**Poverty and Inequality**

**PubPol 495: POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY**  
Fall 2017  
Monday and Wednesday 8:30am-10:00am 1220 Weill Hall

Instructor: Prof. Natasha Pilkauskas  
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Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:30pm or by appointment. Sign up for a slot here: Calendar

**Course Description**

This is a course dedicated to an in-depth study of poverty and inequality in the United States. In particular, we will examine how poverty and inequality are measured, consider the underlying causes of poverty/inequality, consequences of poverty/inequality and then consider how our views of these causes shape public policy. We will examine theories of the culture of poverty, social stratification and discrimination, concentrated poverty and the underclass, economic and family structure drivers as well as institutional causes of poverty such as education and incarceration. We will also consider how special populations are particularly affected by poverty, such as children.

The aim of this course is for students to come away with an understanding of recent historical trends in terms of thinking about poverty and its causes and how that thinking influences policy making.

**Course Design**

There will usually be a short overview/lecture, but much of the class will be focused on discussion. Students will be expected to come to class prepared, having done the readings and to engage in class and small group discussions.

**Assignments and Expectations**

Please refer to the assignments document for details on the assignments!

Grades will be based on:

- Class participation/discussion questions – 20%  
  - Due by 7am before class
- Policy topic – N/A  
  - Draft due in class – due 9/20  
  - Revision due - due 9/25
- Ethnography assignment – 30%  
  - Book selection - due 9/20  
  - Written assignment due 11/13  
  - In class presentations - 11/13 & 11/15
• Problem statement and policy descriptions – 15%
  o Draft due in class - 10/9
  o Revision due - 10/13
• Policy analysis – 15%
  o Draft due in class - 10/30
  o Revision due – 11/6
• Final policy paper – 20% - due 12/11

Class Expectations:

If you are going to miss a class you need to let me know ahead of time. More than three unexcused class absences will result in a final grade reduction. Students are also **expected to arrive for class on time** (Michigan time) and to refrain from using cell phones/tablets during class. I do not ban laptops – but I strongly discourage the use of laptops in class. I will provide lecture slides after class.

Because much of this class will be based on discussion, it is important that we create an open environment for discussion. This means being an active and engaged listener, offering insights, critiquing class content or viewpoints, and asking questions. It also means being respectful of others viewpoints and encouraging a diversity of views.

Some Useful Policy Websites

The Brookings Institute – [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu)
Center for American Progress – [www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org)
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities – [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)
Census Bureau – [http://www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
Children’s Defense Fund – [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)
Center for Law and Social Policy – [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org)
Child Trends – [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)
Future of Children – [www.futureofchildren.org](http://www.futureofchildren.org)
Heritage Foundation – [www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org)
Institute for Research on Poverty – [www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp)
Urban Institute – [www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)
U.S. Census Bureau (population info and poverty statistics) – [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
General Academic Expectations

http://fordschool.umich.edu/academic/expectation

Ford School of Public Policy Inclusivity Statement

Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value one another’s opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the UM community

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources

The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impacts students’ academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and/or University Health Service (UHS). For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: http://umich.edu/~mhealth/.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please let your instructor know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of courses may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make your instructor aware of your needs, they can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential. Other information of Ford School norms/expectations and resources for students can be found at: http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectation
Class Calendar and Readings

SECTION 1: DEFINITION, TRENDS, BACKGROUND

9/6/17 - Class 1: Introductions, syllabus, expectations and assignments. Why do we care about poverty/inequality?

