**PUBPOL 495: POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY - WINTER 2023**

*Monday and Wednesday 10:00am – 11:20am*

**Instructor:** Prof. Natasha Pilkauskas  
**Office:** 5219 Weill Hall  
**Email:** npilkaus@umich.edu  
**Student Office hours:** Mondays 11:40am-12:40pm and Wednesdays 2:45-3:45pm. Sign up for 15 min. meetings [here](#).

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**Course Requirements:**

| Class participation/discussion posts: | 15 | Ongoing |
| Policy Memo turned in in parts: | | |
| - Policy topic and problem statement | 10 | 1/25/23 |
| - *Peer review - background, policy, evidence* | - | 2/8/23 |
| - Background, policy description, research evidence | 15 | 2/15/23 |
| - *Peer review – policy analysis* | - | 3/15/23 |
| - Policy analysis | 15 | 3/20/23 |
| - Final full memo | 20 | 4/17/23 |

**Ethnography assignment:**

| Book selection due | - | 1/18/23 |
| Written assignment | 10 | Due with presentation |
| In class presentations | 15 | 3/15; 3/27; 4/5 |

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**Course Description**

This is a course dedicated to an in-depth study of poverty and to a lesser extent 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 to consider how these ideas shape and frame current policies. This course will provide an overview on the major poverty related policies in the U.S.

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

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**Modules:** The course is organized in Canvas around modules! CHECK THE MODULES! Occasionally readings or organization will change from syllabus, modules will be up to date.
Poverty and Inequality

Readings: I will post readings for each class on Canvas. Students are expected to do the assigned readings for each class period. Class discussions will often be based on the readings.

Assignments: All assignment information and due dates are posted on Canvas. Late work needs to be negotiated before the assignment is due (just like you would do on a job). Professor Pilkauskas is willing to negotiate a new deadline with you if you have a reasonable reason for needing an extension. Assignments that are turned in late without prior discussion or approval will be docked one grade step (A to A-) for every day they are late.

Class Participation and Attendance:

- Class and discussion participation is 15% of the course grade.
- Attendance will be taken each class.
- Class participation also involves asking questions, answering questions, sharing experiences or insights, or even challenging comments made by the professor or other classmates during the class. All students are expected to make productive contributions to class discussions.
- Class participation will also include posting discussion posts before class.
- There are many ways to earn discussion points; this should not be anxiety provoking but rather a key element to engaging in the 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.
- You can miss up to 2 classes (unexcused) without taking any points from your participation grade. If you know you will have to miss a class you should email me before class so that you are excused – if you are excused you do not miss the participation point.
- Class will be recorded – this does not mean you are excused from coming to class. Recordings are available so you can stay home if you are sick. You must email me to let me know if you are sick to ensure you are excused from class to ensure your attendance point. You can make up in-class discussion points by posting online on Canvas.

Ford School 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

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please reach out to U-M Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations and how to communicate about your accommodations with your professors. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential.

**Student Mental Health and Wellbeing:** The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, both those relating to the pandemic and other issues such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, can directly impact students’ academic performance and overall wellbeing. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available.

You may access counselors and urgent services at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and/or University Health Service (UHS). Students may also use the Crisis Text Line (text ‘4UMICH’ to 741741) to be connected to a trained crisis volunteer. You can find additional resources both on and off campus through the University Health Service and through CAPS.

