

Poverty and Place

Community & Environmental Sociology 578 Cross-listed with Sociology and American Indian Studies 578

Spring 2013
Class Location: 1116 Biochemistry
Class Hours: R 2:30-4:25P
Office Hours: R 1-2P, by appointment

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Objectives. This course presents a sociological overview of place-based poverty in the United States, concentrating on the economic structure of poor places and the characteristics of the people who live in those places. Together, we will examine the allocation of economic and social rewards in contemporary society with an emphasis on persistently poor rural regions and communities, analysis of selected minority groups and their poverty statuses, and poverty programs and their consequences for structural and cultural changes. Ideally, class participants will gain an increased awareness of the nature and scope of poverty in the United States, develop an understanding of the explanations for poverty, especially as it is experienced by minority groups, and begin to critically evaluate public policies intended to address poverty. Additionally, class participants will increase their sociological skill set by gathering evidence and applying theory.

The class is organized to promote professionalization. Class assignments aim to develop participants' abilities to summarize and critique information, generate new and theoretically grounded information, and to effectively communicate information through oral presentations and written assignments. Students will learn or hone skills by engaging publically available government and NGO reports and scholarly journal articles, analyzing data through statistical software packages, and communicating effectively through multiple mediums.

Organization. The course is organized into three sections. The first section provides an overview of poverty in the United States, paying special attention to areas of concentrated and persistent poverty. The second section focuses on the structure of poverty in specific places and how it affects the people in those places. The final part of the course focuses on the question of what policies have been tried and what might be needed to ameliorate poverty.

Prerequisites. Class participants must have junior standing and an introductory course in sociology or instructor consent.

Course Modifications and Announcements. Important announcements and changes to the syllabus or course outline will be posted on-line at Learn@UW. You are responsible for regularly checking the course website.

Required Readings. There are 4 required books and several required articles and book chapters. Texts are available for purchase at the locally-owned downtown bookstore *A Room of One's Own* (315 West Gorham Street, 608.257.7888). The required books are:

Frances Fox Piven. 2008. *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America*. (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers)

Sonia Nazario. 2007. *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother*. (Random House)

David Treuer. 2012. *Rez Life: An Indian's Journey Through Reservation Life*. (Atlantic Monthly Press)

William Julius Wilson. 2009. *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*. (W.W. Norton & Co.)

Articles are available online through Learn@UW in the *Electronic Readings* module under the *Content* tab. Students are expected to have read the assigned reading prior to the scheduled class. The assigned readings are listed below in the *Course Schedule* section. Please note that the amount of reading is unevenly distributed across the semester. Updates to the reading list will be posted on-line and announced in class.

I will not lecture from the assigned readings. Rather, the material addressed in the readings is supplemental to the material covered class discussions. Students are expected to integrate the material covered in the readings and in the class, including discussions and guest presentations, into the written and oral assignments.

Format & Requirements. The requirements of this course reflect the "3 to 1" rule. Generally, UW faculty assume that students will spend three hours per week working on course requirements outside of class for every course credit hour spent inside the classroom. Within the classroom, all students are expected to actively participate. Students must be present to actively participate. Classes will be interactive and students should come prepared to participate. Grading for this course will be based on the following factors:

Critical Discussion. The foundation of this course is discussion of the assigned readings. Students are required to submit one-paragraph (approximately 150-200 words) reflection on the week's readings. Reflections can include points that were particularly interesting or aspects that were confusing and require further clarification. The reflections must be submitted via Learn@UW at least 24 hours before the class meeting (2:30P on Wednesday). In addition, there will be at least 3 unannounced in-class short essay exercises throughout the semester. Students can miss one weekly reflection or in-class exercise without penalty. Each additional missed reflection or exercise will result in the loss of 5 points from the total course points. There will be no "make up" reflections or in-class exercises. **Please let me know in advance about any dates you will be absent from class for religious observances or other reasons.**

Reflections and in-class exercises will be graded using a "✓+", "✓", "✓-" system. Exemplary responses will be given "✓+"s (those that are exceptionally thought out and communicated), "✓"s will be given for responses that meet expectations (most responses will receive this score), and "✓-"s will be given for poor or incomplete responses (those that do not engage the material and/or are poorly communicated). Missed responses or exceptionally poor responses, will receive a "0." The reflections and in-class exercises are worth 10% of your total grade, each for a total of 20%.

Critical Analysis. Students will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge as a practitioner through an analysis of place-based poverty. The analysis will be submitted in three parts and detailed instructions on each part will be distributed during the semester. The three parts include:

1. Data analysis summarizing pertinent data for the selected case (i.e. demographic characteristics, economic structure, social dimensions). The data analysis is due 28 February and worth 20% of your total grade.
2. Sociological analysis of county well-being using data from part 1 and additional local sources, and incorporating class readings and one social science article relevant to the particular case. The sociological analysis is due 18 April and worth 20% of your total grade.
3. Policy analysis based on an investigation of federal, state, and local program that affect low-income people, and incorporating class readings. The policy analysis is due 9 May and worth 20% of your total grade.

The data tables will be evaluated based on the clarity of presentation, relevance of presented data, and accuracy of reported estimates in addition to spelling and data source citations. The sociological and policy analyses will be evaluated on how well the problem is stated, originality of ideas, engagement with alternative arguments, use of evidence, clarity of presentation, organization, as well as grammar, spelling and citations. All three elements combined, the critical analysis is worth 80% of your total grade.

