PAI/SOC/PSC 400 Poverty Policy
Spring 2020
Wednesday, 9:30am-12:15pm
Lyman Hall 228

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Course Description
This seminar will examine the nature and extent of poverty in the United States, its causes and consequences, and the antipoverty effects of existing and proposed government programs and policies. The following questions will be addressed:

What is poverty? Why is poverty so persistent? Why are poverty rates for minorities so high? What are the dynamics of rural poverty? What are the goals and purposes of social welfare programs? How has welfare reform changed the playing field? Is marriage a viable antipoverty strategy? Is there a culture of poverty? How are immigration and demographic trends changing the U.S. demographic profile? How do current economic conditions impact people in poverty?

Course Objectives
1. To understand the measurement of poverty and other measures of economic well-being.
2. To explore how demographic characteristics, family status, immigration status and geography alter the risk of being poor in America.
3. To study the different common explanations for why poverty exists.
4. To evaluate what policy options are effective at addressing poverty.

Required Texts
John Iceland’s, Poverty in America: A Handbook, is required for this class.

Further additional readings are assigned for each session. All readings (besides the book) are available online or on Blackboard (under the tab “Content” by session). You are required to print out and bring hard copies of the readings to class each session. Students officially enrolled in the class should have automatic access to the Blackboard site. I will use Blackboard as a means for updating the syllabus, making announcements, posting readings, and resources.

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No extra credit will be given, and final grades will not be curved. Late assignments will receive a 10% deduction from the final grade for each 24-hour period the assignment is late.

Grade Calculation
1. Class discussion 15%
2. In-Class Quizzes (5 @ 4% each) 20%
3. Mock Hearing/Paper 45%
   Problem Statement (5%)
   Summary of Two Policies (10%)
   Presentation (10%)
   Final Draft (20%)
4. State Policy Project 20%

Late Assignment Policy
After an assignment is due, 10% will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the assignment is late, regardless of the reason (health, computer problems, IT problems, etc.)

Class Discussion
Class discussion is an integral part of this course. As such, it is important to lay down some ground rules for discussion. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to the questions we will be exploring in this class. However, discussion should take place on the academic plane of reasoned argument. This means that all students must come to class prepared (with readings in hand!) to discuss the material. Further, students are expected to regularly and respectfully share their thoughts, questions, and observations about the readings.

- Students have the right and should feel empowered to take reasoned exception and to voice opinions contrary to those offered by the instructor and/or other students (S.R. 6.1.2).
- Equally, the course instructor has the right—and the responsibility—to ensure that all academic discourse occurs in a context characterized by respect and civility. Obviously, the accepted level of civility would not include attacks of a personal nature or statements denigrating another on the basis of race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, age, national/regional origin, etc., or other irrelevant factors.

Attendance Policy
Class attendance is required, and absences will adversely affect your participation grade. Missing more than 1 class without proper University documentation will result in a reduction to your participation grade.

Course Assignments
Quizzes
Six short pop quizzes will be distributed in class during the semester. Quizzes will be open book and open note but will not be announced in advance. These assignments are intended to motivate students to come to class fully prepared to discuss the readings.
Your lowest scoring quiz will be dropped, and the remaining 5 quizzes will each count toward 4 percent of your total grade. If you miss a quiz for any reason, you will drop that quiz. Quizzes cannot be made up and will not be accepted electronically.

Mock Hearing & Policy Paper
We will discuss the structure and format for the Mock Congressional Hearings and the choice of topics during the first few sessions. In essence, you will select a social problem and recommend a specific strategy to address the issue. Your recommendations will be based on your reading of the current research on the issue. You may choose any social policy, including those dealing with child care, preschool programs, health insurance, employment and training programs education, the minimum wage, housing, welfare, food stamps, and child support.

The policy analysis research paper will require a substantial amount of work on your part. It is not an assignment that can be successfully completed in a short time. Papers should present thoughtful policy analysis of the 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 policy reform you are analyzing. You will be graded on the quality of the evidence you present in your paper and not on the particular position taken. That is, it does not matter to me if a paper on the minimum wage proposes to increase the minimum wage or eliminate it. What matters is that the paper is well-researched, refers to recent data and policy analyses on the issues, and that analysis is sound and conclusions are well-documented.

PHASE 1: Problem Statement (Due February 5, in class | 5%)
Identify your social problem of interest in 1 page. Students are encouraged to discuss potential paper topics with me during office hours and over email.

PHASE 2: Policy Options (Due February 26, 5pm, submit via Blackboard | 10%)
Write a brief memo describing two social policies that target the social problem you defined in Phase 1. For example, if your social problem is the working poor and your two policies are the minimum wage and the EITC, your memo should describe the details of the minimum wage and the EITC. Include key details such as who is covered/eligible under the policy, when the policy was implemented, how it has changed over time, and how it is funded.

PHASE 3: Hearing (Due April 15 or 22, in class | 10%)
During the last two class sessions, you will present your policy idea to your peers as part of a mock Senate Hearing exercise. Students will be grouped into four-member Senate panels by substantive policy area, and each student on the four-member panel will have five minutes and five PowerPoint slides to present their policy idea. Panels will present to an audience of four peers, who will act as Senators (pick your favorite or be your future self!) and ask questions of the panel for 10 minutes total.