9/11/17 - Class 2: History of poverty policy in the U.S., views of poverty and values, quick overview of policies

Required:
Before class fill in this quiz: http://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/group/41eb7138

- Edin & Shaefer (2015). $2 a day – living on almost nothing in America. Chapt 1 (1-33)

Recommended:

9/13/17 - Class 3: Measuring poverty

Required:
Recommended:

9/18/17 - Class 4: Trends and characteristics of poverty, working poor, chronic poverty

Required:

Recommended:
• Scan/look through Census poverty numbers: https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-252.pdf
• Schaefer, Mattingly, & Johnson (2016). Child poverty higher and more persistent in rural America. http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1265&context=carsey

9/20/17 – Class 5: In class discussion and peer review of paper topics

9/25/17 - Class 6: Trends and measures of inequality (income and wealth)

Required:

Recommended:
• This issue is dedicated to inequality: http://ann.sagepub.com/content/663/1.toc

SECTION 2: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY AND LINKS TO POLICY

9/27/17 - Class 7: Culture of poverty / Flawed character / Class

Required:
  http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203806504577181750916067234

Recommended:
• Cohen, P. (2010). “Culture of poverty makes a comeback” NY Times

10/2/17 - Class 8: Policies that address our flawed character – WORK FIRST! EITC,
TANF, proposals on SNAP and housing. Consider argument that policies create
poverty.

Required:
• Bernstein, J. (2013) “Where have all the jobs gone?” NY Times (3pages)
  http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/04/opinion/where-have-all-the-jobs-gone.html
• Gunn, D. (2016) “Whose responsibility are the working poor?” (3pages)
  https://psmag.com/whose-responsibility-are-the-working-poor-34a342b62560#.gwmsaaav92
• Cooper, D. (2016). EPI Briefing Paper – Balancing paychecks and public
  assistance. Just the introduction and key findings (2pages)
  In Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family.

Recommended:
• Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Intro to TANF
  http://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-an-introduction-to-tanf
• Who the EITC helps (4pages) http://www.tcf.org/blog/detail/who-the-eitc-helpsand-why-it-works
• Overview of the EITC:
  http://www.tcf.org/blog/detail/the-eitcour-biggest-program-for-the-working-poor
• Intro to SNAP: http://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-introduction-to-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap
• Cassidy, M. (2015) “How can the EITC be improved?
  https://tcf.org/content/commentary/how-can-the-eitc-be-improved/

10/4/17 - Class 9: Social Stratification: Race and Discrimination

Take the implicit bias test – do the one on race. You do not need to share your
results but it is worth reflecting upon.

• https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
Required:


Recommended:


10/9/17 - Class 10: Problem Statement and Policy Descriptions Due In Class/Peer Review – Will touch on income segregation

Required:


10/11/17 - Class 11: Concentration of poverty – Urban underclass, segregation, neighborhoods, racial segregation vs. income segregation.

Required:


• Ifil, S. (2014). Focus on the costs of segregation for all. (2 pages) http://furmancenter.org/research/iri/essay/focus-on-the-costs-of-segregation-for-all


• Johnson, R. (2014) In search of integration beyond black and white (3.5 pages) http://furmancenter.org/research/iri/essay/in-search-of-integration-beyond-black-white

Recommended:


10/18/17 - Class 12: Policies addressing concentration of poverty/neighborhoods

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


If you're not familiar with housing policies in the U.S.

- Intro to housing vouchers: [http://www.cbpp.org/research/introduction-to-the-housing-voucher-program](http://www.cbpp.org/research/introduction-to-the-housing-voucher-program)

If you want to know more about the Chetty’s work and on MTO


**Eviction**

Other housing issues:

- Collison, R. (2016). Expanding neighborhood choices for voucher tenants using small area fair market rents. (2 pages)
- Fee, R. (2016). Housing choice shouldn’t be at the expense of other low-income renters. (1.5 pages)
- Mcain, D (2016). (1.5 pages) Small area FMRs; a jump start to affirmatively furthering fair housing.
  http://furmancenter.org/research/iri/essay/small-area-fmrs-a-jump-start-to-affirmatively-furthering-fair-housing


Required:

  http://economics.mit.edu/files/5554

Recommended:

  https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2016/06/10/financial-inclusion-united-states
  And
  https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/20160610_financial_inclusion_cea_issue_brief.pdf
- Should we raise the minimum wage? (7 pages)
Poverty and Inequality

