

**SOCIOLOGY 124:
SOCIOLOGY OF POVERTY**

INSTRUCTOR: PROFESSOR SANDRA SMITH

sandra_smith@berkeley.edu

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/vjrco>

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

David Brady, "Beyond Individualism," "Rethinking the Measurement of Poverty," and "Mythical and Real Patterns in Poverty," in Chapters 1, 2, & 3 *Rich Democracies, Poor People*, 2009. On bCourse.

WEEK 3: FEBRUARY 2ND-4TH

POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE NON-WORKING POOR:
DO JOBS EXIST?

William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, Chapters 1-4.

David Brady, "Structural Theory and Poverty," Chapter 7 in *Rich Democracies, Poor People*, 2009. On bCourse.

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

Arne Kalleberg, Barbara Reskin, and Ken Hudson, "Bad Jobs in America: Standard and Nonstandard Employment Relations and Job Quality in The United States," *American Sociological Review*, 65: 256-78, 2000. On bCourse.

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

David Brady, "The Welfare State and Poverty," Chapter 4 in *Rich Democracies, Poor People*, 2009. On bCourse.

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

Charles Murray, Part III of *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980*, 1984. On bCourse.

Lawrence Mead, "The Problem of Obligation in Social Policy," and "Why Work Must be Enforced," Chapters 1 & 4 in *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*, 1986. On bCourse.

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

Jane Collins and Victoria Mayer, *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom of the Low-Wage Labor Market*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

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

Loic Wacquant, “The Criminalization of Poverty in the Post-Civil Rights Era,” and “Welfare Reform as Statecraft,” Chapters 2 & 3 of *Punishing the Poor*, 2009. On bCourse.

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

Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, 2010.

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

Devah Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(5): 937-975, 2003. On bCourse.

Harris et al., “Drawing Blood from Stones: Legal Debt and Social Inequality in the Contemporary United States.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 115(6): 753-1799, 2010. On bCourse.

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