PHASE 4: Final Paper (Due April 29, 5pm, submit via Blackboard | 20% ) The final paper should be 8-10 pages long and include the following components:
1. Introduction/motivation
   a. What is the social problem?
   b. Who is affected? (How many people? What characteristics do they share? Where do they live?)
   c. Why do we care? (What consequences are associated with the social problem?)
2. Introduction of two policy options aimed at fixing the social problem
   a. Describe details of the two key policies.
3. Policy Analysis
   a. How much do we spend on the program?
   b. What evidence is there about program effectiveness? (What outcomes does it produce, for whom, and under what conditions?)
   c. Are there unintended consequences of the program?
4. Conclusion
   a. Which policy do you choose as a better option for targeting the social problem?
   b. Discuss what led you to this decision.

State Policy Project  (Due March 25, 5pm, submit via Blackboard | 20%)
Draft a three-page policy brief that details one state’s policies targeting family, housing, food or income support policy—feel free to get creative with the format and pictures!
   1. Choose a state
   2. Choose a social policy area
   3. Summarize state demographics (use Census American Fact Finder)
   4. Summarize the details of the state policies:
      a. Is this state generous or stingy when it comes to providing benefits?
      b. Does the state encourage or discourage participation among eligible populations?
   5. Provide suggestions for reform.

Paper Expectations and Turnitin
Papers are to be handed in electronically through Turnitin in Blackboard. Turnitin is a plagiarism prevention system that identifies “matched text.” You have the opportunity to view your “Originality Report” and check that all sources you have used are properly acknowledged and cited. Thus, you should leave yourself some time to run this check before submitting a final version. Note that all submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers in the future.

Be sure to edit and rewrite several times, proofread and spell-check the paper, and number the pages. You are allowed to use one of two citation styles. The first is the conventional footnote format, with a note in the text and the reference in an accompanying footnote or endnote. The second style is the embedded citation format (sometimes known as MLA format), where the author and page number are placed in parentheses at the end of the sentence. A bibliography should also accompany the paper.
University Attendance Policy
Attendance in classes is expected in all courses at Syracuse University. Students are expected to arrive on campus in time to attend the first meeting of all classes for which they are registered. Students who do not attend classes starting with the first scheduled meeting may be academically withdrawn as not making progress toward degree by failure to attend. Instructors set coursespecific policies for absences from scheduled class meetings in their syllabi. It is a federal requirement that students who do not attend or cease to attend a class to be reported at the time of determination by the faculty using Orange Success to alert the Office of the Registrar and the Office of Financial Aid. Students should also review the university’s religious observance policy and make the required arrangements at the beginning of each semester.

Digital Etiquette
Texting, emailing and surfing the web during class are extremely disrespectful and disruptive behaviors. To prevent undue distraction and to encourage a participatory and respectful classroom environment, the use of cell phones, laptop computers or PDAs will not permitted in class, unless required as special accommodation or otherwise negotiated with me. Students who use such devices will be asked to leave class and may be marked absent. Additionally, you may not audio or video record class sessions without the instructor’s permission.

Disability-Related Accommodations
Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that results in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in the course. I invite any student to meet with me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in this process.

If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with ODS, please visit the ODS website—http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, the office located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 or TDD: (315) 443-1371 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting academic adjustments.

ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic adjustments and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since academic adjustments may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity Policy
Syracuse University’s Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures
on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. SU students are required to read an online summary of the University’s academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

**Course Schedule**

Session Topics (readings for each session are listed below)

2. January 22 Poverty Levels and Measurement
3. January 29 Who is Poor in America?
4. February 5 Economic Mobility and Its Consequences
5. February 12 A Short History of Poverty Policy
6. February 19 NO CLASS
7. February 26 The Great Recession and the Role of the Macroeconomy
8. March 4 Behavioral Explanations for Poverty
9. March 11 Changes in the Family and Migration
10. March 25 Spatial Dimensions of Poverty
11. April 1 Income and Near Income Policies
12. April 8 Education and Workforce Development
13. April 15 Hearing I
14. April 22 Hearing II and Pulling it All Together

**Assigned Readings**

All readings are required. Readings marked with an asterisk [*] are available electronically.

1. **Introduction to Seminar Topics and First Exercise**
   - Take political ideology quiz (https://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/)
   - Take implicit bias test (race or gender) (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html)
   - Discuss David Ellwood’s Three Helping Conundrums (Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family, Chapter 2). (1988)

2. **Poverty Levels and Measurement**
   - Iceland, John, Poverty in America, Chapters 1 and 2: “Methods of Measuring Poverty.” Pp.2237
   - How the US Census Bureau Measures Poverty Infographic
3. Who is Poor in America?

- Income and Poverty in the United States, 2018  p60-266 income and poverty 2018.pdf (focus on poverty)
- Health Insurance in the United States, 2018  p60-267 health insurance 2018.pdf (skim)
- Supplemental Poverty Measure, 2018  p60-268 SPM 2018.pdf (skim)

4. Economic Mobility and Its Consequences


5. A Short History of Poverty Policy


6. The Great Recession and the Role of the Macroeconomy

7. Behavioral Explanations


8. Changes in the Family and Migration

- Steven Raphael and Eugene Smolensky. “Immigration and Poverty in the United States.” Focus (p.27-31)

9. Spatial Dimensions of Poverty

- Introduction to public housing and introduction to housing vouchers by Center for Budget and Policy Priorities

10. Income and Near Income Programs

11. Education and Workforce Development


12. Hearing I

13. Hearing II