The Politics of Poverty

Political Science 4000-3
Dr. Belinda Creel Davis
232 Stubbs Hall
578-2129
davisbe@lsu.edu

Tues, Thurs 10:40-12:00
218 Coates
Office Hrs: by appointment
Monday 9:30-11:30
Thursday 12:00-2:00

The purpose of this course is to introduce poverty as the key to understanding some of the most important problems facing our county. 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 Moodle download reading assignment.

Exams

There are four exams in the course. Each exam is worth 100 points and will consist of twenty-five multiple choice questions (2 points each) and five short answer questions (10 points each). If you miss an exam, you may take the makeup exam during my office hours in the week following the scheduled exam. Makeup exams consist of two essay questions worth 50 pts each.

Quizzes

There will be 12 pop quizzes or assignments scattered throughout the course. Each quiz or assignment is worth 10 points. Only 10 quizzes/assignments will count towards your grade so if you take all 12, I will count the best 10 of the 12 grades. Quizzes may consist of information from the previous class lecture or the assigned reading. THERE ARE NO MAKEUPS ON QUIZZES/ASSIGNMENTS. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Paper

There is one two-part paper assignment for the course. The first part is a 25 point thought paper due on September 3rd 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 second part of the paper is worth 75 points and is due on December 10\textsuperscript{th} at 10:00am. You must answer the questions listed above again, but this time you must defend your answer based on the readings from this course. When readings from the course 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.

**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.

**Readings Schedule and Topic Outline**

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

- **August 25\textsuperscript{th}**
  - Introduction; What is public policy?

- **August 27\textsuperscript{th}***
  - Behavioral Assumptions

- **September 1\textsuperscript{st}**
  - What is Poverty?

- **September 3\textsuperscript{rd}**
  - What Does Poverty Look Like?
  - Reminder: Thought paper is due.

- **September 8\textsuperscript{th}***
  - Why are Poor People Poor?

- **September 10\textsuperscript{th}**
  - Why are Poor People Poor?

- **September 15\textsuperscript{th}**
  - Exam One

*Section Two: Policy Solutions to the Problem of Poverty*

- **September 17\textsuperscript{th}***
  - Solutions: The Elderly, Social Security, and Medicare
  - “Can the Rich and Famous Save Social Security?”

- **September 22\textsuperscript{nd}***
  - Solutions: The Young, Medicaid, and CHIP
  - “Children’s Coverage and SCHIP Reauthorization”
  - [http://www.kaiseredu.org](http://www.kaiseredu.org)
September 24th* Solutions: The Current Debate over Healthcare Reform
Series of three policy briefs “Explaining Healthcare Reform”
covering financing reform, play or pay, and health exchanges.
http://www.kaiseredu.org

September 29th Solutions: Healthcare continued

October 1st No Class

October 6th Solutions: AFDC and Why America Hated It

October 8th* Solutions: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

October 13th Solutions: TANF in Louisiana

October 15th Exam Two

Section Three: What is policy evaluation? How well do poverty solutions work?

October 20th Evaluating Public Policy

October 22nd Evaluating Public Policy Continued

October 27th* Evaluating TANF: Sanctions

October 29th* Evaluating TANF: Financial Independence

November 3rd* Dental Care/Teen Pregnancy

November 5th Exam Three
Section Four: How do race and poverty intersect in America?

November 10th*
Race and Welfare: News Media and Race

November 12th*
Race and Welfare: Distributing Discipline

November 17th
Race and Welfare: Distributing Discipline

November 19th*
Race and Welfare: Vocational Education

November 24th
Race and Welfare: Public Education

December 1st*
FEMA trailer parks
Davis and Bali. 2008. “Examining the Role of Race, NIMBY, and Local Politics in FEMA Trailer Park Placement” *Social Science Quarterly* 89:1175-1194.

December 3rd
Exam Four

December 10th
Paper Part II is due.