

POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES
Sociology 3505, Fall 2018

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:50 PM
211 Tureaud Hall

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Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs., 3:00-4:00 PM

SOCL 3505 POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES (3)

Prereq: SOCL 2001 or SOCL 2501 or equivalent. Definition of poverty, its meaning, measurement, causes, correlates and consequences; strategies for its amelioration and elimination.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course examines the nature and extent of poverty in the United States. Students will gain familiarity with poverty issues as we review topics such as people's views of poverty, poverty measurement, the characteristics of the poor population, international comparisons, underlying causes of poverty, and government programs and policies crafted to address poverty.

The types of questions we will focus on include: How have views of poverty evolved? What are the different methods people use to measure and understand poverty? Who are the poor? Why does poverty remain so pervasive? How do economic processes contribute to poverty? Are people from particular social backgrounds inevitably more likely to be poor? What are the goals and purposes of social welfare programs? What are the limits of policy?

The primary objective of the course is to encourage students to think analytically and critically about poverty. We all come to this course with different life experiences, and these experiences have led us to hold different ideas about poverty. This diversity—informed by the course material—will allow for an interesting exchange of ideas.

Specific course objectives are to:

1. Describe and synthesize concepts, principles, and theories used to study poverty.
2. Analyze and discuss contemporary poverty issues and information.
3. Communicate the above effectively, orally and in writing.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Iceland, John. 2013. "Poverty in America: A Handbook." 3rd Edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. ISBN: 978-0-520-27636-9.

Additional readings will be posted on the course website or provided via hyperlink in the Detailed Course Outline at the end of this syllabus.

COURSE WEBSITE

This course makes use of Moodle, which is accessed through your *myLSU* account. I will use Moodle to post lecture material, grades, readings, and announcements. Make sure to check the website regularly.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

General Pointers: Regular class attendance and participation will greatly improve your odds of success in this course and will also facilitate the collective success of the class. If you are unable to attend class on a particular day it is your responsibility to find out what you missed, either from a classmate or by visiting me during my office hours.

It is also important to keep up with the reading assignments. All assigned reading is fair game for the exams.

I encourage you to utilize my office hours (Tues. and Thurs., 10:30-11:30 AM) if you have any questions about the course material, your standing in the course, or other related matters. I set this time aside each week specifically to meet with my students, so please don't hesitate to stop by!

Exams: There will be two exams in this course. Each exam is worth 30% of your final grade. Exams will be administered in our regular classroom unless you are notified otherwise. The exams will be held on the following dates:

Midterm Exam:	Thursday, September 27, regular class time
Final Exam:	Monday, December 3, 3:00 PM

Please note that while tardiness is always frowned upon, it is inexcusable on an exam day. You must be on time for exams. **No new exams will be administered after the first student has completed their test and has exited the classroom.**

Term Paper: You will be required to write an 8 to 10-page term paper on a topic of your choice that relates to the sociology of poverty in the U.S. Your term paper will be worth 30% of your final grade. There are countless topics you might explore for your term paper, so be creative! I will be happy to discuss paper topics with you as your ideas develop. **A hardcopy of your term paper is due in class on Thursday, November 1.**

Participation: Class participation will be assessed throughout the semester. Participation is worth 10% of your final grade. One measure I will use to assess class participation is attendance. Each student will begin the semester with a perfect 100% for attendance and a 3 absence "cushion." For each unexcused absence beyond your cushion, 10% will be deducted from your attendance score. So if you have 4 unexcused absences your attendance grade will be 90%, if you have 5 it will be 80%, and so on.

Absence and Make-Up Policy: **In order to be excused for an absence you will be required to provide written documentation of a valid reason for your absence within one week's time** (see LSU Policy Statement 22, posted on the course website, for a list of valid reasons for student absences). No assignments (exams, term paper, etc.) can be made-up without such documentation.

GRADING

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Midterm Exam	30%	Thursday, September 27
Term Paper	30%	Thursday, November 1
Final Exam	30%	Monday, December 3, 3:00 PM
Participation	10%	Ongoing throughout semester

Based on the cumulative score earned on these four components, letter grades will be assigned as follows:

97-100	A+
93-96	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
59 & below	F

Note: There are no extra credit options available in this course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Louisiana State University students are responsible for observing the highest standards of academic and personal integrity. The penalties for academic misconduct are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable excuse. All cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Louisiana State University is committed to promoting an atmosphere to end discrimination against individuals with special needs, to bring persons with special needs into the social and economic mainstream, and to provide enforceable standards to address discrimination against individuals with special needs. In order to ensure reasonable accommodations, students with special needs should register with the Office of Disability Services. If you anticipate needing special accommodations in this course, please contact me early in the semester so that we can reach a mutual understanding on how to best set you up for success.

IMPORTANT NOTES

1) If you are concerned about your course performance, contact me as soon as possible. Together we can identify why you are having problems and how you can better position yourself for success. If you wait until the end of the semester to contact me about your status in this course it will be too late! Please also note that academic policies have been put in place that put serious restrictions on the ability of students to drop and retake classes. These changes make it more important than ever that you take personal responsibility for your course performance.

2) Be respectful of others. Among other things, this means refraining from side-conversations, turning off cell phones upon entering the classroom, and waiting until the end of class to pack up your things. If you must leave class early, please choose a seat near the door in order to minimize your disruption of others when exiting the classroom. Last, it is always important that you be respectful of those with opposing points of view. Remember, the open exchange of ideas is a big part of what a college education is all about!

