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POLS 60: Introduction to Public Policy
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:35-10:50AM
Fall 2016

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Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday: 2:30pm-3:45pm

Fighting poverty is one of the central challenges of the 21st century in the United States and in developing countries where extreme poverty is especially pervasive. In this class, we will think about how we should understand poverty and what has and can be done to alleviate poverty here at home and in the developing world. To this end, we will explore three substantive questions at some length. First we will discuss how to define and measure poverty. This is critical for any government or other program that aims to target welfare benefits/aid to the poor. Second, we will explore poverty and policies that aim to address it in the urban United States—with a focus on welfare programs broadly and urban poverty, with some attention to urban development in Los Angeles specifically. This will give you a first application in a more familiar context before we move onto other countries. Third, after the midterm we will focus on poverty alleviation in developing countries and critically assess a range of strategies (welfare programs, conditional cash transfers, microcredit, etc.) to fight poverty in this setting.

Course Objectives: As required by the College, you will find a list of course objectives on the last page of this syllabus.

Classroom Etiquette

To make sure that we have a hospitable learning environment, I ask students to follow three simple rules:

- 1) Turn your cell phones off when you enter the class room (and refrain from chat platforms— gchat, WhatsApp, etc— on your laptops).
- 2) Respect your fellow classmates. Debate is welcome but disagree respectfully by engaging ideas rather.
- 3) Coffee/beverages are fine but food is not permitted in class since it can distract your classmates.

***As goes without saying, it will not be possible to pass this course if I find any evidence of plagiarism/cheating of any kind for any assignment. At minimum, this will result in a zero for that assignment and will be referred to the Dean without exceptions. If you do the work, and think a lot about the material, you'll be fine.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

(1) Lecture and Discussion Section Attendance and Participation (20%)

You are expected to attend all lectures and to read the required readings in advance of each class session. In order to do well in this course, you must attend and actively participate in class. You must also fully participate in all class activities. You will not be penalized for 1 absence but will lose points after that.

(2) Los Angeles Urban Development Partner Assignment (10%)

For this assignment, I ask you to pick an area of policy that you are interested in and explore its development in Los Angeles. You will be asked to provide a brief overview of the state of your policy area (e.g. education) in two neighborhoods and to assess progress. I will provide a handout on this at the start of the U.S. Poverty section of the course.

(3) Case Study Presentations (15%)

Each student will complete a presentation that applies a class session theme to a real world case in one country (outside the U.S). The purpose of the presentation is to use a political science argument to understand the situation in your case (current or from the past) that interest you. You will pick an argument and explore whether that argument explains your specific case through a careful application of the argument to evidence from your case.

The presentation should last 10-12 minutes. I will ask you to propose a country and a ranking of preferences for three class session by email by week 3. Presentations will take place on Thursdays from weeks 5 to 13. You will be required to submit a one-page memo with your research question (requirements outlined in the assignment handout) no less than one week before the date of your presentation.

*Note: If you wish to do a presentation on the U.S. during our U.S. poverty section, see me.

(4) In-class Midterm Exam (25%)

The Midterm will include a combination of identification questions and short essay questions. It will include material presented both in the required readings and in the lectures. This will be a closed-book exam, and you will have a full class period to complete it.

(5) Take-Home Final: Policy Memo (30%)

The final exam (8-10 pages) will be a take-home essay that asks you to draw on course material. You will be asked to address one of two essay prompts. Final exam essay prompts will be handed out at final class meeting and due at 5pm on the day of the scheduled final exam, which is set by the registrar.

Required Books

Available at the bookstore and on course reserve:

Krishna, Anirudh. 2010. *One Illness Away: Why People Become Poor and How They Escape Poverty*. New York: Oxford University.

Banerjee, A. and Esther Duflo. 2012. *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*. Public Affairs. <See the website here: <http://www.pooreconomics.com>>

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in the United States*, University of California Press.

Edin, Kathryn and H. Luke Shaefer. *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*

Session 1: Course Introduction (8/30)

NO CLASS 9/1 DUE TO A CONFERENCE

PART I: CONCEPTUALIZING AND MEASURING POVERTY

Session 2: What is Poverty? (9/6)

Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*, Chapters 1-2.

Krishna, Anirudh. *One Illness Away*. Skim Chapter 1 (“Refilling the Pool of Poverty”) and Read Chapter 3 (“The Rising-Falling Tide”).

Narayan et al. 2000. *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* Chapter 2 (“Definitions of Poverty”).

Session 3: How Do the Poor Live? (9/8)

“SPENT” < <http://playspent.org> > [GAME; PLAY BEFORE CLASS]

Collins, D., Morduch, J., Rutherford, S., Ruthven, O. 2009. *Portfolios of the Poor*, Chapter 1 (“The Portfolios of the Poor”).

Neuwirth, Robert. 2006. *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters: A new urban world*, Chapter 2 (Nairobi, Kenya).

Session 4: How Should We Determine Who Is Poor? (9/13)

Deaton, Angus. “Measuring Poverty” in Abhijit Banerjee, Roland Benabou, and Dilip Mookherjee, eds., Understanding Poverty (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Laderchi, Catherina, Ruhi Saith, and Frances Stewart. 2003. "Does it Matter That We Do Not Agree On the Definition of Poverty? A comparison of four approaches." *Oxford Development Studies*, 31(3) 243-274.

Skim: Banerjee and Duflo, *Poor Economics*, Chapter 2.

Session 5: How is the Poverty Line Determined? (9/15)

Brady, David. *Rich Democracies, Poor People*. Chapter 2 ("Rethinking the Measurement of Poverty").

Dreze, Jean and Reetika Khera. 2010. The BPL Census and a Possible Alternative. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(9), 54-63.

Cases: United States, India

PART II: The CAUSES OF POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES (AND POLICIES TO ADDRESS THEM)

Session 6: Poverty and Its Causes in the U.S. (9/20)

Iceland, John. *Poverty in America*, Chapter 4.

Cancian and Danziger. Changing Poverty, Changing Policies. 2009. Chapter 7: "Mobility in the United States: a Comparative Perspective" by Marcus Jantii. P. 180 – 201.

Session 7: Where are the Jobs? Poverty and Economic Change in America (9/22)

Iceland, John. 2013. *Poverty in America: A handbook*. University of California Press. Chapter 5.

Wilson, William. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. Introduction.

Session 8: Welfare Policy in the United States (9/27)

Iceland, Chapter 7.

Edin, Kathryn and H. Luke Shaefer. *\$2 a Day*, Chapter 1.

Session 9: Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform (9/29)

Gilen, Marty. *Welfare and Why Americans Don't Like It*, Selection.

Session 10: Education Inequality (10/4)

Kozol, Jonathan. *Savage Inequalities*, Chapter 3.

Watch: *Waiting for Superman*

Session 11: Education Policy (10/6)

Guest Speaker Round Table Discussion

Rudalevige, A. 2003. "The Politics of No Child Left Behind." *Education Next*, 3(4) 63-69.

"The Disproportionate Stress Plaguing American Teachers." *Atlantic Monthly*.
<Available at: http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/10/the-disproportionate-stress-plaguing-american-teachers/503219/?utm_source=atfb>

Session 12: Poverty and Prison: A vicious cycle (10/11)

Western, Bruce. 2006. *Punishment and Inequality in America*. Russell Sage Foundation. Chapters 1 and 5.

"Prison and the Poverty Trap." *New York Times* (2/18/2013) Available at:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/19/science/long-prison-terms-eyed-as-contributing-to-poverty.html?pagewanted=all&r=1>

Video Clip: *Ted Talk*.

Session 13: Class Activity: Los Angeles Project (10/13)

Take-Home Midterm Distributed

FALL BREAK: NO CLASS 10/18

PART III: Why are Some Countries Poorer than Others?