**Academic Integrity:** The Ford School academic community, like all communities, functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. We hold all members of our community to high standards of scholarship and integrity. To accomplish its mission of providing an optimal educational environment and developing leaders of society, the Ford School promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. Plagiarism involves representing the words, ideas, or work of others as one’s own in writing or presentations, and failing to give full and proper credit to the original source. Conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards will result in serious consequences and disciplinary action. The Ford School’s policy of academic integrity can be found in the MPP/MPA, BA, and PhD Program handbooks. Additional information regarding academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct and their consequences is available at: http://www.rackham.umich.edu/current-students/policies/academic-policies/section11#112

**Please review additional information and policies regarding academic expectations and resources at the Ford School of Public Policy at:**
https://intranet.fordschool.umich.edu/academic-expectations
Use of Technology: Students should follow instructions from their instructor as to acceptable use of technology in the classroom, including laptops, in each course. All course materials (including slides, assignments, handouts, pre-recorded lectures or recordings of class) are to be considered confidential material and are not to be shared in full or part with anyone outside of the course participants. Likewise, your own personal recording (audio or video) of your classes or office hour sessions is allowed only with the express written permission of your instructor. If you wish to post course materials or photographs/videos of classmates or your instructor to third-party sites (e.g. social media), you must first have informed consent. Without explicit permission from the instructor and in some cases your classmates, the public distribution or posting of any photos, audio/video recordings or pre-recordings from class, discussion section or office hours, even if you have permission to record, is not allowed and could be considered academic misconduct.

FYI: Maize & Blue Cupboard if you are on/near campus: “College students are experiencing food insecurity at alarming rates. The Maize and Blue Cupboard is here to provide an immediate and comprehensive response for the U-M community. We provide students with resources, educational opportunities, leadership development and compassionate support -- the tools they need to develop the skills to make informed decisions.” More information here: https://mbc.studentlife.umich.edu/
CLASS CALENDAR AND READINGS

SECTION I: DEFINITION, TRENDS, BACKGROUND

1. 01/4/23 – Introductions, syllabus, expectations and assignments.

   READ THE SYLLABUS. SERIOUSLY. READ IT.

   NO CLASS TODAY. Watch the recorded lecture video instead.

   Post any questions you have for me in the discussion section on canvas.

2. 01/09/23 – History of poverty policy in the U.S.,

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

3. 01/11/23 – Values around poverty and features of social policy


01/16/23 – MLK day – no class

4. 01/18/23 – Measuring poverty

Book selection is due

• Haveman, 2009. “What does it mean to be poor in a rich society?” (6pgs)
  http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc262n.pdf
  http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/22/what-it-means-to-be-poor-by-global-standards/ (1.5 pages)

Optional

5. 01/23/23 – Trends and characteristics of those in poverty

Guest lecture from Liana Fox


SKIM/LOOK THROUGH FIGURES.
• Schaefer, Mattingly, & Johnson (2016). Child poverty higher and more persistent in rural America. http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1265&context=carsey

6. 01/25/23 – Trends and measures of inequality

Memo topic due

  https://www.rsfjournal.org/content/rsfjss/2/2/44.full.pdf

Optional:

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

7. 01/30/23 – Culture of poverty / Flawed character

• Sussner, N. & Williams, D. (2020) Scholars of Poverty and Inequality Face Their Own Racial Reckoning https://www.thenation.com/article/society/poverty-racial-inequality/ (6 pages)

Optional

8. 02/01/23 – Poverty policy and our “flawed character” – WORK FIRST. TANF, EITC, work requirements and the working poor.


Optional:
• Seefeldt, K. (2017). How welfare’s work requirements can deepened and prolong poverty. (2.5 pages) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-welfares-work-requirements-can-deepen-and-prolong_us_59837487e4b00833d1de2677

If you need primers on TANF/EITC/SNAP
• Intro to TANF http://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-an-introduction-to-tanf
• Intro to EITC: https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/policy-basics-the-earned-income-tax-credit
• Intro to SNAP: http://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-introduction-to-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap
9. 02/06/23 – Social Stratification: Race and Discrimination


Optional:


10. 02/08/23 – Reparations.

Peer review of background section of memo in class, most of class will be independent – there are videos and podcasts instead.

