Poverty and Politics: US and Comparative Perspectives
POLSCI: 372 (Online)
Summer 2015: June 22nd to July 18th

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Office Hours: Available by appointment

Course Description:
Poverty is one of the greatest worldwide social challenges of the twenty-first century. Why is it that billions of people live in poverty in an age of affluence, globalization, and remarkable progress in human productivity? This course examines the causes as well as the social and political consequences of poverty worldwide. We will analyze the current state of poverty and socioeconomic inequality in a number of country contexts, including the United States. As political scientists, we explore how political actors have responded to poverty and the various public policy strategies governments and international development agencies have undertaken. Our analysis will include special attention to those groups most vulnerable, especially women and children.

While most of the world’s poor live in developing nations, poverty is also a challenge for advanced industrialized countries like the United States. Thus we begin by examining the politics of poverty at home in the US. What’s at stake and can investments by government and private groups end poverty, as we know it? Why or why not? We go from examining the politics of poverty-relief and social welfare in a wealthy country (the U.S.) to poverty worldwide among the bottom billion. In other words, we will examine poverty and the challenge of development for the poorest countries, which are falling farther and farther behind. We conclude the course with an examination of the special challenges that women and children face to overcome poverty in developing nations.

Summer Course Format:
This course is designed as an intensive four-week summer session course, delivered online via D2L. While the delivery is compressed, the course is still designed to give you the FULL experience of a 300-level semester-long political science course. That means that if you’re used to a regular 16-week course, we’ll tackle about 4 weeks of material in each of our weekly modules. One of the advantages of this format is the continuity in reading and discussion that can sometimes get stalled during a long semester. But beware; falling behind in a short-course can be disastrous. Successful completion of the class will require that you be organized and keep pace with the four modules for the course. Please plan to log-onto the D2L site and check email on a daily basis.
Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to explain the domestic and international features of poverty and social inequality, including debates over measures, comparisons across countries, and the causes of poverty.

2. Students will demonstrate depth of knowledge in the areas of social welfare and development policy.

3. Students will not only express their knowledge on the consequences of poverty on politics, but also how politics shapes the public policy strategies undertaken by governments and the international development community.

Required Readings for Purchase:
All assigned readings are required. Books are available for purchase at the UWM Bookstore in the Union. You can purchase the book in person or online at:
http://bookstore.uwm.edu/CourseMaterials.aspx

Please shop around for the best prices. Other online retailers, such as Amazon.com, also carry these books at various price points. Sample prices are listed along with the book’s full citation.


Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available on the course’s D2L site.

Required Reading available on D2L Course Website:
Other books chapters, academic articles, and news articles will also be required. Those materials will be made available on our course website.
**ALSO Required**

**Computer Access:**

As this course is conducted completely online, you should ensure that you have RELIABLE ACCESS to the D2L course website. That means you will need regular access to a computer with reliable high-speed Internet connection. Phone dial-up is not sufficient to meet the demands of downloading and uploading assignments and taking secure exams. If you do not have a computer with high-speed Internet connection at home, please plan accordingly. For instance, plan to use one of the computer labs on the UWM Campus. It is the student’s responsibility to make sure you have the computing support necessary to complete this course. **Note: Technical difficulties with online access will not constitute a reasonable excuse for the late submission of assignments.** Of course, if you have any difficulty with the course website or any questions regarding the performance of D2L, contact the University’s Help Desk at 414-229-4040. You can also try and troubleshoot on your own at: http://www.uwm.edu/IMT/STS/helpdesk/faq/

**All communication for this course will take place via D2L and UWM e-mail. Students are responsible for checking email on a regular basis. If you do not check your UWM email regularly, please forward your email to an address that you check regularly.**

This course also requires that you have access to basic word processing software, such as Microsoft Office. You will need to be able to access Word documents, PDF files (Acrobat or Preview), excel files, and PowerPoint slides.

**General Class Conduct:**

This class is conducted entirely online. I expect all students to display a professional tone in all interactions, including online postings on the course website. That means that students are free to exchanges ideas and express differences of opinion. In fact, I expect there to be lively differences of opinion on the course material! However, communication should always be courteous, respectful, and thoughtfully written. As such, personal attacks on other students’ points of view will not be tolerated. Failure to follow professional standards of conduct will result in a significant deduction of points on relevant assignments.

**Class Structure:**

This summer session course is taught entirely online via DesiretoLearn (D2L). There are no face-to-face meetings. This course is structured with weekly modules. For our purposes, a week starts on Monday at 12:00am and ends on Sunday at 11:59pm. Weekly framing notes will be posted on Monday by 9am. Each module is designed so that you read and think during the first half of the week, and write/respond in the second half of the week.

All assignments are due as specified on the syllabus below. While I know some of you may prefer a more flexible online course structure where you can keep your own pace, this course is structured differently. Specifically, the flow of this course is designed to: 1) facilitate
ongoing dialog among classmates; and 2) ensure that you have clear deadlines to stay on top of the material and meet the course requirements. Also note: the official time zone for our purposes is Central Time (used here in Milwaukee, WI).

