The Politics of Poverty

Political Science 4000
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Tues, Thurs 10:40-12:00
102 Turead
Office Hrs: by appointment
Monday 10-11
Thursday 1:00-2:30

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 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, May 12th immediately following our final exam time. 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 unless I am given a University excuse. 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 January 26th 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 and stapled. 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 at the start of class on May 3rd. 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. 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 may lose some or all of these points for the following offenses.

- Emailing me and asking me questions that can be answered using the syllabus or that can be answered using LSU’s website. Some examples are “Where is your office?” “When are your office hours?”

- Emailing me and telling me why you missed an exam.

- Emailing me some form of the following questions: “Can you give me a B? If you don’t I’ll lose my TOPS,” or “Can you give me a [insert grade]? I won’t graduate without it.”

**Grading Scale**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Assignments</th>
<th>Exam</th>
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<tr>
<td>540-600</td>
<td>108-120</td>
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<td>480-539</td>
<td>96-107</td>
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<td>420-479</td>
<td>84-95</td>
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<td>360-419</td>
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**Readings Schedule and Topic Outline**

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

**January 17th**

Introduction; What is public policy?

**January 19th**

Policy Making Process Review

**January 24th**

Behavioral Assumptions


**January 26th**

What is poverty?

“How Poor Are America’s Poor: Examining the ‘Plague’ of Poverty in America”
Additional reading to be announced.
Reminder: Thought paper is due.

January 31
The Safety Net in U.S. and Europe

February 2nd
Research Methods

February 7th
Research Methods Continued

February 9th
Is the playing field really level?
http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/03/poordevelopment/
Nisbett, Richard. “Social Class and Cognitive Culture.” Chapter Five from Intelligence and How to Get It.

February 14th
Economic Mobility: Can’t the poor just try harder?
Scott Winship. “Mobility Impaired.” Brookings Institute
Holmes, Jamie. Why Can’t More Poor People Escape Poverty? A radical new explanation from psychologists.

February 16th
Exam One

Section Two: Policy Solutions to the Problem of Poverty

February 23rd
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”

February 28th
Social Security and the Elderly
“Policy Basics: Top Ten Facts about Social Security”
“Can the Rich and Famous Save Social Security?”

March 1st
Health Care and in the United States

March 6th
Health Care Reform Summary
Summary of Health Care Provisions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act Kaiser Family Foundation
The Uninsured: A Primer Kaiser Family Foundation

March 8th
AFDC and Why America Hated It

March 13th
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
“Policy Basics: Introduction to TANF”
“Government Index of Dependence” pp 14-17 of pdf

March 15th
Evaluating TANF: Sanctions

March 20th
Evaluating TANF: Financial Independence

March 22nd
Early Childhood Education
Reading to be announced.

March 27th
EXAM II

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

March 29th
Race and Welfare: News Media and Race

April 3rd
Race and Welfare: Distributing Discipline

April 5th
Race and Welfare: Vocational Education

April 17th
Education, Race, and Poverty
Waiting for Superman Poverty and Crime

April 19th
Education, Race, and Poverty
Waiting for Superman

April 24th
“Turn Around Schools That Work” by Richard Kahlenberg

April 26th

May 1st
Immigration and Social Services

May 3rd
Catch Up and Paper Due

May 12th
Final Exam and Make Up Exams