3) No laptop computers, phones, or other gadgets should be used during class. While most students use their laptops for legitimate class purposes, too many students do not. Due to distractions caused by the inappropriate use of laptops, it is with regret that I have chosen to ban their use in my classes. (Exceptions for those with formal accommodation requests will certainly be honored).

COURSE OUTLINE

<u>Approx. Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Week 1: 8/21, 8/23	Introduction and Views of Poverty in History
Week 2: 8/28, 8/30	Measurement and Meaning of Poverty
Week 3: 9/4, 9/6	Characteristics of the Poor Population and Dynamics of Poverty
Week 4: 9/11, 9/13	Discussion of Term Paper; Librarian Workshop
Week 5: 2/13, 2/15	Geography of Poverty
Week 6: 9/18, 9/20	U.S. Poverty in Global Context
Week 7: 9/25, 9/27	Review and Midterm
MIDTERM EXAM	THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27
Week 8: 10/2, 10/4	Fall Break
Week 9: 10/9, 10/11	Macro-Economy and Labor Force
Week 10: 10/16, 10/18	The Great Recession
Week 11: 10/23, 10/25	Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration; Family Structure and Culture
Week 12: 10/30, 11/1	Anti-Poverty Policy
TERM PAPER DUE	THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1
Week 13: 11/6, 11/8	Anti-Poverty Policy
Week 14: 11/13, 11/15	Local and State Concerns
Week 15: 11/20, 11/22	Thanksgiving Break
Week 16: 11/27, 11/29	Conclusion and Review
FINAL EXAM	MONDAY, DECEMBER 3, 3:00 PM

DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Week 1 Introduction and Views of Poverty in History

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America*. Introduction and Chapter 1: pp. 1-21.

Pew Research Center. 2014. "[Public is Sharply Divided in Views of Americans in Poverty.](#)"

Week 2 Measurement and Meaning of Poverty

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America*. Chapter 2: pp. 22-38.

Allen, Jodie T. 2011. "[Re-Counting Poverty.](#)" Pew Research Center.

Week 3 Characteristics of the Poor Population and Dynamics of Poverty

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America*. Chapter 3: pp. 39-51.

Pew Charitable Trusts. 2012. "[Economic Mobility of the States.](#)" Data Interactive.

Week 4 Discussion of Term Paper and Librarian Workshop

Week 5 Geography of Poverty

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America*. Chapter 3: pp. 51-60.

Weber, Bruce and Kathleen Miller. 2017. "Poverty in Rural America Then and Now." Chapter 2 in *Rural Poverty in the United States*, Ann R. Tickamyer, Jennifer Sherman, and Jennifer Warlick (eds). New York: Columbia University Press. (Posted on Moodle).

Wilson, William J. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Vintage Books. Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. xii-xxiii and 3-24. (Posted on Moodle).

Week 6 U.S. Poverty in Global Context

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America*. Chapter 4: pp. 61-78.

Smeeding, Timothy. 2006. "Poor People in Rich Nations: The United States in Comparative Perspective." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20: 69-90. (Posted on Moodle).

Week 7 Review and Midterm

MIDTERM EXAM THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

Week 8 Fall Break

Week 9 Macro-Economy and Labor Force

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America*. Chapter 5: pp. 79-88.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books. Introduction and Chapter 1: pp. 1-49. (Posted on Moodle).

Week 10 The Great Recession

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America*. Chapter 6: pp. 114-129.

Week 11 Race, Ethnicity, Immigration; Family Structure; Culture

Iceland, John. 2012. *Poverty in America*. Chapter 5: pp. 89-113.

Massey, Douglas S. 2007. *Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System*. “Reworking the Color Line.” Chapter 3: pp. 51-112. (Posted on Moodle).

Lewis, Oscar. 1966. “The Culture of Poverty.” *Scientific American* 215: 19-25. (Posted on Moodle).

Cohen, Patricia. 2010. “‘Culture of Poverty’ Makes a Comeback.” *New York Times*, October 17, 2010. (Posted on Moodle).

Week 12 Anti-Poverty Policy

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America*. Chapter 7: pp. 130-155.

Moffitt, Robert A. 2002. “[From Welfare to Work: What the Evidence Shows](#).” The Brookings Institution Welfare Reform and Beyond Policy Brief No. 13 (January).

Lichter, Daniel T. 2001. “Marriage as Public Policy.” Progressive Policy Institute Policy Report. (Posted on Moodle).

TERM PAPER DUE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Week 13 Anti-Poverty Policy

Sawhill, Isabel and Ron Haskins. 2002. “[Welfare Reform and Work Support System](#).” The Brookings Institution Welfare and Beyond Policy Brief No. 17 (March).

Waldfogel, Jane. 2001. “Research on Poverty and Antipoverty Policies.” Pp. 467-472 in *Understanding Poverty*, S. Danziger and R. Haveman (eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Posted on Moodle).

Week 14 Local and State Concerns

Tues.: Guest lecture: Kim Matherne, Executive Director of Economic Stability Programs, State of Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

Thurs.: Guest lecture: Jan Moller, Director, Louisiana Budget Project (LBP).

Week 15 Thanksgiving Break

Week 16 Conclusion and Review

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America*. Conclusion: pp. 157-163.

FINAL EXAM MONDAY, DECEMBER 3, 3:00