- Take the implicit bias test – do the one on race. You do not need to share your results but it is worth reflecting upon. If you have done this before take the one on weight. https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
- Listen to the Freakonomics podcast (40 minutes): https://freakonomics.com/podcast/reparations-part-2/
  - You can listen to this instead of reading (while you cook dinner! Or do a puzzle! Or exercise/take a walk!) it’s 1.5 hours.
11. 02/13/23 –Race “conscious” policies


12. 02/15/23 – Concentration of poverty – Urban underclass, segregation, neighborhoods, racial segregation vs. income segregation.

Background section of memo due

- Faber, J. (2020). “We build this: Consequences of New Deal era intervention in America’s racial geography. American Sociological Review, 739-775. JUST THE ABSTRACT.
- 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](http://furmancenter.org/research/iri/essay/focus-on-the-costs-of-segregation-for-all)

Optional

13. 02/20/23 – Housing policies


Optional:

- **Desmond (2016).** “The eviction economy.” NYTimes (5 pages)
  http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/06/opinion/sunday/the-eviction-economy.html
- **Aaronson, D., Faber, J., Hartley, D., Mazumder, B., & Sharkey P. (2021).** The long-run effects of the 1930s HOLD “redlining” maps on place-based measures of economic opportunity and socioeconomic success. *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 86

14. 02/22/23 – Family structure as a cause of poverty

- **Moynihan Report (1965).** “The negro family the case for national action.” (50 pages)
  https://web.stanford.edu/~mrosenfe/Moynihan's%20The%20Negro%20Family.pdf
- **Sussner, N. (2020)** What comes after the nuclear family? 

Optional

- **Coontz, S. (2002).** “Marriage, Poverty and Public Policy”, *The American Prospect*, 
15. 03/06/23 – Family Structure and Policy


**Optional**

- Interesting websites to poke around:
  - [https://familystoryproject.org/research/](https://familystoryproject.org/research/)
  - [https://ifstudies.org/](https://ifstudies.org/)

16. 03/08/23 - Economics: Jobs, Labor Markets, Wages, Unions

  - Con: Cato institute. *Four reasons not to raise the minimum wage.* [https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/four_reasons_not_to_raise_the_minimum_wage.pdf](https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/four_reasons_not_to_raise_the_minimum_wage.pdf) (1 page)

17. 03/13/23 – Intergenerational Mobility and Education
Guest lecture from Jane Furey
- Readings TBD

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18. 03/15/23 – Qualitative Book Presentations

Peer review in class of policy analysis section!

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SECTION 3: CHILDREN & NEW DIRECTIONS

19. 03/20/23 – Poverty and Children 1

Policy analysis section due


Optional:

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20. 03/22/23 – Poverty and Children 2

  - If you are interested the full paper is available on NBER: [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w30533/w30533.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w30533/w30533.pdf)
• Rachidi, A. (2021). Why a fully refundable CTC is the wrong policy for working families. American Enterprise Institute [Rachidi Why a fully refundable CTC is the wrong policy for working families _ American Enterprise Institute - AEI.pdf] (4 pages)


Optional:


21. 03/27/23 – Qualitative Book Presentations

22. 03/29/23 – Universal Basic Income

Class is cancelled today, there are multiple long podcasts to listen to


Optional – most of this is discussed in Piper and in the podcast.

23. 04/03/23 – Unconditional Cash Transfers/ UBI part 2


Optional:

24. 04/05/23 – Qualitative Book Presentations

25. 04/10/23 – Other policy changes/way forward?

• Collyer, S., Wimer, C., Curran, M., Friedman, K., Harley, R, Harris, D. & Hinton, A. (2020). Housing vouchers and tax credits. Poverty and social policy brief. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5743308460b5e922a25a6dc7t/5f7dd00e12dfe51e1
Poverty and Inequality


Optional

26. 04/12/22 – More on the EITC

Guest lecture from Kathy Michelmore in undergrad class. Watch recording of her lecture.

- Readings TBD

Optional

27. 04/17/23 – Did the war on poverty work? Wrap up

Final paper due TODAY

No additional readings for today

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