The Politics of Poverty

Political Science 4000-1
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Tues, Thurs 10:40-12:00
211 Turcaud
Office Hrs: by appointment
Monday 9:30-11:30
Tuesday 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 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 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 February 2nd 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 75 points and is due on May 13th 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. You must incorporate at least 5 readings from the course and may use as many outside readings as you like.

**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?*

**January 19th**

Introduction; What is public policy?

**January 21st**

Policy Making Process
Sabatier Chapter

**January 26th**

Policy Making Process

**January 28th**

Behavioral Assumptions

**February 2nd**

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.

**February 4th**

What Does Poverty Look Like?

**February 9th**

Exam One

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

**February 11th**

Why are Poor People Poor?

February 18th* Solutions: Poverty among the Elderly
“Can the Rich and Famous Save Social Security?”

February 23rd* Solutions: Poverty among Young
“Children’s Coverage and SCHIP Reauthorization”
http://www.kaiseredu.org

February 25th* 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

March 2nd* Solutions: AFDC and Why America Hated It
Reading TBA

March 4th* Solutions: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
What is TANF?
http://www.cbpp.org

March 16th Exam Two

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

March 18th Research Methods: Part I
March 23rd Research Methods: Part II
March 25th Evaluating Public Policy

March 30th* Evaluating TANF: Sanctions

April 1st* Evaluating TANF: Financial Independence
April 13th*
Dental Care/Teen Pregnancy

April 15th
Exam Three

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

April 20th*
Race and Welfare: News Media and Race

April 22th*
Race and Welfare: Distributing Discipline

April 27th*
Race and Welfare: Vocational Education

April 29th
Race and Welfare: Public Education

May 4th*
FEMA trailer parks

May 6th
Exam Four

May 13th
Paper Part II is due at 12:30