

**NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
POLITICS DEPARTMENT**

**POL-UA 382-001 — Fall 2020
Politics of Poverty and Welfare**

Monday and Wednesday 12:30 – 1:45 PM

Instructor: Clifford Frasier

Office Hours: After class 1:45 – 2:30 PM, and by appointment

Grader: Noah Truesdale

On-line

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Course Description

This is a survey course in the politics of welfare and poverty. The major questions of this class are: How welfare states operate to benefit the poor? And, in the United States, what are the differences in welfare policies at the state level? Therefore, we consider not just the poverty-reducing regulations and programs, but theories underlying them. This is not a class focused on several adjacent questions: What are the origins of poverty? What is the policy solution (the cure) for poverty? These are important questions, but I am interested in students developing a comprehensive understanding of how policies handle poverty — in the United States in particular, with reference to the larger context of the industrial/post-industrial rich nations.

Substituting for a textbook for this class are a set of articles on poverty and welfare from the Oxford Handbooks. These are supplemented by other readings from academic journals as well as occasional nonacademic sources. Re the Oxford articles: this series was chosen because the articles give us the background to think critically about the course topic, and because they offer a fair balance between academic scholarship and straightforward presentation. However, most of the Oxford articles are written from a comparative perspective, so we will extract information relevant to the case of the United States. When we do consider country comparisons, we will focus on welfare systems in the industrial and post-industrial nations.

This course also includes several works that are considered classics in their own fashion: Titmuss (1970); and Meltzer & Richard (1981). Even though we will not reach further back (we won't read Marx or Hayek), I believe it is important for students to become familiar with foundational ways of thinking that underlie discussions of welfare and redistribution.

Course Objectives

1. To understand background theory and concepts that help us discuss the politics of welfare and poverty.
2. To learn how to characterize welfare states.
3. To develop an awareness of measures of poverty.
4. To become familiar with major welfare policies, and changes in welfare policy, in the United States.

5. To investigate how variation across the American states matters for recipients of welfare policies.
6. To hone skills in assessing public policy environments — skills that can be used in other settings, such as policy offices, organized labor, and graduate programs in fields such as public affairs, political science, law, and labor economics.

Teaching Approach

To build a sophisticated understanding of the topics and arguments we consider, you will need to engage in all components of the course. It is expected that you will complete all required readings in advance of the session for which they are listed, take notes on the material, and be prepared to evaluate it critically. Classes will include discussion, exercises, and lecture components – but feel free to ask pertinent questions at any point. You will help guide the discussion in our class meetings; your classmates are counting on you to bring your own perspective to small-group conversations. I encourage the expression of diverse viewpoints in class and in your written work.

Discussion guidelines:

1. Take break-out groups and group work seriously. Remember that your peers' learning is partly dependent on your engagement.
2. Recognize how your own social location (e.g., gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, ability) informs your perspectives as well as reactions to all colleagues in the course.
3. Listen actively to other students and offer comments that indicate you have paid attention to the previous speakers.
4. Understand that your words have effects on others. If you learn that something you've said was experienced as disrespectful or marginalizing, listen carefully and try to understand that perspective. Learn how you can do better in the future.
5. Understand that we are bound to make mistakes in our discussions, as anyone does when approaching complex tasks. Strive to see mistakes as part of the learning process.

Grading

There are three components to the grade:

1. Quizzes plus a short paper **(60% of the grade)**
 - Quiz 1: 10%
 - Quiz 2: 15%
 - Quiz 3: 15%
 - Final essay (due during exam week): 20%
2. Group project/report **(20% of the grade)**
3. Participation **(20% of the grade)**
 - Reading summary, short presentation and discussion question: 10%
 - Class discussion: 10%

A reading summary/commentary. A 300–500 word summary of a reading of your choice that summarizes what you think are several important ideas. The summary will be sent to the class by 5 pm the day before the class meets, followed by a short presentation (5 minutes) of this

summary during the class. The presentation will conclude with a discussion question based on the summary. We will divvy up weeks and readings on a spreadsheet, and will begin this component on September 16.

Quizzes. Three quizzes will be given in class on the dates listed in the course calendar. The first two will be non-cumulative. These will be constituted of true/false, multiple choice, written identifications of terms or concepts, and questions that require short written answers. There will be practice quizzes that help students prepare. The third quiz will likely include information presented in the group projects, and so may cover concepts used throughout the course.

Group project. A group project comparing states on a set of welfare policies, for instance: the minimum wage; Medicaid expansion; unemployment benefits; paid sick days. Guidelines will be posted on NYU Classes.

Final essay. A 4 page essay (12 point font, one inch margins, double spaced) that draws from at least three course readings, each from a different session. The essay follows closely the posted guidelines for this assignment, and answers one of the below questions:

- Based on a synthesis of these readings, what argument can be made for how to address poverty through public policy?
- How should the American citizen understand the change in welfare policy that occurred in 1964-65; 1981; 1996; or 2010 ?
- Another question, pre-approved by the Professor.

NYU Classes and Readings and Assignments

All announcements will be delivered through NYU Classes. Slides, if used, will be posted after class. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with notice provided as soon as possible through the NYU Classes course page. Materials and assignments will be posted to NYU Classes.

Academic Integrity

The students and faculty at NYU are very concerned about academic integrity. Each student should have the assurance that the rules of the game are understood by everyone and enforced equally. Students are encouraged to learn and study together. Individual assignments are just that, but mutual assistance is appropriate. New York University has an academic code that is available here:

<https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu>

Every student is expected to maintain academic integrity and is expected to report violations to me.

Additional Administrative Details

- You are responsible for obtaining any materials distributed in or outside of class.
- I reserve the right to revise this syllabus as the term progresses.

- Regarding lateness:
 - For quizzes and class presentations, students are only permitted to take a make-up if they have a prior arrangement with me or supply a note from a doctor or university dean excusing their absence due to serious illness or another family problem. Travel, conflict with another activity or job, and other nonmedical reasons are not acceptable excuses for missing quizzes or class presentations.
 - Turning in an assignment beyond the deadline leads to an automatic grade reduction of 10% of the assignment for each calendar day (including the day of lateness and each subsequent day).
 - Technical difficulties uploading assignments to NYU Classes will not excuse late assignments. If NYU Classes is frozen and will not upload, then please email a copy directly to me with a timestamp before the deadline.
- Whenever you email me: please avoid beginning the email with "Hey"; you can normally expect a reply within 24 hours.
- Please use my office hours!! Email me ahead of time to request a time so that I can manage the schedule.

Policy Regarding Disability Services and Programs

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980). Reasonable accommodations can be made for students with qualified disabilities, but only for students who have registered with the Moses Center and provide documentation from that office. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me in the first three weeks of the term.

READINGS

Robert Putnam, "Crumbling American Dreams," New York Times, August 4, 2013, p. SR9.

de Mesquita, E.B., 2016. *Political economy for public policy*. Princeton University Press.. Chapter 1.

Titmuss, Richard. 1970. *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*. Selections.

Meltzer, A.H. and Richard, S.F., 1981. A rational theory of the size of government. *Journal of political Economy*, 89(5), pp.914-927.

Soroka, S.N. and Wlezien, C., 2008. On the limits to inequality in representation. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 41(2), pp.319-327.

Lee, Cheol-Sung and In-Hoe Koo. 2016. *The Welfare States and Poverty*. in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

King, Desmond and Fiona Ross. 2010. "Critics and Beyond", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*

Brady, Blome and Kleider. 2016. "How Politics and Institutions Shape Poverty and Inequality" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Lein, Laura, Sandra K. Danziger, H. Luke Shaefer, and Amanda Tillotson. 2016. Social Policy, Transfers, Programs, and Assistance. in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Adema and Whiteford. 2010. "Public and Private Social Welfare" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*

Castles, Francis G. 2010. The English-Speaking Countries, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*

Paul, Hassel and Moser. 2014. "Individual Consequences of Job Loss and Unemployment" in *The Oxford Handbook of Job Loss and Job Search*

Sinfield, Adrian. 2014. "Unemployment and Its Wider Impact" in *The Oxford Handbook of Job Loss and Job Search*

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. NY: Picador.

Hunt and Bullock. 2016. "Ideologies and Beliefs about Poverty" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*

Watkins-Hayes, Celeste and Elyse Kovalsky. 2016. "The Discourse of Deservingness: Morality and the Dilemmas of Poverty Relief in Debate and Practice" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Jost, J.T., Gaucher, D. and Stern, C., 2015. "The world isn't fair": A system justification perspective on social stratification and inequality. In *Annual Meeting of International Society of Political Psychology, Herzliya, Israel*.

Smeeding, Timothy. 2016. "Poverty Measurement" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Gornick, Janet and Natascia Boeri. 2016. "Gender and Poverty" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Massey, Douglas. 2016. "Segregation and the Perpetuation of Disadvantage." in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Streib, Jessi, Saunjuhi Verma, Whitney Welsh, and Linda M. Burton. 2016. "Life, Death, and Resurrections: The Culture of Poverty Perspective" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Wilson, William Julius. 2016. "Urban Poverty, Race, and Space" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Angel, Ronald J. 2016. Social Class, Poverty, and the Unequal Burden of Illness and Death. in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Beckett, K. and Western, B., 2001. Governing social marginality: Welfare, incarceration, and the transformation of state policy. *Punishment & Society*, 3(1), pp.43-59.

