New York University
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

PADM-GP 2445 Topics in Poverty, Inequality, and Policy
Spring 2015
Course Time Dates: 1:00-4:00 pm; M-T-W-TR (1/5 to 1/8/); T-W-TR-F (1/13 to 1/16)
Location: WAVE, Room 367

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Office Hours: 4:45-5:45 pm Tuesday or by appointment.

Course Description and Objectives

This course examines the nature and extent of poverty, primarily in the U.S. We will study the contending ideological theories about the causes of poverty and the theoretical approaches to and development of public assistance and anti-poverty programs. In this course, we consider what is poverty – how do we measure it, what does it mean to be poor? Why is it so persistent, and so concentrated in particular groups? How do labor markets, family structure, and social organization come into play in shaping poverty? How successful have the array of anti poverty efforts been and which look most promising going forward?

Objectives:

The goal of this course is to provide students with:

1) An understanding of the broad area of poverty including its measures and U.S. social policies addressing the issue;
2) An understanding of the major contemporary theories about the underlying mechanisms that may contribute to poverty, and the state of the evidence on theories, conjectured consequences, and selected policy interventions.
3) An opportunity to further develop critical analytical skills (e.g., reading thoughtfully – assessing the arguments and evidence provided by authors; thinking carefully about one’s own beliefs and evidence; and communicating well articulated arguments with evidence).

Course Requirements/Assignments/Expectations:

Class preparation and participation are essential for this course. Students are expected to read required texts in advance and be prepared to participate in class discussions. There is both a speaking and listening component to participation: sharing your ideas and reflecting on/responding to the ideas of others. The first half of this course begins by framing the issues, what we mean by poverty and how we measure it, and why we care.
This section also sets out some empirical ‘facts’ on levels, trends, who are the poor, and how much mobility is there in and out of poverty. In the second half of this course, we consider specific policy areas prominent in anti-poverty efforts, including income and family support policies, education, workforce development, and issues in the U.S. criminal justice system.

Students will be expected to speak insightfully and analytically during case study class components. In addition to class participation, students will be evaluated with a mid-course examination and a final data-supported policy analysis paper. More detailed instructions for all assignments will be posted on NYU Classes. Please refer to Wagner School Academic Code for information about academic honesty (https://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/academic-code) and to the following link for information on Grading Guidelines (https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/admissions/GradingGuidelines.pdf).

Late assignments will lose one letter grade for each day they are late (which begins immediately after the posting deadline). If you are facing some kind of serious and urgent situation that could delay turning in the assignment, contact me as soon as possible to discuss other arrangements.

Prerequisites: Intro to statistics (P11.1011) and Intro to policy (P11.1022 or the equivalent, P11.2660) are recommended.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

There are three course requirements. Each accounts for a percentage of your grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-course evaluation</td>
<td>Jan. 13</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Analysis Paper</td>
<td>Feb. 6th (by 5:00 p.m. on NYU Classes)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>Throughout semester</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20 points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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All papers should be double-spaced, have 1-inch margins, and use Times New Roman, 12 pt. font.

Mid-course evaluation: (1.5 hour time limit) (40%)

This mid-course evaluation assesses students’ course knowledge using a timed examination (multiple choice, short answer, and essay format).

Poverty topic policy analysis paper: (15-20 pages) (40%)

The final paper is meant to be cumulative in that it builds on the skills demonstrated in the mid-course examination and course. By January 13th, students should submit a one-page proposed outline for their paper that includes the following: 1) Paper topic (i.e. poverty policy topic of interest); 2) Data to be examined (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services statistics, etc.); 3) Description of literature to
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be reviewed (e.g., review of non-discriminatory housing policy at the federal and state legislation for a final paper on “redlining” in the U.S); and 4) Basis for interest in topic. Changes to the topic require my prior approval. Each final paper must be comprised of two broad sections:

- Papers must include a literature review of a poverty policy topic, highlighting what is known and not, determining the most promising policy/program areas and providing some data to support your view;
- Papers must also include a specific policy proposal assessment, including an assessment of the existing proposal/program (including data to support your view), recommendations for this policy/program, along with a call for new policy reforms, if applicable.

Class participation (20%). Class participation includes active participation in class discussion and during in-class case studies. Note: Due to the compressed nature of this course, more than one absence for this course is considered excessive and will impact the participation component of your overall grade. Please contact me if there are concerns about your anticipated attendance for this course.

“A” Level Participation
- Absent no more than once during the semester. Sends email ahead of time to tell me you will miss class.
- Regularly participates in class discussion.
- Comments are clear, succinct, and relevant to the current conversation.
- Takes risks in answering difficult questions, or offering unpopular ideas.
- Is prepared for class, as evidenced by:
  - Applying ideas from the readings to the discussion
  - Challenging or extending ideas in the readings
  - Integrating or contrasting ideas from current readings with previous readings

“B” Level Participation
- Absent no more than once. May not send email to me ahead of time.
- Participates occasionally.
- Comments are sometimes unclear, long-winded, or not relevant to discussion.
- Answers questions but rarely takes risks.
- Is less prepared for class (see above).

“C” Level Participation
- Absent more than once. Doesn’t email professor ahead of time.
- Offers input rarely.
- Is unprepared for class.

**Required Reading:** Required readings are listed for each session (See text and readings after each session heading). You are expected to read all required readings prior to
attending class. Most readings are in the required textbooks or course packet, but some are posted on NYU Classes. Finally, this syllabus is a “living” document, which means that reading assignments may change due to classroom discussion, so be sure to check NYU Classes regularly for announcements, reminders, readings, assignments, etc.

Required Texts:


Other required readings are placed on NYU Classes or in the Course Packet, available at Unique Copy Center.

**Session Readings (**Readings to be done before each class session.**)

**Session 1. What is poverty and how do we measure it?**

**Readings for Session 1 (January 5, 2014):**


Case study: Fresno, CA (NYU Classes)


**Session 2. How has U.S. poverty evolved and who is disadvantaged?**

**Readings for Session 2 (January 6, 2014):**

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Case study: Cleveland, OH (NYU Classes)


Session 3. Who is impacted by poverty?: Families and children.
Readings for Session 3 (January 7, 2014):


Case study: Martin County, KY (NYU Classes)


Session 4. What is the safety net and is there disparity?
Readings for Session 4 (January 8, 2014): [Guest Lecture]


Case study: Austin, TX (NYU Classes)


Session 5. Poverty, Policy, Labor, and Employment
Readings for Session 5 (January 13, 2014):


Case study: Atlantic City, NJ (NYU Classes)

**Session 6. Poverty, Policy, Crime, and Education**

**Readings for Session 6 (January 14, 2014):**


Case study: McDowell County, WV (NYU Classes)


**Session 7. Poverty, Policy, and Immigration**

**Readings for Session 7 (January 15, 2014): [GUEST LECTURE]**


**Session 8. Poverty, Policy, and Housing/Where do we go?**

**Readings for Session 8 (January 16, 2014):**


Case study: Rochester, NY (NYU Classes)