

The Politics of Poverty

Political Science 4000-2
Dr. Belinda Creel Davis
232 Stubbs Hall
578-2129
davisbe@lsu.edu

Tues, Thurs 9:10-10:30
211 Turead
Office Hrs: by appointment
Monday 9:30-11:30
Wednesday 1:00-3:00

The purpose of this course is to introduce poverty as the key to understanding some of the most important problems facing our country. The class will start by defining public policy and its origins. We will then move to a discussion of how we define poverty, its causes, and our choice of solutions. Because poverty has been defined as a problem worthy of national government attention since the 1930s, any discourse on poverty is inherently a political one.

Course Requirements

You are expected to come to class prepared to participate in the discussion of the day's reading assignment. There is no textbook for this course. All of the class readings can be downloaded from the Moodle website or found via a link on the Moodle website. An * next to a class date indicates a reading assignment. All students must abide by the Student Academic Honor Code. Cheating will not be tolerated. All electronic devices (cell phones, ipads, laptops, etc) must be placed inside a zipped backpack during exams. Failure to place electronic devices inside a zipped backpack will be considered cheating.

Exams

There are three exams in the course. Each exam is worth 120 points and will consist of forty multiple choice questions (2 points each) and four short answer questions (10 points each). You must bring a scantron to class for the exam. Exams are not cumulative. If you miss an exam, you may take a makeup exam on Saturday, December 10 during our final exam time. Note: This is the same day your paper is due. The makeup consists of two essay questions worth 60 points each. The makeup exams will be given in 232 Stubbs Hall.

Quizzes

There will be 10 pop quizzes or homework assignments scattered throughout the course. Each quiz or assignment is worth 15 points. Only 8 quizzes/assignments will count towards your grade so if you take all 10, I will count the best 8 of the 10 grades. Quizzes may consist of information from the previous class lecture or the assigned reading. **THERE ARE NO MAKEUPS ON QUIZZES/HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS.** There are no exceptions to this rule. In addition, a homework assignment may only be turned in during the class in which it is due.

Paper

There is one two-part paper assignment for the course. The first part is a 20 point thought paper due on August 30th at the beginning of class. You must answer the following questions based on your current beliefs:

1. Why are poor people poor?
2. What is the responsibility of government when it comes to dealing with poverty?

Answers for each question should be one to two paragraphs long and written in complete sentences. The paper should be double spaced, with one inch margins, and use Times New Roman 12 point font. The paper should be 1-2 pages long. The only information needed at the top of the page is your name and the date on the same line.

The second part of the paper is worth 100 points and is due on Saturday, December 10th at 9:00am. You must answer the questions listed above again, but this time you must defend your answer based on the readings from this course plus readings you gather from outside the course. When readings are cited, you may use parenthetical citations (example: (Davis and Bali 2008)). This paper must be 4-5 pages long, double spaced, with one inch margins, and use Times New Roman 12 point font. The paper must answer both questions in a single essay format. In other words, your discussion of why poor people are poor should inform your discussion of government responsibility for the problem. You must incorporate at least 5 readings from the course and 3 readings from outside the course. Your name and the course information must be included on a title page that does NOT count in the page total. The bibliography does NOT count in the page total. Do not put your name anywhere on the paper besides the title page. You must turn in a hard copy of this paper to my office by 10:00 am, December 10th. Early papers may be placed in my office mailbox.

Bonus

Each of you starts out with 5 bonus points. These 5 points are yours to lose. You lose these points by emailing me and asking me questions that are answered on the syllabus or that can answered using LSU’s website. Some examples are “Where is your office?” “When are your office hours?” etc.

Grading Scale

Total Assignments		Exam	
540-600	A	108-120	A
480-539	B	96-120	B
420-479	C	84-120	C
360-419	D	72-120	D
0-359	F	0-71	F

Readings Schedule and Topic Outline

Section One: What is public policy? What is poverty?

August 23 rd	Introduction; What is public policy?
August 25 th	Policy Making Process Review
August 27 ^{th*}	Behavioral Assumptions Ingram, Helen and Anne Schneider. 1990. Behavioral assumptions of policy tools. <i>Journal of Politics</i> , 52(2), 510-529.
August 30 ^{th*}	What is poverty? “How Poor Are America’s Poor: Examining the ‘Plague’ of Poverty in America” “10 Important Questions about Child Poverty and Family Economic Hardship” Reminder: Thought paper is due.
September 1 ^{st*}	The Safety Net in U.S. and Europe

Alesina, Glaeser, and Sacerdote. 2001. "Why Doesn't the US Have a European-Style Welfare State?" Pages 1-12 only

September 6th*

Why are Poor People Poor?

Beeghley, Leonard. 1988. "Individual and Structural Explanations of Poverty." *Population Research and Policy Review* 7:201-222.

September 8th*

Research Methods

Wheelan Charles. 2010. *Introduction to Public Policy*. Chapter 11.

Note: Do not panic. It will be okay. You do not have to do the math!

September 13th*

Research Methods Continued

September 15th

Exam One

Section Two: Policy Solutions to the Problem of Poverty

September 20th*

The U.S. Tax Code: Who Really Pays Taxes

"Policy Basics: The Earned Income Tax Credit"

"Policy Basics: The Estate Tax"

"Policy Basics: The Child Tax Credit"

September 22nd*

Social Security and the Elderly

"Policy Basics: Top Ten Facts about Social Security"

"Can the Rich and Famous Save Social Security?"

http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-05-31-taxing-rich_x.htm

September 27th

Health Care and ObamaCare

September 29th*

Health Care Reform Summary

October 4th

AFDC and Why America Hated It

October 6th*

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

"Policy Basics: Introduction to TANF"

"Government Index of Dependence" pp 14-17 of pdf

October 11th*

Evaluating TANF: Sanctions

Rector, Robert and Sarah Youssef. 1999. "The Determinants of Caseload Decline."

Cook et al. 2002. "Welfare Reform and the Health of Young Children." *Arch Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* Vol. 156:678-684.

October 18th*

Evaluating TANF: Financial Independence

Powers, Michelle et al. 2010. "Failing to Make Ends Meet: Dubious Financial Success Among Employed Former Welfare to Work Program Participants." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* forthcoming.

October 20nd*

Exam Two

Section Three: How do race and poverty intersect in America?

- October 25th* Race and Welfare: News Media and Race
Gilens, Martin. 1996. "Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the News Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60:515-527.
- October 27th* Race and Welfare: Distributing Discipline
Schram et al. 2009. "Deciding to Discipline: Race, Choice, and Punishment at the Frontlines of Welfare Reform." *American Sociological Review* Vol. 74:398-422.
- November 1st* Race and Welfare: Vocational Education
Davis, Powers, and Lim. "The Extended Reach of Minority Political Power." Forthcoming at the *Journal of Politics*
- November 3rd* Immigration and Social Services
TBA
- November 8th* Poverty and Crime
Lee, Matthew. 2000. "Concentrated Poverty, Race and Homicide." *Social Science Quarterly* 41:189-200.
- November 10th Education, Race, and Poverty
Waiting for Superman
- November 15th Education, Race, and Poverty
Waiting for Superman
- November 17th* "Turn Around Schools That Work" by Richard Kahlenberg
- November 22nd* Williams, Jerel Paper
- November 29th Catch Up/Paper Discussion
- December 1st Exam Three
- December 10th Paper is due at 10:00am. Makeup Exams