SOCIOLOGY 124:  
SOCIOLOGY OF POVERTY

INSTRUCTOR: PROFESSOR SANDRA SMITH  
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Office Hours: Mondays 1-2p and Wednesdays 9-11a  
Office Hours Location: 468 Barrows Hall  
Online office hours sign-up: http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/vjrc0

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Why, in the midst of great affluence, are people poor, and in some cases, persistently so?  
Social scientists have put forth a number of explanations—culture of poverty and dependency,  
macroeconomic conditions, changing demographic trends, too much government coddling, not  
enough government intervention...These are just to name a few.  This semester we will  
focus on explanations that can be gleaned by examining the likelihood of experiencing poverty in  
cross-national perspective, since rates of poverty vary significantly more across national  
contexts than within. In the process, students will become informed about the likely causes of  
poverty amidst affluence, as well as what society needs to do to address this seemingly  
intractable problem.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Final grades will be determined as follows:

60%  THREE ANALYTIC PAPERS: Essays should be 5-7 pages in length; each is worth 20%  
of your final grade and will be assessed based on how well students logically develop and  
support an argument, drawing from course lectures, assigned readings, and section  
discussions. Paper due dates are as follows:

-First paper assignment due: February 23rd
-Second paper assignment due: April 1st
-Third paper assignment due: May 15th, 11am

Please organize your time wisely as late papers will not be accepted under any circumstances.

Plagiarism is a very serious offense and will be treated as such. Any student suspected of  
plagiarizing will be investigated thoroughly and, if necessary, will be reported to the  
Office of Student Affairs for disposition. For more information about what plagiarism is  
and how to avoid it, please visit the following website:  
http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/citations.html#Plagiarism

20%  WEEKLY QUIZZES. Students are expected to come to class each week having read assigned  
readings. Quizzes will be given every Monday at the start of class to test students’ knowledge  
of the content of that week’s assigned readings. The two lowest quiz grades will be dropped  
from students’ averages.

20%  SECTION ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: Attendance and participation in discussion  
sections are mandatory. Students’ final grades will reflect the extent and nature of their
engagement in these weekly meetings. During discussion sections, GSIs, will review the lecture and assigned readings and use a variety of other activities, including section-specific assignments, to help students understand the material as well as how to apply it. Also, GSIs hold their own office hours. If students are finding it difficult to understand the material and/or complete assignments, they should seek help from their GSI immediately.

**READING MATERIALS:**

Most of the assigned readings can be found on the course’s bCourse page, to which all students should have access, once enrolled in the course. “On bCourse” distinguishes these reading assignments from assigned readings in required books that have been ordered for the class.

The following books can be purchase at the University Book Store:

- Jane Collins and Victoria Mayer, *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom in the Low-Wage Labor Market*
- Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldir Shafir, *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*
- Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*
- William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*

These books are also available on reserve at Moffitt Library.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS:**

**WEEK 1: JANUARY 21ST**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE:**

**POVERTY IN CROSS-NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**


**WEEK 2: JANUARY 26TH - 28TH**

**CONCEPTUALIZING AND MEASURING POVERTY**

**WEEK 3: FEBRUARY 2ND-4TH**

**POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE NON-WORKING POOR:**

**DO JOBS EXIST?**


WEEK 4: FEBRUARY 9TH-11TH
POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE WORKING POOR


Lane Kenworthy, “How Trickle Down Can Fail: The U.S. Case,” Chapter 3 in Progress for the Poor. On bCourse.

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 16TH-18TH
NO CLASS MEETINGS
2/16—HOLIDAY
2/18—AT CONFERENCE

WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 23RD-25TH
POVERTY AND WELFARE STATE GENEROSITY

FIRST PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE FEBRUARY 23RD


Lane Kenworthy, “Growth is Good for the Poor, If Social Policy Passes it On,” “General Social Policy Reduces Material Deprivation,” “The Aim is Not Spending Per Se,” Chapters 2, 4, & 9 in Progress for the Poor. On bCourse.

WEEK 7: MARCH 2ND-4TH
THE PROBLEM WITH GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION:
(DIS)INCENTIVIZING AND CODDLING THE POOR


WEEK 8: MARCH 9TH-11TH
WELFARE REFORM AND LOW-WAGE WORK


WEEK 9: MARCH 16TH-18TH
THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF POVERTY

Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir, Parts I & II of Scarcity, 2013.
WEEK 10: MARCH 23RD-25TH
SPRING BREAK!!!

WEEK 11: MARCH 30TH-APRIL 1ST

SECOND PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE APRIL 1ST

DVD — Wage Slaves: Not Getting by in America

WEEK 12: APRIL 6TH-8TH
THE PUNITIVE TURN


WEEKS 13: APRIL 13TH-15TH
POVERTY, POLICING, AND MASS INCARCERATION


WEEK 14: APRIL 20TH-22ND
POVERTY, POLICING, AND MASS INCARCERATION


WEEK 15: APRIL 27TH-29TH
ANTI-POVERTY EFFORTS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Jane Waldfogel, Chapters 1-3, 6, and 8 in Britain’s War on Poverty, 2010. On bCourse.

THIRD PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE: MAY 15TH, 11AM