

**Social Work 501: Poverty and Inequality
Winter 2007**

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Course Description

This course is a critical analysis of poverty and inequality in the US and internationally, with an analytic and descriptive focus on measurement, processes of production and perpetuation, and public policy responses. It examines competing perspectives on the causes of poverty, the role of policy, and socioeconomic dimensions of stratification, including race, ethnicity, class, gender, immigration status, disability, age, sexual orientation and family structure.

This course builds upon historical and critical analysis content covered in the "Intellectual and Historical Foundations of Professional Social Work Practice" and links to policy advocacy and policy analysis material covered in policy practice sessions in the "Macro practice" sequence. Together, these courses offer a foundation in the historical, political, economic, and philosophical context of US social welfare policy, familiarize students with current policy controversies, build skills in policy analysis and advocacy, and help students critically analyze competing perspectives on poverty and inequality, in preparation for socially just social work practice.

Course goal: To enable students to critically examine the dimensions, causes, consequences and perpetuation of poverty and inequality in the U.S., to understand the role of policy in producing, maintaining, and alleviating poverty and inequality, and to offer a theoretical and analytic foundation for promoting social and economic justice.

Objectives: At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand different measures of poverty and inequality, their value and empirical dimensions, and their consequences for the social construction of the problem, policy response, and the political debate.
2. Be familiar with the type, magnitude, and trends of disparities in several dimensions including power, status, health, as well as social and economic inequalities.
3. Understand stratification and inequality by various social dimensions such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, immigration status, disability, age, sexual orientation and family structure.
4. Understand the role of historical oppression in creating and perpetuating poverty and inequality.
5. Critically analyze competing perspectives on the causes of poverty, particularly individual versus structural explanations, how these theories are invoked in public discourse, and their implications for governmental response.

6. Critically evaluate and apply alternative perspectives on poverty and inequality, both within the US and global contexts, that encompass conflicts between labor and capital, synergistic processes of economic and social stratification, and other critical forces that produce and perpetuate poverty and inequality.
7. Understand the role of public policy and its implementation in producing, maintaining and alleviating poverty and inequality in the US.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy:

Readings: Our major texts are *Poverty in America* by John Iceland (2006, University of California Press) and *Social Capital and Welfare Reform* by Jo Anne Schneider (2006, Columbia University Press). Other readings are on electronic reserve with a one hard copy available at the SSW Library.

Written assignments: A series of written assignments will integrate class concepts and readings through analysis of a substantive area of student interests.

1. **Demographics briefing on poverty or inequality.** Students will complete a four page demographic briefing on economic (income or wealth) or social inequalities within or between demographically defined groups. Example: children and poverty; wealth among older women and men; income disparities and voter participation; or Latino families and health care access.
2. **Paper on competing perspectives and policies.** Building upon the first assignment (demographics briefing), students will critically analyze policy implications that derive from two competing theoretical perspectives on the cause of poverty or inequality.
3. **Final Paper.** For the final paper, students will revise and combine the first two parts and integrate class readings.

Written work should follow format guidelines on page 13 of the *SSW Guidelines for Student Papers*. Use a standard 12 point font (such as Times Roman or Arial), double-space lines, and staple multiple-page assignments in the upper left-hand corner. Major assignments will be accompanied by assessment rubrics. Because of the condensed time-frame of the course, instructors may not have adequate time to comment on assignments turned in past the due date and students will not be able to reflect on comments. To motivate promptness, late assignments will automatically lose one point (1.0 on a 4.0 scale) per day.

Work submitted should be the student's original writing created in response to the assignment in question. Any suspected plagiarism will be investigated and referred to Student Services or the MSW program director. See <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm#plagiarism> for some useful rules as to what constitutes proper versus plagiaristic use of others' work. Confirmed plagiarism, even minor, will result in "no credit" for the assignment and may result in no credit for the course.

Mid-term evaluation: There will be a written mid-term quiz. This quiz will provide an opportunity for students to consolidate background knowledge before tackling the more conceptual issues in the second half of the course. Students will be encouraged to provide mid-term feedback to instructors at this time as well.

Participation: Course format will include lecture, class and small group discussion, and web-based communication. It is hoped that a tone of open discussion will be maintained throughout the course. We have much to learn from one another and this intellectual and personal growth is best achieved by encouraging dialogue and respecting diverse points of view.