Communication with the instructor:
The best way to reach me is via my UWM email. I check my email regularly during the workweek and I generally to reply to e-mails within 24 hours during our intensive summer sessions. Note: I may be a bit slower to reply during the weekends (24-36 hours). Thus, please do not wait to the last minute to ask questions! Let me know early if you have questions about the material or have difficulty accessing any of the readings. ** Be sure to put “POLSCI 372” in the subject of your email, so that I can prioritize replies to students in the class. **

I am also available for individual consultations. If you’re in Milwaukee, we can schedule a face-to-face meeting as part of my summer “office hours.” If you cannot meet in person, we can set up a phone meeting. Please email me to set up an appointment.

Expectations with Online Learning:
Online classes are very demanding. To be successful, you’ll need to be self-motivated and very organized. You will need to keep up with the readings and adhere to the course schedule. Read the syllabus VERY CAREFULLY so that you know what is expected of you. It can be very tempting to put off readings until the last minute since we do not meet face-to-face. But doing so will endanger your ability to successfully complete the course. The course is structured so that you have ongoing opportunities to read, think, and write. Keep up with the class reading, take good notes, and you’ll be in good shape at the end of semester.

As the instructor, I will assist you in achieving the course’s learning goals. In addition to presenting the class with information needed to analyze the topics in this course, I will do my best to keep you motivated, make the course clear and organized, and help you stay on task. As I would like to encourage lively discussion and avoid stifling the class dialogue, I will not post excessively on the boards. Rather, I will respond occasionally and will likely do so after the window to post has closed. So please do check back on the discussion threads.

Expectations on Course Involvement:
Be involved! I assume you are taking this course because you are interested in this topic and not just because it contributes the major or fits your schedule. You will have ample opportunity throughout the semester to share your interests and ideas. I also expect that you will keep up with readings prior to submission of your regular discussion post. The amount of reading varies with each topic and article; some readings require in-depth study, while others can be read quickly. A general rule-of-thumb with UWM courses is that you’ll spend 3 hours outside of “class” per credit. Since this class is conducted entirely online, your time will be distributed differently. You’ll spend more time reading, writing discussion posts, and responding to classmates. You will also spend time taking notes on readings, exploring online resources, and preparing for exams. Participation in D2L discussions is a class requirement.
and counts toward your final grade.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Time Allocation (total hours/semester)</th>
<th>Undergrad</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time spent online reading lecture and other material</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in discussion (online)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spend studying and taking exams</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Hours</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
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**Academic Misconduct**

The course requires professional conduct and submission of your own work. To maintain academic integrity, anyone found guilty of cheating or plagiarism will automatically receive a grade of “F” for the course. The instructor will also report academic misconduct to the University, resulting a full review and severe penalties. Be sure you understand what plagiarism means and how to avoid it. For instance, you cannot “cut and paste” text from any source (e.g. book, classmates’ shared notes, instructor’s lecture notes, newspapers, websites, or discussion-board posts) without proper attribution. This applies for all assignments, whether take-home essays, discussion posts, or exams.


**Dropping the Course and Incompletes**

Be sure you know the university deadlines for dropping courses (see the UWM Calendar for details). This summer, the deadline to “drop without a W Grade” is 6/26/15; the deadline to “drop with a W” is 7/3/15. Incompletes are only given under extenuating circumstances (e.g. serious illness or injury, family emergency, etc.). Students must provide proper documentation and communicate with the instructor as soon as possible.

**Student Accommodations**

If you require disability accommodations to meet any portion of the requirements for this course, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. Students should also contact the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) to meet with a counselor on campus, tel. (414) 229-6287. Students with course conflicts due to religious observances must notify the instructor in advance.

**Submission of Late Material**
Per the instructions elsewhere on this syllabus, late submission of discussion or reaction posts will not be accepted.

**Other UWM Policies and Procedures**
There are a number of other policies and procedures governing courses at UWM, including guidelines on religious observances, sexual harassment, and incompletes due to calls for active duty military. For further details, see: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf)

**Course Requirements & Grading:**

**Assigned Reading and Framing Notes:**
In addition to the required course reading, you will have access to framing notes for each week. These notes are designed to guide your reading and help you think about the material. Framing notes will be available on Mondays by 9am.

**Regular Discussion Posts:**
A major component of this course involves weekly discussion. You will find the discussion question in the “Discussion Forums” section of the D2L course page. Each student will be required to post one (1) response each week to the “regular weekly posts” section.

Discussion posts should thoughtfully engage the course readings and the question(s) posed. In other words, posts should be well thought out, answer the question, and written in academic prose. Think of these as short essays where you will want to display good academic writing and analysis. Full answers will typically require two or three paragraphs (approximately 500 words in length), written in full sentences, with proper citations (see above on plagiarism). They should also be **free of grammatical and spelling errors**. Posts should not be organized with bullet points or numbered lists. Also, avoid usage of online slang, “jargon,” abbreviations, or emoticons. I strongly recommend that you use word processing software to write your posts (and responses) and then copy and paste your remarks into D2L. Do **not** post your response as an attachment.