Sharkey, Patrick, Max Besbris, and Michael Friedson. 2016. Poverty and Crime. in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Haskins, R., 2016. TANF at age 20: Work still works. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 35(1), pp.224-231.

Brady, D., Baker, R.S. and Finnigan, R., 2013. When unionization disappears: State-level unionization and working poverty in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, 78(5), pp.872-896.

Marianne Levine, "Behind the minimum wage fight, a sweeping failure to enforce the law," Politico, February 18, 2018.

Sennett, R., 2003. *Respect in a world of inequality*. NY: Norton. Chapter 7, pp.185-196.

Rosenbaum, Sara and Timothy M. Westmoreland. 2012. "The Supreme Court's Surprising Decision On The Medicaid Expansion: How Will The Federal Government And States Proceed?". *Health Affairs*, 31, NO. 8 (2012): 1663–1672

Zewde, N. and Wimer, C., 2019. Antipoverty impact of Medicaid growing with state expansions over time. *Health Affairs*, 38(1), pp.132-138.

Smith, Sandra Susan. 2016. Job-Finding among the Poor: Do Social Ties Matter? in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

COURSE CALENDAR

Sept. 2: Introduction

Objective: To provide an overview of the course.

Putnam, "Crumbling American Dreams."

Sept. 7: Labor Day (no class)

PART I. Conceptual Tools

Sept. 9: Background theory, part 1

Objective: To develop conceptual tools for studying welfare policies and poverty: utilitarianism and egalitarianism.

de Mesquita, 2016. Chapter 1, pp. 13-31

–Feedback: What works well, what doesn't work well?

Sept. 14: Background theory, part 2:

Objective: To understand: Rawlsian egalitarianism, Kantian deontology, and libertarianism.

de Mesquita, 2016. Chapter 1, pp. 31-46

Sept. 16: Distinguishing social policy from economic policy

Objective: To conceptualize social policy as a dimension of public policy.

Titmuss, 1970. Chapter 16, selections. *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*

Sept. 21: Redistribution and the concept of welfare.

Objective: To consider the underpinnings of the idea of redistribution, including redistribution from the poor to the rich.

Titmuss, 1970. Chapter 16, selections. *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*

Sept. 23: Rational actor theory of welfare preferences

Objective: To understand the rational actor approach to welfare.

Meltzer-Richard. 1981. "A rational theory of the size of government."

Soroka and Wlezien. 2008. "On the limits to inequality in representation."

– Practice quiz and discussion

PART II. The Welfare State**Sept. 28: Intro to the Welfare State (part 1)**

Objective: To understand the key concepts of the welfare state.

Lee, Cheol-Sung and In-Hoe Koo. 2016. "The Welfare States and Poverty."

Brady, Blome and Kleider. 2016. "How Politics and Institutions Shape Poverty and Inequality"

For further reading:

Castles, Francis G. 2010. "The English-Speaking Countries" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*

Sept. 30: Quiz (in class)

- Presentation by Scott Oatkin: The Borgen Project

Oct. 5: Intro to the Welfare State (part 2)

Objective: To understand major welfare policy areas, and the major criticisms of welfare.

Lein, Laura, Sandra K. Danziger, H. Luke Shaefer, and Amanda Tillotson. 2016. "Social Policy, Transfers, Programs, and Assistance."

King, Desmond and Fiona Ross. 2010. "Critics and Beyond"

For further reading:

Bambra, Clare and Terje A. Eikemo. 2014. Insecurity, Unemployment, and Health: A Social Epidemiological Perspective in *The Oxford Handbook of Job Loss and Job Search*

Levy, Jonah. 2010. "Welfare Retrenchment." in *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*.

Oct. 7: The scope of the welfare state.

Objective: To consider welfare as a function of taxes or as a function of GDP

Adema and Whiteford. 2010. "Public and Private Social Welfare"

For further reading:

Immergut, Ellen. 2010. "Political Institutions" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*

Oct. 12: Unemployment

Objective: To understand how the topic of employment fits in theories of welfare.