In-class: Students are expected to attend class regularly, do the assigned reading in advance of class, and participate in class discussions and exercises. Participation and preparation are evaluated in class. If you must miss class, please notify Jen before class and negotiate a plan for making up your participation.

On-line: Students are expected to participate in an online discussion of course concepts and readings, including leading the discussion for one reading or set of readings. On-line participation can be completed via any networked computer including the SSW computer lab. The lab is staffed by a consultant, and additional help can be arranged by contacting sswtech@u.washington.edu or calling the lab at 206-685-2295. Find the discussion board at <https://catalyst.washington.edu/webtools/epost/register.cgi?owner=romich&id=17991>.

Grading: Numeric grades of 0-4.0 will be given according the following scale:

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|---------|---------|--|
| A/A- | 4.0-3.5 | Mastery of subject content, demonstration of critical analysis, creativity and/or complexity in completion of the assignment. The difference between an A and an A- is based on the degree to which these skills are demonstrated. |
| B+ | 3.4-3.2 | Mastery of subject content beyond expected competency, but lacking in additional critical analysis, creativity, or complexity in the completion of the assignment. |
| B | 3.1-2.9 | Mastery of subject content at level of expected competency; meets course expectations. |
| B- | 2.8-2.5 | Less than adequate competency, but demonstrates student learning and potential for mastery of subject content. |
| C-/C+ | 2.4-1.7 | Demonstrates a minimal understanding of subject content. Significant areas need improvement to meet course expectations. |
| Failing | 0 | Failure to demonstrate minimal understanding of subject content. |

Assignments and activities are weighted as follows:

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|---|------|
| Participation (whole class, electronic and group) | 35% |
| Mid-term quiz | 20%* |
| Written assignments (demographic briefing, analysis of competing perspectives, and final paper) | 45%* |

*Students who feel that their midterm grade does not reflect their commitment to the course may make arrangements with me to weight the midterm and paper at 10% and 55% respectively.

Academic Accommodations: If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disability Resources for Students, 448 Schmitz, 206-543-8924 (V/TTY). If you have a letter from the office of Disability Resources for Students indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for this class.

Winter 2007 Preliminary Course Summary*

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Readings</u> | <u>Activities</u> <u>Assignments are underlined</u> |
|--|--|---|--|
| 1. January 10 | Introduction: Poverty and Inequality | <i>Iceland, ch. 1-2, Lui et al, Krugman, Rector & Johnson</i> | |
| 2. January 17 | Poverty: Measurement and magnitude | <i>Iceland, ch 3-4, Shulman ch 1-2, Census report, Aron-Dine & Shapiro, Folbre, CBPP</i> | Self-Sufficiency Standard (<u>prepare before class</u>) |
| 3. January 24 | Inequality: National and international measurement and implications | <i>Schiller, Kawachi et al., World Bank tables, Dricoll, Sen, World Bank report, Century Foundation</i> | Library workshop Possible writing workshop |
| 4. January 31 | Theory I. Why are some people poor? | <i>Iceland ch 5, Gilder, Heckman</i> | Midterm quiz <u>Paper part I due Saturday, February 3, 11:59 pm.**</u> |
| 5. February 7 | Theory II. Why are there poor people? | <i>Iceland, ch. 6, Anders, Rector, Okun, Piven & Cloward</i> | <u>On-line midterm course evaluation (optional)</u> Midterm exams returned |
| 6. February 14 | American policies I: anti-poverty programs | <i>Iceland, ch 7, Schneider selections, Haskins</i> | Debate (<u>prepare before class</u>) Paper part I returned |
| 7. February 21 | American policies II: The less visible welfare state | <i>Schneider, ch 13, Abramovitz & Morgen, Karoly, Romich, Mishra</i> | Paper peer review <u>Paper part II due Saturday, February 24, 11:59 pm.</u> |
| 8. February 28 | Local to global anti-poverty efforts | <i>Hills & Waldfogel, Krugman, Friedman & Boshara, Bhagwati, Mishra</i> | Peer presentations (<u>prepare before class</u>) |
| 9. March 7 | Integration and wrap-up | <i>Iceland, Folbre</i> | Peer presentations Paper part 2 returned |
| <u>Final paper due 3/16, hard copy with previous drafts attached, 5:00 pm to Xiang Gao's mailbox</u> | | | |

*Specific readings, timing of topics, and assignment due dates are subject to change and adjustment as needed in order to help students meet course objectives. Expect updates throughout the quarter.

