analyses on the issue, and that the analysis is sound and the conclusions are well-documented.

The paper will require extensive reading (in addition to the required readings on the syllabus) and analysis on your part. It is not an assignment that can be successfully completed in a short period of time. It should demonstrate mastery of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature. Relevant articles on your topic may be written by economists, political scientists, sociologists, developmental psychologists, public health or social work researchers.

Because I can only cover a limited number of topics, this assignment gives you an opportunity to master a topic that is of most interest to you. Student paper titles from recent years include:
“Anti-poverty Policies in the U.S. and the United Kingdom in Comparative Perspective”
“School Choice and Underprivileged Students: Publicly Funded Vouchers for Private Schools.”
“Reducing Barriers to Work for Marginalized Black Men”
“Analyzing the Healthy Marriage Initiative”
“Implications of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM)”
“School-Based Health Clinics as a Solution to Children’s Mental Health Care Needs”
“The Effects of Welfare Reform on Children”
“Improving Child Care Options for Low-Income Families”

On Wednesday September 21, Ford School Writing Instructor, David Morse, will lead a discussion about how to prepare the abstract for your project; he will also talk about how to outline and draft your paper and how to prepare for your oral presentation. We will distribute abstracts and papers from previous years as examples prior to this session.

Students should discuss potential paper topics with me in September during office hours and/or via e-mail interchanges and should submit a brief abstract/outline of the paper topic (2 pages including about 5-8 references) via e-mail attachment no later than 5 pm on Sunday, October 2. I will not grade your abstract. The goal of this first assignment is to help you identify your topic early in the term; get my suggestions on shaping your topic and suggestions for additional references so that you can begin your necessary background research prior to the fall term break. I will be available throughout the term to discuss your topic as it evolves, suggest additional references and read partial drafts of your paper.

A first draft of the paper is due to me no later than 10pm five days prior to the date of the hearing at which you will present your paper. For students presenting at the first hearing on Monday, November 28, the first draft is due at 10pm on Friday, November 25; for those presenting Wednesday, November 30, the draft is due at noon on Sunday, November 27. We will select presentation dates after I have reviewed all of the abstracts, but prior to October 10. All sessions after the Thanksgiving break will be “Mock Congressional Hearings.” Each student will have 15 minutes to make an oral presentation of her/his paper; this will be followed by 15 minutes of questions from the “Congressional Panel” of three fellow students and then open discussion. I expect to schedule three presentations per session. As mentioned above, I have scheduled additional sessions outside of class time so that all students can present their papers.

I will prepare detailed critical, but constructive, comments and suggestions for revision based on your first draft and the class discussion and return that to you after your oral presentation. I do not grade the abstract or the first draft, but expect that your revised draft will respond to my detailed comments. When you submit your final paper, you should include a cover memo that reports how your paper has addressed my comments and those from the open discussion after your oral presentation. If you have not incorporated all of these suggestions for revisions, the memo should provide a strong rationale as to why you rejected them. The final paper is due by 9am on Monday, December 19.

Suggested Supplemental Readings:
James T. Patterson, America’s Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century (2000).
William Julius Wilson, More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City (2009)
Kevin Lang, Poverty and Discrimination (2007)
Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, Promises I Can Keep (2005).
Mary Pattillo, Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City (2007).
Sandra Smith, Lone Pursuit: Distrust & Defensive Individualism Among the Black Poor (2007).

Web Sites for background reading and research for policy analysis paper:
National Poverty Center ______________________________ http://www.npc.umich.edu
White House Policy Issues: ____________________________ http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/
Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity _________________ http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/
Institute for Research on Poverty: __________________________ http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp
MDRC: ____________________________ http://www.mdrc.org
Urban Institute: ____________________________ http://www.urban.org
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

Reading Assignments
(Web links for readings are provided; you should have access to all journal articles if you log in via Mirlyn. If no web link is listed, the reading will be distributed prior to class via email attachment.)

September 7: Introduction to Seminar, Review Syllabus and Assignments
September 12: Discussion exercise: Who Should Receive What Kind of Government Assistance?
The exercise will be distributed at the first class. Each student should come to class with a copy of the exercise filled out. All students will be called on to discuss their responses to the exercise; there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. The Ellwood reading should help you think about how to respond to the exercise.


September 14: What is Poverty? How is it Measured? What Does it Mean to be Poor?


http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html


http://www.brookings.edu~/media/Files/rc/papers/2008/12_poverty_measurement_blank/12_poverty_measurement_blank.pdf

September 19. Trends in Poverty, Mobility and Income Inequality, 1949-present

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412055_america_insecure.pdf


http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=67&did=109766828&SrcMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=6&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1293649782&clientId=17822


September 21: David Morse: Preparing abstracts and policy analysis research papers
Sample papers from students who were enrolled in previous years will be distributed prior to this session. Please read them prior to this session. Abstracts are due by 5pm. Sunday, October 2.

September 26: Poverty and Social Welfare Policies in Comparative Perspective


U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means “Appendix I: Spending for
October 3: The Historical Context: Views about Welfare Programs and the Poor

Jason De Parle, American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and the Nation’s Drive to End Welfare, chapters 1-5, pp. 1-100.


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


October 12 In-Class Exam
October 17—Fall Break


October 24: Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings–How the Labor Market Operates


October 26: Policies to Raise Employment and Earnings–Programs for the Least Skilled?


October 31: Disconnected Men, Incarceration and the Labor Market


November 2: Can Family Policy Reduce Poverty?


November 7: Father’s Employment and the Ability to Pay Child Support


D. J. Pate, “The Life Circumstances of African American Fathers with Children on W-2: An
http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc222.pdf#page=25
(Note—first 6 pages of PDF only)

http://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/docs/17_02_03.pdf

L. Kaufman, “When Child Support is Due, Even the Poor Find Little Mercy,” New York Times, 
February 19, 2005. 
http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/19/nyregion/19support.html?scp=1&sq=%22When%20Child%20Support%20is%20Due%22&st=cse


November 9: Reducing the Deficit and Antipoverty Policies for the 21st Century

http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=77007#axzz1TEVFfU6z


November 14: Discussion Exercise–How Would You Reallocation Antipoverty Spending? 
The exercise will be distributed prior to this session. Each student should come to class with a copy of the exercise filled out. All students will be called on discuss their responses to the exercise; there are no “right” or “wrong” answers.

November 16: Second in-class exam

November 21 Discussion of procedures for Mock Congressional Hearings

November 23 No class—students prepare drafts of policy analysis research papers

November 28 Mock Congressional Hearings I (drafts due 10pm November 25)
November 30  Mock Congressional Hearings II (drafts due noon November 27)

December 5  Mock Congressional Hearings III & III B (drafts due 10pm November 30)

December 7  Mock Congressional Hearings IV & IV B (drafts due 10pm December 2)

December 12  Mock Congressional Hearings V (replaced by Friday, December 9 double session; papers due 10pm December 4)

December 19  Final papers due @ noon