Students will deliver a 3-5 minute oral presentation in class based on the critical analysis. The presentation will not be graded, but is necessary to gain full credit. Students who elect not to present will forfeit a full letter grade for the critical analysis.

Students will need to submit each element of the critical analysis in *.rtf or *.doc format to the course website through the *Dropbox* tab at Learn@UW before class on the identified due date. Documents must include your name, have page numbers and 1-inch margins on all sides, and be double-spaced. **Late papers are discouraged and will be deducted by a full letter grade each day beginning at 2:30P of the deadline, including weekends.**

Oral Presentation. In each class meeting, at least one student will briefly present (5 minutes) a relevant and current news piece from the popular press. The presentations should be focused and concise, and should cover the major ideas, (implicit) theoretical basis, and (implicit) policy implications. The presentation is intended to stimulate class discussion. Students should come to class with a hardcopy of or the URL for the news piece.

Oral presentations will be graded using a “√+”, “√”, “√-” system using the same criteria as outlined for the weekly reflections and in-class exercises. The presentation is worth 10% of your total grade.

Grading. No curve is used in this course which means that you will be able to gauge your status at any time and you will get the grade that you earn. Your final course grade will be based on the following components and according to the following distribution:

weekly reflections, 10% (50 points)
in-class exercises, 20% (100 points)
data analysis , 20% (100 points)
sociological analysis, 20% (100 points)
policy analysis, 20% (100 points)
oral presentation, 10% (50 points)

Students will earn the grade for this course that corresponds with the following point distribution:

95-100, A	70-79, C
90-94, AB	60-69, D
85-89, B	0-59, F
80-84, BC	

Incompletes will not be awarded. Extensions will be considered only under extreme circumstances pertaining to family or medical emergencies. **Cheating (including plagiarism) is not tolerated.** Students who are caught cheating will automatically receive an F (zero points) for the relevant assignment/exam. In addition, the incident will be reported in writing to the Dean of your school or college as well as the Dean of Students so that they may decide whether further disciplinary action is needed. A clear definition of plagiarism and information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct can be found at the Dean of Students website:

<http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/misconduct.html>

It is your responsibility as a UW student to be knowledgeable of these rules; lack of familiarity with the rules will not excuse misconduct. Plagiarism detection software will be used in this course.

A Note for Graduate Students. Graduate students enrolled in the course are expected to meet the same requirements *and* perform at a higher level. Graduate students are expected to engage with the material in greater depth (more advanced analysis) and to provide a more polished product (more advanced communication).

Additional Expectations, Matters & Etiquette. The substance addressed in this course can give rise to emotionally-charged discussions. Class participants are strongly encouraged to share their thoughts and questions, and are expected to communicate with one another and are required to do so in a respectful manner. Those unable to maintain a professional and respectful level of exchange will be asked to remove themselves from the discussion. Quality learning is not achievable without tolerance and respect for others' views.

Students are expected to attend class, to complete the reading before class, and to participate in class. Tardiness is discouraged. Cell phones need to be turned off during class (this also means no texting). Class participants are expected to be respectful of one another and refrain from engaging in behaviors that place barriers to students (your and others') learning (i.e., sleeping, chatting, and other distracting actions). Laptops or other internet devices, including tablets or smartphones, are not permitted for note-taking. Computers are a valuable tool for research and study, they are inimical to participation and collegiality in the classroom, creating a "cone of distraction." Therefore, the use of laptops for reasons other than to consult the readings during discussion times will not be permitted.

Please let me know at the beginning of the semester about any dates you will be absent from class for religious or other anticipated reasons.

I am unable to guarantee an immediate response to e-mail messages, especially in the evening. I am available during my regular office hours and will schedule meetings at alternative times if necessary. Check the course website periodically for updates and announcements. Please contact the DoIT help desk (on-line form or 264-4357) if you are having any trouble gaining access to or navigating within the course site.

Students with disabilities, including temporary impairments, are encouraged to contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center (<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/index.php>) and explore the available services.

Course Schedule. Regularly confirm the course schedule on Learn@UW.

Week 1	24 January	Introduction to course
Week 2	31 January	Definitions and issues Reading: Selected readings at Learn@UW
Week 3	7 February	Data access and case studies Guest lecture: David Egan-Robertson, Applied Population Laboratory (* bring your laptops/tablets to follow along— <i>let me know in advance if you do not have one available</i>) Reading: Selected readings at Learn@UW
Week 4	14 February	Theories of poverty and the underclass Reading: <i>More than Just Race</i> (Wilson)
Week 5	21 February	Poverty in the Black Belt Reading: Selected readings at Learn@UW
Week 6	28 February	Poverty and Natural Disasters Reading: Selected readings at Learn@UW Deadline: Data analysis
Week 7	7 March	Social capital and poverty Guest lecture: Dan Veroff, Applied Population Laboratory
Week 8	21 March	Reservation Poverty Readings: <i>Rez Life</i> (Treuer)
Week 9	28 March	No class. Spring break.
Week 10	4 April	Borderland Poverty Readings: <i>Enrique's Journey</i> (Nazario)
Week 11	11 April	No class. Writing Day
Week 12	18 April	Policies for impoverished people Guest lecture: Jane Collins, Community & Environmental Sociology Readings: Selected readings at Learn@UW Deadline: Sociological analysis
Week 13	25 April	Real Change Readings: <i>Challenging Authority</i>
Week 14	2 May	Policies for impoverished places Guest lecture: Amber Canto, UW Extension Readings: Selected readings at Learn@UW
Week 15	9 May	Class wrap-up and presentations Deadline: Policy analysis