** Unless otherwise noted, papers may be left in Xiang Gao's box in the faculty mail room or sent via e-mail to gaoxiang@u.washington.edu as a Microsoft Word or pdf document. Other formats may not convert properly. Please check layout and pagination (using print preview) before sending. Early papers are always accepted.

Readings

Readings should be completed and contemplated before class. Please bring copies of the readings or detailed notes to class. Readings other than the Iceland and Schneider texts are available via e-reserves at <https://eres.lib.washington.edu/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=5273> .

1. January 10 - Introduction: Poverty and inequality

Iceland, ch. 1-2

Lui, M., Robles, B. J., Leondar-Wright, B., Brewer, R. M., & Adamson, R. (2006). "Overview: The roots of the racial wealth divide." *The Color of Wealth*. New York: New Press. p. 1-27.

Krugman, P. (2002, October 20). For richer: How the permissive capitalism of the boom destroyed American equality. *The New York Times Magazine*, pp. 9.

Rector, R. E., & Johnson, K. A. (2004). Understanding Poverty in America (*Backgrounder* paper no. 1713, pp. 16). Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation.

2. January 17 - Poverty: Measurement and magnitude

Iceland, ch. 3-4

DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B. D., & Lee, C. H. (2006). *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States, 2005*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

Aron-Dine, A., & Shapiro, I. (2006). "New data show extraordinary jump in income concentration in 2004." Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Folbre, N. (2001). Introduction p. xi-xx and Ch. 3 "Measuring Success" p. 53-80. *The invisible heart : economics and family values*. New York, New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton.

Shulman, B. (2005). Ch 1-2. *The Betrayal of Work: How Low-Wage Jobs Fail 30 Million Americans and Their Families*. New York: The New Press.

(*optional*) Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2006). "Poverty remains higher, and median income for non-elderly is lower, than when recession hit bottom." Report issued September 1. Washington DC.

3. January 24 - Inequality: National and international measurement and implications

Schiller, B. (2004). Ch. 2: "Inequality," *The economics of poverty and discrimination* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Kawachi, I., R. G. Wilkinson, et al. (1999). "Introduction" p. xi – xxxiv. *The Society and Population Health Reader*. New York, The New Press.

[skim text and work to understand tables] Chen, S., & Ravallion, M. (2004). How have the world's poorest fared since the early 1980s? *The World Bank Research Observer*, 19(2), 141-169.

Driscoll, D. D. (1996). "The IMF and the World Bank: How Do They Differ?", Hoover Institution. 2003. <http://www.imf.org/operations/driscoll896.html>

Sen, A. (2002). How to Judge Globalism. *The American Prospect* 13(1). <http://www.prospect.org/print/V13/1/sen-a.html>

(optional) World Bank. (2005). "Overview". In *World development report 2006: Equity and development* (pp. 1-17). Washington, DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

(optional) Century Foundation Guide to the Issues: "Rags to Riches? The American Dream is Less Common in the United States than Elsewhere" New York: Century Foundation. Pg. 1-9.

4. January 31 - Theory I. Why are some people poor?

Iceland ch 5

Gilder, G. (1989). The Nature of Poverty. In I. Colby, *Social Welfare policy: Perspectives Patterns, Insights*, pp.47-57. Chicago: Dorsey Press.

Heckman, James, 2005. "Inequality in America: What Role for Human Capital Policies?" Institute for Research on Poverty *Focus*, 23, 3. 1-11.

5. February 7 - Theory II. Why are there poor people?

Iceland, ch. 6

Anders, Gary, C. (1981). The reduction of a self-sufficient people to poverty and welfare dependence: An analysis of the causes of Cherokee Indian underdevelopment. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 40, 3, 225-237.

Rector. Robert and Patrick Fagan, 1996. "How Welfare Harms Kids" Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* 1084. June 5, 1996. pp. 1-11.

Okun, A. M. (1975). Ch. 2. "The case for the market." *Equality and efficiency*. Washington, The Brookings Institution: 32-64.

Piven, F. F. and R. A. Cloward (1993). Relief, Labor and Civil Disorder: An Overview. *Regulating the poor : the functions of public welfare*. New York, Vintage Books: 3-42.