- Raising the minimum wage is a terrible idea (3pages):
  [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/06/22/a-15-minimum-wage-is-a-terrible-idea/] OR
- Raising min wage is a good idea (1page):
- Unions are bad (2 pages):
  [http://townhall.com/columnists/johnhawkins/2011/03/08/5_reasons_unions_are_bad_for_america]
- Unions are good (2 pages):
  [http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/10/unions-are-basically-dead/412831/]
  [http://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jep.9.2.149] (18 pages)
- Dimon, J. (2016). Why we are giving our employees a raise.
  [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/opinion/jamie-dimon-why-were-giving-our-employees-a-raise.html]
- Union membership and intergenerational mobility:

10/25/17 - Class 14: Family structure as a cause of poverty

Required:
  [https://web.stanford.edu/~mrosenfe/Moynihan's%20The%20Negro%20Family.pdf]

Recommended:


11/1/17 - Class 16: Intergenerational Mobility – Guest lecturer – Fabian Pfeffer, in Weil 1210– 2:30-4:00.

CLASS TODAY AT 8:30 IS CANCELLED COME TO GRAD SECTION IF YOU CAN MAKE IT! IF NOT – WATCH VIDEO AFTER IT IS POSTED.

**Required:**

  [https://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc311l.pdf](https://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc311l.pdf) (4 pages)

• Solon, G. Intergenerational transmission of income inequality: What do we know?  

  [http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2012/pursuingamericandreampdf.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2012/pursuingamericandreampdf.pdf) (26 pages)


**Recommended:**
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11/6/17 - Class 17: Education

Take a look at this: [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility/](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility/)

Required:
- Bailey & Dynarski Changing inequality in college entry and completion. NBER working paper - Digest. [http://www.nber.org/digest/may12/w17633.html](http://www.nber.org/digest/may12/w17633.html) (1 page)

Recommended:
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  [http://www.rsjournal.org/doi/full/10.7758/RSF.2016.2.2.06](http://www.rsjournal.org/doi/full/10.7758/RSF.2016.2.2.06)

11/8/17 - Class 18: Politics of poverty and inequality **We will do an class exercise so make sure you do the readings!**

**Required:**
Recommended:


**SECTION 3: ETHNOGRAPHIES**

11/13/17 - Class 19: In-Class Presentation of Ethnographies

11/15/17 - Class 20: In-Class Presentation of Ethnographies

**SECTION 4: SPECIAL POPULATIONS/SPECIAL TOPICS**

11/20/17 - Class 21: Guest lecture – Kristin Seefeldt Abandoned Families

Required IF YOU DID NOT READ ABANDONED FAMILIES:


11/22/17 – Class 22: Class cancelled – HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

11/27/17 - Class 23: Incarceration, effects on employment, families
Required:

  http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc232i.pdf
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi (2015). Read sections I-III but I recommend the whole thing. 

Recommended:

  http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/10/how-we-misunderstand-mass-incarceration
  http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc213.pdf
- Boys with incarcerated fathers are screwed before they even get to school 


Required:


Recommended:

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/future_of_children/v024/24.1.chase-lansdale.html

http://www.futureofchildren.org/publications/docs/07_02_06.pdf


• Non-Standard Work/Shifting schedules (4 pages):  

• Benefits of Paid parental leave (4 pages):  

• WIC Works. Addressing the Nutrition and Health Needs of Low-Income Families for 40 years.  

• Boo, K. (2006). Swamp Nurse – on nurse home visiting:  
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/02/06/swamp-nurse

• Currie, J. (2016). “How can we reduce child poverty and support parental employment?”  
Academic Pediatrics, 16.  
http://www.academicpedsjnl.net/article/S1876-2859(16)00059-0/pdf

• Issue of Academic Pediatrics touching on child poverty  
http://www.academicpedsjnl.net/issue/S1876-2859%2816%29X005-8

12/6/17 – Class 26: War on poverty? Did it work?

Required:

• Lowrey, A. (2014). “50 years later, war on poverty is a mixed bag.” NYTimes (4 pages)  
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/05/business/50-years-later-war-on-poverty-is-a-mixed-bag.html

• Boteach, Stegman, Baron, Ross & Wright (2014). “The war on poverty: Then and Now”. Center for American Progress. (32 pages)  

Recommended:

12/11/17 - Class 27: Wrap up

Required:

Recommended: