

Soc. 280aa
SOCIOLOGY OF POVERTY
Syllabus

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INTRODUCTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the sociology of poverty. In that effort it will engage a broad literature on the topic that incorporates the research from the disciplines of sociology, economics, and anthropology. The sociology of poverty involves many interrelated topics and we will only be able to touch on some of them. However, the student interested in pursuing specific topics of the subject in more depth will have a firm foundation from which to do so.

The course is about understanding the causes and conditions called poverty. Poverty, or the state of being categorized as living in it, is part of the social stratification system as well as a condition with properties that objectively characterize the experience of individuals living with extreme material scarcity. As such, it involves both the physical (material and body) and social world. This will necessitate looking at food, shelter, disease, markets, and interactions of individuals and states. Having some familiarity with economic theory is useful since a good deal of work on poverty incorporates such theory, but it is not required. What is required is that students consistently and thoroughly engage and interrogate the readings so that learning can be maximized.

Finally, this course will attempt to identify what factors cause and keep people in the condition of poverty, as well as how they relate to produce the type of life people experience when they are in this condition. To do this we will consider the impact of structure, culture and agency in creating and maintaining individuals and groups in the poverty condition. This will allow us to begin to marry explanation with understanding, and increase the likelihood of optimal prediction and successful intervention in one of the more troubling aspects of the human condition.

REQUIREMENTS

There will not be a final paper. Instead we will concentrate on learning what the research assigned has to tell us, and what we make of it in helping us to explain and understand poverty. In order to do this, we will have two requirements for grades:

- (1) Each student will be responsible for providing three, 5-10 page papers on the readings for a particular week. They will then present their paper's argument and engage in dialog with others in the class regarding their arguments. The instructor will provide the students with the question they are to address for that week's papers and discussion.

BOOKS

There have been a number of books ordered for the course. If you are thinking of having poverty be one of your specialty areas, then you may want to purchase all of the books. I have also put together reader for the course that you will have to purchase.

READINGS

- I. The Concept of Poverty: Human Welfare and Inequality

- II. Measuring Poverty
 - a. Martin Ravallion, ***The Economics of Poverty*** (Oxford University Press: 2016): 131-290.

III. Causes of Poverty

- a. Paul Collier, ***The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007): 1-98.
- b. Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis and Melissa Osborne Groves, eds., ***Unequal Chances: Family Background Economic Success*** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005): Chs. 1,3,4, 6, & 7.
- c. Samuel Bowles, Steven N. Durlaub and Karla Hoff, eds., ***Poverty Traps*** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006): Chs. 1,2,3,4, & 5.
- d. Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, ***The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*** (New York: Free Press, 1991): 1-24; 29-126, 127-166.
- e. Claude Fischer, et. al., ***Inequality By Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996): Chs. 2,3, & 4.

IV. Poverty and Place

- a. Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, ***The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side*** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929): Chs. 1,4, 6, 7, & 8.
- b. Paul A. Jargowsky, ***Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios and the American City*** (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1997): 29-88, 116-144, 145-184.
- c. Janice Perlman, ***Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)
- d. Mike Davis, ***Planet of Slums*** (London: Verso, 2010).

V. Social and Cultural Basis of Poverty

- a. Patrick Sharkey, ***Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality*** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): 24-46; 136-165.
- b. David Harding, ***Living the Drama: Community, Conflict, and Culture Among Inner-City Boys*** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 108-203.
- c. Martín Sánchez-Jankowski, ***Cracks in the Pavement: Social Change and Resilience in Poor Neighborhoods*** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

VI. Poverty and Health

- a. Paul Farmer, ***Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 23-134.
- b. Jason Corburn and Lee Riley, eds., ***Slum Health: From the Cell to the Street*** (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016): 101-228.
- c. Nancy Sheper-Hughes, ***Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992): Chs. 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, & 9.
- d. Charles Briggs and Clara Mantini Briggs, ***Tell Me Why My Children Died: Rabies, Indigenous Knowledge, and Communicative Justice*** (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016): Chs. 1,2, & 3.

VII. Poverty and Crime

- a. Martín Sánchez-Jankowski, ***Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991):23-29; 37-62; 101-137.
- b. Sudhir Venkatesh, ***Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor*** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006): 2, 3, 4, & 7.
- c. Randol Contras, ***The Stick-up Kids: Race, Drugs, Violence and the American Dream*** (Oakland: University of California Press, 2012): 115-202.
- d. Phillippe Bourgois, ***In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 77-113.
- e. Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, ***The Bell Curve***, Pp. 235-253.

VIII. Poverty and the Life Course

- a. Corey Abramson, ***The End Game: How Inequality Shapes Our Final Years*** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

IX. Poverty and Policy

- a. Paul Collier, ***The Bottom Billion***, Pp. 99-196.
- b. Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, ***Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way the Fight Global Poverty*** (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).