Instructor: Dr. Andrea Hetling  
Office: Civic Square Building, Room 542  
Telephone: (732) 932-2499 x708  
E-mail: ahetling@rci.rutgers.edu  
Classroom: CSB 112  
Class Hours: Thursdays, 9:50 – 12:30  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:30 – 11:30, Thursdays 12:30 – 2:30 and by appointment

Course Description and Teaching Style

This course will cover the political aspects of poverty and anti-poverty policy in the United States. We will study the contending ideological theories about the causes of poverty and, perhaps more importantly from a policy perspective, the theoretical approaches to and development of public assistance programs to the poor. Over the past twenty years, the United States has seen fundamental changes to how anti-poverty policies are structured. We will investigate how anti-poverty programs have been and are being shaped by devolution, privatization, and behavioral expectations. Before analyzing these policies and programs, we will first explore and debate how poverty is defined and measured, how society understands poverty, and if and how society should address the issue. The issues of race and gender will be woven into our readings and discussion throughout the semester.

The format for the course will be lecture and facilitated discussion. Case studies, assigned readings and other activities will be used to organize class discussions. I am a firm believer of active learning; thus, I will attempt to use discussion in place of traditional lectures whenever possible and encourage questions and expect class participation.

Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to provide students with

1) An understanding of the broad area of poverty including its measures and US social policies addressing the issue

2) An awareness of how emergent problems and the politics involved shape public policy formation in this arena

3) An ability to analyze anti-poverty and, in particular, welfare policy issues (finding strengths and weaknesses) and to think critically about the presentations of others
   a. Apply this ability in a practitioner setting, e.g. how to write a policy memo
   b. Apply this ability in an academic setting, e.g. how to write a literature review and how to be a discussant
4) (Possibly) a desire to further an expertise in a particular area of anti-poverty policy or an interest in playing a role in the development of social policies aimed at decreasing poverty and inequality

**Texts**

There are no required texts for the class; all readings will be posted on Sakai.

**Grading**

Grades will be based on four activities:

1) **Class participation 25%**
   Students are expected to read and digest the readings before class. Discussion will be a major part of the class and its success will depend on the contributions of all members. Both listening and discussion skills are important in this context, and depending on your strengths, the challenge may be to speak up or to monitor your participation; to practice debating or to tone down your argument. Not all students are expected to contribute in the same way, but everyone should reflect on the readings and be prepared to participate in some manner. An assessment of your participation will be provided halfway through the semester.

2) **Critical reading and presentations 20%**
   Each week two/three students will be assigned formal roles in the discussion. (You will have one opportunity to serve as a presenter and one opportunity to serve as a discussant. We will put together a schedule on the second class and begin the presentations on the third class.
   a. **Presenter** – The presenter will summarize the key points of the readings. In about 10 minutes, the presenter should outline the main research questions of each author, their methodology, their underlying assumptions, and their main conclusions.
   b. **Discussant** – The discussant should tie the readings together. Also, in about 10 minutes, the discussant will address two to three of the strengths or major contributions of the readings as a whole and two to three of their weaknesses (eg taken together are they incomplete, inconsistent, unsatisfying, irrelevant?).
   Both the presenter and discussant(s) should hand out a one page summary of your remarks to the class.

3) **Policy memo and presentation 20%**
   A 3-4 paged, single-spaced memo analyzing a specific aspect of US demographic change (ie immigration, aging, family structure) through the lens of a political ideology. The emphasis should be on assessing measurement and data sources as well as its hypothesized impact on poverty in the US. Please see memo assignment for more information and suggested supplemental reading on memo writing.

4) **Annotated bibliography and integrating essay 35%**
   On a topic of your choosing, you should conduct a thorough review of the current literature, focusing on policy research. You will need to critically evaluate (not summarize) the study of your topic and create some conceptual structure of the research. The product will be an annotated bibliography with three sections:

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a. 6-8 page integrating essay summarizing the key issues and identifying challenges and ideas for future research.

b. Critical summaries of 10-12 of the most important articles/reports. Each summary should be about a paragraph in length and include the research question, methods, contributions, and limitations of each piece.

c. A full reference list.

Ground Rules

Collegial and respectful conduct is expected in class. Class members should consider themselves colleagues who will collaborate to help each other develop a solid understanding of materials and concepts. To facilitate this process, class will start and end on time. While I understand emergencies occur, timely arrivals and departures should be the norm.

Please turn off your cell phones and other electronic devices during class.

Attendance at all class session is expected. Any missed classes without an excused absence will count against your class participation grade.

All assignments must be completed on time. They should be typed in 12-point font and submitted in hard copy. Late work will be penalized. Assignments turned in the following week will be marked down an entire grade. Assignments cannot be submitted any later than one week after the due date; missed assignments will receive a failing grade.

Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Such actions will result in a failing grade on the assignment and disciplinary action will be pursued. For further information about academic misconduct and a full explanation of the University’s policies, please see the University’s Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students located on the web at http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html.

My office hours are listed on the top of the syllabus. If any questions or concerns arise, please come see me. If you cannot make my office hours, please make an appointment. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities.
Schedule and Readings

Part I: Introduction to Poverty and Poverty Politics

Week 1 (January 22): Measures and Meaning of Poverty


Week 2 (January 29): Demographics of Poverty


Week 3 (February 5): Causes of Poverty: Liberal and Conservative Theories

Week 4 (February 12): Recent (Neoliberal) History: Here and abroad  
Current Strategies/Goals: Work, Fertility/Marriage, Savings

- Excerpts from Gutman, A. (ed.) Democracy and the Welfare State

Week 5 (February 19): Presentations

Part II: Policy Formation and Analysis

Week 6 (February 26): Public Opinion and Policy Feedback


Week 7 (March 5): Our Analytical Tools and Concerns: Social Welfare Spending and Program Evaluation

- Excerpts from the Green Book
- Bell, S.H. New Federalism and Research: Rearranging old methods to study new social policies in the States. Urban Institute
- Program evaluation handout

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Part III: Welfare Policy

Week 8 (March 12): Welfare policy in New Jersey: The Welfare and Workforce Development Study
Guest: Melissa Qual, Legal Services of New Jersey, Poverty Research Institute

• 3 Reports from NJLS posted on Sakai

Week 9 (March 26): Work-related Program design features: Work-first and Diversion


Week 10 (April 2): Paternalism, Family Policy, and Program design features: Application Requirements, Family Caps, and Marriage


Week 11 (April 9): Sources of variation: Case worker discretion

• Excerpts from Lipsky, M. 1980. Street Level Bureaucrats

**Part IV: Challenges and Special Topics**

**Week 12 (April 16): Sources of variation: Poverty and Place**

• Blank, R. 2004. *Poverty, policy and place: How poverty and policies are shaped by local characteristics*. RPRC Working Paper 04-02

**Week 13 (April 23): Non-Welfare Poor: The Working Poor and The Disconnected**

• Excerpts from Shipler. *The Working Poor*.

**Week 14 (April 30): And in the future?: “Modernization” and More? Privatization**