Paul, Hassel and Moser. 2014. "Individual Consequences of Job Loss and Unemployment"

Sinfield, Adrian. 2014. "Unemployment and Its Wider Impact" in *The Oxford Handbook of Job Loss and Job Search*

For further reading:

McKee-Ryan and Maitoza. 2014. "Job Loss, Unemployment, and Families" in *The Oxford Handbook of Job Loss and Job Search*

Cuyper, Fontinha and DeWitte. 2014. "Nontraditional Employment: The Careers of Temporary Workers" in *The Oxford Handbook of Job Loss and Job Search*

PART III. POVERTY

Oct. 14: Working poverty

Objective: To consider the working poor in the United States.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. Chapter 2, pp 51-81.

For further reading:

Gautié, Jérôme and Sophie Ponthieux. 2016. Employment and the Working Poor. *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*

Oct. 19: Beliefs about poverty

Objective: To understand major beliefs about who are the poor.

Hunt and Bullock. 2016. "Ideologies and Beliefs about Poverty"

Watkins-Hayes, Celeste and Elyse Kovalsky. 2016. "The Discourse of Deservingness: Morality and the Dilemmas of Poverty Relief in Debate and Practice"

– Midsemester evaluation

Oct. 21: System justification theory

Objective: To become familiar with a recent theory about why the poor do not demand more from the political system.

Jost, J.T., Gaucher, D. and Stern, C., 2015. "The world isn't fair": A system justification perspective on social stratification and inequality.

– Practice quiz and discussion

Oct. 26: Measuring poverty

Objective: To sharpen awareness of measures of poverty, and to integrate this awareness into the ways we assess policy responses to poverty.

Smeeding, Timothy. 2016. "Poverty Measurement."

For further reading:

Kus, Basak, Brian Nolan, and Christopher T. Whelan. 2016. "Material Deprivation and Consumption" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*

Oct. 28: Quiz (in class)**Nov. 2: Poverty and social groups in the United States**

Objective: To assess the correspondence between (a) poverty and (b) gender, marital status, ethnicity, and race in the United States.

Gornick, Janet and Natascia Boeri. 2016. "Gender and Poverty"

Massey, Douglas. 2016. "Segregation and the Perpetuation of Disadvantage."

Nov. 4: Poverty and culture

Objective: To question how poverty comes to be associated with a culture.

Streib, Jessi, Saunjuhi Verma, Whitney Welsh, and Linda M. Burton. 2016. "Life, Death, and Resurrections: The Culture of Poverty Perspective" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

Wilson, William Julius. 2016. "Urban Poverty, Race, and Space"

For further reading:

Angel, Ronald J. 2016. "Social Class, Poverty, and the Unequal Burden of Illness and Death."

Nov. 9: Poverty, crime, and the U.S. prison system

Objective: To consider the U.S. system of incarceration in terms of changes in welfare policies.

Beckett, K. and Western, B., 2001. Governing social marginality: Welfare, incarceration, and the transformation of state policy. *Punishment & Society*, 3(1), pp.43-59.

Sharkey, Patrick, Max Besbris, and Michael Friedson. 2016. Poverty and Crime. in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*.

PART IV: POLICIES**Nov. 11: Wages and collective bargaining**

Objective: To understand several types of policies that keep wages from falling to nominal levels.

Marianne Levine, "Behind the minimum wage fight, a sweeping failure to enforce the law"

Brady, D., Baker, R.S. and Finnigan, R. 2013. "When unionization disappears: State-level unionization and working poverty in the United States."

Nov. 16: Preparation class for group projects

Objective: To review what is required for a successful group project.

Nov. 19: TANF (From Welfare to Work)

Objective: To become familiar with the 1996 policy of TANF.

Haskins, R., 2016. "TANF at age 20: Work still works."

Sennett, R., 2003. *Respect in a world of inequality*. NY: Norton. Chapter 7, pp.185-196.

Nov. 23: Medicaid expansion

Objective: To become familiar with the 2010 policy of Medicaid expansion.

Rosenbaum, Sara and Timothy M. Westmoreland. 2012. "The Supreme Court's Surprising Decision On The Medicaid Expansion: How Will The Federal Government And States Proceed?". *Health Affairs*, 31, NO. 8 (2012): 1663–1672

Zewde, N. and Wimer, C., 2019. "Antipoverty impact of Medicaid growing with state expansions over time."

Nov. 25: The Market

Objective: To review arguments for market-based solutions to poverty, and to identify policies based in this approach.

Smith, Sandra Susan. 2016. Job-Finding among the Poor: Do Social Ties Matter?

For further reading:

Brady, David and Markus Jäntti. 2016. "Economic Performance, Poverty, and Inequality in Rich Countries. " in *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*

Nov. 30: Group meetings to coordinate deliverable and presentations

Dec. 2: Group presentations

Dec. 7: Group presentations

Dec. 9: Final quiz (in class)

Final essay is due by: December 16 by 12:30 pm.