6. February 14 - American policies I: anti-poverty programs

Iceland, ch 7

Schneider, p. 1-9, chapters 2, 3, skim ch. 4, 5

Haskins, R. (2002). "The poor go to work." *The American Enterprise* **13**(3): 41.

(optional) Haskins, R. (2001). Liberal and Conservative Influences on the Welfare Reform Legislation of 1996. *For better and for worse: Welfare reform and the well-being of children and families*. G. J. Duncan and P. L. Chase-Lansdale. New York, Russell Sage: 9-34.

7. February 21 - American policies II: The less visible welfare state

Schneider, ch. 13

Karoly, Lynn, (2000). Investing in the Future: Reducing Poverty through Human Capital Investments, Institute for Research on Poverty *Focus*, Vol.21, No.2, Fall, pp 38-43.

Abramovitz, M., & Morgen, S. (2006). *Taxes Are a Woman's Issue: Reframing the debate*. Selection.

(optional) Romich, Jennifer L. Review: *Taxes are a Woman's Issue*. Forthcoming in *Affilia, a Journal of Women and Social Work*.

Mishra, Ramesh (1999). Chapter 1, The logic of globalization: The changing context of the welfare state. In *Globalization and the welfare state*, pp. 1-17. Northampton, MA : E. Elgar.

8. February 28 - Local to global anti-poverty efforts

Hills, J. and J. Waldfogel (2004). "A third way in welfare reform? Evidence from the United Kingdom." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* **23**(4): 765-788.

Krugman editorial on UK - http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/122606C.shtml

Friedman, R. E., & Boshara, R. (2005). Going to scale: Principles and policy options for an inclusive asset-building policy. In M. Sherraden (Ed.), *Inclusion in the American Dream: Assets, Poverty, and Public Policy* (pp. 241-261). New York: Oxford University Press.

To be announced – readings on anti-poverty strategies

Bhagwati, J. (2005). "In defense of globalization: It has a human face." *Angelo Costa Lecture*. Rome, Italy.

Mishra, Ramesh (1999). Chapter 7, "Towards a global social policy" In *Globalization and the welfare state*, pp. 1-17. Northampton, MA : E. Elgar.

9. March 7 - Integration and wrap-up

Iceland, ch 8

Folbre, N. (2001). Ch. 9 "Dancing in the Dark" p. 209-232 *The invisible heart: economics and family values*. New York, New Press.

Final Paper Assignment

Demographic Briefing (Part I) and Competing Perspectives (Part II)

Part I

This assignment provides an opportunity to understand the scope of poverty or inequality as applied to a population or topic of interest. Drawing on demographic data, students will write a brief report on one of two options.

Poverty option: Research and analyze income or wealth distribution within a population defined by age, gender, race, ethnicity, geography or a combination thereof. If useful, compare that economic distribution with that of a relevant comparison group.

Inequality option: Research and analyze a non-economic inequality such as educational attainment, health and longevity, political voice and power, criminal justice involvement, social mobility (the ability to climb the SES ladder), or sexual or reproductive sovereignty.

Papers should be four double-spaced pages and include the following elements,

- An introduction outlining the purpose and key points of the paper
- Definitions and operationalizations of important concepts
- Documentation of the scope and magnitude of the chosen economic or social inequality
- A discussion of relevant context

This is an exercise in interpreting and using demographic data. Support all statements of fact with references to academic, governmental or reputable non-governmental sources of information. Use language that clearly documents the situation without eliciting emotion or action. Let the facts speak for themselves.

Part II

Theories about why poverty or inequalities exist may draw on individual, social or structural arguments. Such explanations inform and justify policy responses. The second part of the paper is a critical analysis of policy implications that derive from two competing explanations on the cause of the economic or social inequality examined in Part I.

This paper should be four to six double-spaced pages and include the following elements,

- Identify two different explanations from course reading materials.
- Describe the logic and theory behind each explanation and explain how it applies to the situation described in Part I
- Describe policy responses that derive from each explanation. What policy goals would be implied by each perspective? How might these be achieved? (i.e., what types of benefits, services, conditions? Would these be entitlements? Criteria for eligibility? Etc.)
- Compare and contrast the two explanations and their associated policy responses from a social justice perspective.

Analysis drawn from external sources, readings for this course, and the Intellectual Foundations (Hub) course may be useful in developing this argument. Sources should be cited appropriately.

Final paper: Parts I and II will be revised, combined and extended to form the final paper. Details will be provided in class