Public Affairs 883: 
Politics of Poverty, Inequality and Social Policy

Professor: Geoffrey L. Wallace
Office Hours: Friday mornings 10-noon, or by appointment
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Course Description

This Course analyzes the conditions and causes of poverty with the United States and the variety of economic, social, and political responses that have occurred in recent history. Various perspectives on poverty and their underlying theory and implications will be explored. Policies aimed at alleviating poverty will be explored programs with emphasis given to the research literature evaluating these programs. The goal of the course is to develop the institutional knowledge and analytical skills to allow students to be good consumers of poverty related research.

Prerequisites

An understanding of microeconomics and regression analysis is a necessity. Students entering the course should have had PA 818 (Introduction to Quantitative Tools for Public Policy Analysis) or equivalent class and PA 880 (Microeconomic Policy Analysis). Additionally, completion of, or contemporaneous enrollment in, 819 is highly recommended.

Course Requirements

1. Timely completion of required readings.
2. Participation in class meetings.
3. One paper on a topic chosen by the student.
4. Six Reading Critiques
5. Final exam.

Grades will be calculated as follows

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Paper</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Critiques</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm (to be announced)</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final (to be announced)</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
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**Course Paper**

The paper is expected to be a critical analysis of some research area that addresses the problems of poverty. It should demonstrate knowledge of the literature in this area and analyze what we do and do not know about the issue from existing research. The papers are expected to show some degree of independent thought and not be merely a “book review.” The paper will be due May 10th in class. Late papers will be penalized one letter grade for each day that they are late.

**Reading Critiques**

During six weeks of the course (you pick the weeks) of the semester you are responsible to writing critiques of two of the assigned readings for the week. The critique of each paper should be a single page, about half devoted to integrative summary comments, and about half to critical responses or questions. These critiques should be completed by noon on Wednesday and sent by e-mail to the classlist. Critiques will be graded on a check+, check, check- scale.

**Required Books**


Subjects and Readings

February 2, 2012

I. The Problem of Poverty

A. Measuring Poverty


B. Poverty and in the US


February 9, 2012

C. Poverty Dynamics, Persistence, and Transmission


D. Consequences of Poverty


E. Coping With Poverty


February 16, 2012

II. Theories of Poverty

A. Economics Market Models


February 23, 2012

B. Institutional/Structural Models


C. Cultural Models


March 1, 2012

III. History of Responding to Poverty

A. Before the 1960s


B. The War on Poverty and Its Follow-up


March 8, 2012

C. Welfare Reform Era


March 14, 2012

- Midterm Exam
- Brief paper (1-2 pages) describing your final paper is due
March 21, 2012

IV. Policy Responses – Specific Programs and Issues.

A. Changing Labor Markets


March 28, 2012

B. Welfare, Work, and Poverty


April 4, 2012 – Spring Break

April 11, 2012

C. Earned Income Tax Credit and the Minimum Wage


April 19, 2011

D. Family Structure, Composition, and Policy


April 26, 2012

E. Job Training, Education, and Employment Policies for Adults and Older Youth


May 3, 2012

F. Policies Affecting Children


G. Child Support


May 10, 2010

H. Housing Policy, Poverty, Spatial Location, and Neighborhood Effects


I. Health, Disability, and Food Programs


Saturday May 12, 2012 – Final Exam (noon-2pm), location TBA