Now we move the discussion beyond the U.S. to countries in the developing world.

Session 14: Institutions vs. Resource Endowments (10/25)

Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, Chapter 3 ("The Making of Prosperity and Poverty").

Sachs, Jeffrey. 2012. "Government, Geography, and Growth: The true drivers of economic development." *Foreign Affairs*, 142-150.

Session 15: Institutions and Development (10/27)

Acemoglu, Daren, S. Johnson, and James Robinson. 2002. "An African Success Story: Botswana."

Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, Chapter 9 ("Reversing Development").

Recommended: Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. "Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism." Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2 ("Decentralized Despotism").

Session 16: Does Democracy Lead to Pro-Poor Policies? (11/1)

Varshney, Ashutosh. 2000. "Why Have Poor Democracies Not Eliminated Poverty? A Suggestion." *Asian Survey*, 40(5) 718-736.

Keefer, Phillip and Stuti Khemani. 2004. "Why Do the Poor Receive Poor Services?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, 935-943.

Recommended: Ross, Michael. 2006. "Is Democracy Good for the Poor?" *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(4) 860-874.

Optional: Schneider, Mark. "[Do Local Leaders Prioritize the Poor?](#)" *Hindu Business Line*, 14 December 2015.

Session 17: Democracy, Development, and Poverty Alleviation? (11/3)

Ravallion, Martin. 2009. "A Comparative Perspective on Poverty Reduction in Brazil, China and India". World Bank Policy Research Working Paper Series.

Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Action*, Selection.

Drèze, Jean and Amartya Sen. 2012. "Putting Growth in its Place." *YOJANA*, 35-40.
Cases: India, China.

Optional: Van de Walle, Nicholas. 1999. "Economic Reform in a Democratizing Africa." *Comparative Politics*, 21-41.

PART IV: POLICY DEBATES

Session 18: Social Safety Nets (11/8)

Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen. 2013. *An Uncertain Glory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: Chapter 7: 'Poverty and Social Support.'

Sandbrook et al. *Welfare State in the Global Periphery*. Chapter 3 (Kerala).

Session 19: Social Safety Nets II: Outsourcing Social Welfare to Non-State Actors (11/10)

Thachil, Tariq. 2011. Embedded Mobilization: Non-state service provision as electoral strategy in India. *World Politics*, 63(03), 434-469.

Brass, Jenn. 2015. "Blurring the Boundaries: NGOs, the State, and Service Provision in Kenya." In Melanie Cammett and Lauren McLean (eds) *The Politics of Non-State Social Welfare*.

Session 20: Is Foreign Aid Effective? In-Class Debate (11/15)

The Optimists:

Sachs, Jeffrey D. 2005. *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: Penguin) [Chapter 13: “Investments Needed to End Poverty”].

Pessimists:

Easterly, William. 2007. “Planners versus Searchers” (Chapter 1) AND “The Legend of the Big Push” (Chapter 2), p. 3-52 in *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ills and So Little Good*.

Watch: *Poverty Inc.*

Session 21: Understanding Social Science Experiments (11/17)

Roodman, *Due Diligence*, Chapter 6.

Banerjee and Duflo, *Poor Economics*, Introduction.

Session 22: Micro-Credit (11/22)

Banerjee and Duflo, *Poor Economics*, chapters 7, 9.

Recommended: Roodman, David. 2012. *Due Diligence: An impertinent inquiry into microfinance*. Washington DC: Center for Global Development, Chapter 7 (“Development as Freedom”).

Thanksgiving: No Class 11/24

Session 23: Cash Transfers (11/29)

Diaz-Cayeros, Alberto and Beatriz Magaloni. 2009. “Aiding Latin America's Poor.” *Journal of Democracy*, 20(4), 36-49.

Lomelí, Enrique Valencia. 2008. “Conditional Cash Transfers as Social Policy in Latin America: An Assessment of their Contributions and Limitations.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 475-93.

Christopher Blattman and Paul Niehaus. 2014. “Show Them the Money: Why Giving Cash Helps Alleviate Poverty,” *Foreign Affairs*, 93.3 (May/June).

Session 24: Education and Health: The Challenge (11/29)

Chaudhury, Nazmul; Hammer, Jeffrey; Kremer, Michael; Muralidharan, Karthik; Rogers, F. Halsey. 2006. "Missing in Action: Teacher and Health Worker Absence in Developing Countries." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(1) 91-116.

Dundar, Halil, Tara B eteille, Michelle Riboud, and Anil Deolalikar
Student Learning in South Asia. World Bank. Chapter 2 ("What and How Much are Students Learning?")

No Class 12/1 Due to a Conference

Session 25: Education and Health: What Works? (12/6)

Banerjee and Duflo, *Poor Economics*, Chapter 3-4.

Bj orkman, Martina, and Jakob Svensson. 2009. "Power to the People: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment on Community-Based Monitoring in Uganda." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124 (2) 735-769.

Session 26: Course Conclusion and Final Review (12/8)

No Required Readings

Reading Skills:

As you manage the reading for this and other courses, you are likely to find, if you have not already, that there is no correlation between effort and outcome. It is entirely possible to spend several hours reading something without “getting it.” And it is equally possible to spend less than a half-hour reading something else and getting to the heart of the argument. You will have to devise for yourselves ways to read efficiently. These are some devices that may help:

1. Figure out what the heart of an argument is before you read deeply: skim, read the abstracts, the jacket blurbs, often short reviews published elsewhere. When you know where the center of gravity is, you read more efficiently.
2. Read actively: do not simply soak up the reading for what the author wants to tell you, but approach it with questions, and try to answer them for yourself as you make your way through.
3. Use other peoples’ skills: you do not have to do all the work yourself. It is not “cheating” if you talk through the argument with someone else before or after you delve in, or look at reviews for explication, or form reading groups where you can discuss the argument with each other.
4. Write in order to read. The response papers for this class and the (non-graded) worksheet attached should help.
5. Use diagrams if necessary: often, the structure of an argument can be most clearly expressed if you “draw” it, using arrows and lines, than by trying to understand it in words.
6. Organize your notes in a way that makes retention and information retrieval possible: you could use index cards, annotated bibliographies, database programs like Filemaker Pro etc. These rules may be obvious to some and not to others. Basically, do whatever works for you. But be self-conscious about the reading process as a skill that has to be learned and not necessarily as an ability that either comes naturally or does not.

Reading Worksheet

For each book, chapter, or article assigned in this course, you should fill out the following (non-graded) worksheet. Many of these points can be addressed in a sentence or two (e.g. Questions 1 and 2; in some cases, answers will not need even to be full sentences (e.g., Question); and in some cases, the answers may overlap. These worksheets should be retained: they will be useful for future reference.

1. State the central question that the reading addresses.
2. State the central argument(s) defended in the paper in response to this question.
3. What type of reasoning or evidence is used to support these arguments? If it is an analytical paper, what is the logic that undergirds the argument? If an empirical paper, what type of data is employed? Are there other data sources that you think might be more appropriate?
4. Do you find the claims of the reading convincing? What do you see as the main gaps that need to be filled?
5. Why (if at all) is the reading interesting?
6. Do you agree with the main claims? What are your hesitations? (This may simply involve restatement of previous points.)
7. Identify one or two implicit premises or background assumptions in the paper that you think are especially controversial or objectionable.
8. Considering your answers to the previous questions, write an abstract for the article of no more than 100 words. (Feel free to repeat formulations given in response to earlier questions.)
9. When you have done this for individual readings, take some time to think about the various readings you have been assigned in relation to each other. See if you can write or imagine a summary table for all the readings taken together which compares and contrasts them.