Discussion posts will be graded on a 15-point scale, focusing on four main criteria: content, quality of writing, critical thinking, and adherence to instructions on this syllabus. A grading rubric detailing each of these criteria and corresponding points is available on the D2L course website, in the Content section under “rubrics.”

Please consult the calendar and syllabus for the due dates. Only one post per week (the first) will be graded if more than one is submitted. Late submissions, even by a minute, will not be accepted. Late entries, or failure to submit a post, will be graded “zero.”
Reaction Posts to other students:
Twice this semester, you will also respond to other students in your weekly “reaction posts.” Your reaction post should engage the content of your peer’s post in a clear way. For instance, your reaction post can elaborate or critique your colleague’s argument. Please note that positive critiques are welcome. For full credit, reaction posts should meaningfully and seriously engage your peer’s comments. The same principles of regular posts apply; the responses should be well thought out and clearly written. Reaction posts may however, be shorter (~200-300 words).

So long as the posts comply with the standards stated above and follow a professional tone, I welcome students to post as many reaction posts as they would like throughout the semester. However, for grading purposes, I will only grade two reaction posts. If you would like me to grade your reaction post, please write: “I submit this reaction post to be graded” in the first line of the text (not the subject heading) in your reaction post.

If by the end of the semester, you do not indicate which reaction posts you would like graded, I will grade the first two reaction posts you submitted (across different weeks). If you submit more than one reaction post for a given week and do not indicate which reaction post you want graded, I will grade your first post.

Exams:
There are two limited-time exams – 90 minutes – for this course. Each exam will draw on the course material for this class – readings, framing notes, and discussion forums. Exams will include multiple choice questions (including true/false), short answers, and an essay.

The first exam will be available online beginning July 4th at 8:00am and must be completed by July 5th at 11:59pm. You may determine when you’d like to take the exam during this window. The exam needs to be completed in one sitting, thus I strongly encourage you to find a time where you can sit uninterrupted for the full 90 minutes.

The second exam will be available online beginning July 17th at 8:00am and must be completed by July 18th at 11:59pm. This exam is non-cumulative in nature, thus is will cover the material since the last exam. The same format and rules will apply.

Exam Logistics: The exams will be administered through the D2L website in a timed setting. Once you start the exam you must complete it; you will not be allowed to start an exam and then return to it later. It is your responsibility to make sure you have a secure Internet connection and proper test-taking environment before you start your exam. In other words, please be sure you pick a quiet place where you can concentrate. (The lab in the Student Union would not be a good choice, for example). I design these exams so that you will not have time to consult your notes or books. Thus, I strongly encourage you to think of these tests as closed book exams and suggest your prepare accordingly. The instructor reserves the
right to curve exam grades, if necessary.

**Scavenger Hunt Exercise:**
The scavenger hunt is designed to orient you to the class and the D2L website and course. To complete the exercise, you’ll perform the tasks that will be necessary to successfully complete the semester. For example, you’ll need to: 1) email the instructor indicating that you’ve started the assignment; 2) look on the “content” section of the D2L website to find the scavenger hunt form; 3) take a quiz on the syllabus; 4) introduce yourself in the discussion forum; 5) “cut and paste” the content of your introduction post onto the form; 6) upload the scavenger hunt form to the course D2L dropbox; and 7) answer some basic questions about the course. The scavenger hunt will be graded on a credit/no credit basis and is worth “1” bonus point. I strongly encourage you to complete the scavenger hunt. Students adding the course late have 24 hours to submit introductions and complete the scavenger hunt exercise for a grade.

**Grading concerns:**
Grades for course assignments will be posted in D2L throughout the semester. If you have any questions regarding your grades, please contact the instructor within five days of receiving the grade.

**Grades:**
- Discussion Post: 32% (4 posts, 8% each);
- Reaction Post: 8% (2 posts, 4% each)
- Exams (2): 60% Total, (30% each)
- Scavenger Hunt Extra Credit 1% (Bonus)

**Point-Scale:**
- A 93-100
- A- 90-92
- B+ 87-89
- B 83-86
- B- 80-82
- C 77-79
- C- 73-76
- D+ 67-69
- D 63-66
- D- 60-62
- F …-59

**Important Due Dates:**
- Class Introduction Post: Monday, June 22\(^{nd}\) at 11:59pm
- Scavenger Hunt Exercise: Tuesday, June 23\(^{rd}\) at 11:59pm
- Discussion Post: Thursday, June 25\(^{th}\) at 11:59pm
- Reaction Post: Saturday, June 27\(^{th}\) at 11:59pm
Course Outline (Topics):

**MODULE 1: Social Welfare: Politics and Policy in the U.S.**
Topic A: U.S. Politics and Policymaking on Social Welfare
Topic B: Politics and History of Social Welfare Policy in the U.S.
Topic C: Measuring poverty, assessing trends, and determining the underlying causes

**MODULE 2: US Poverty Policy and Politics**
Topic A: Public Policy Approaches: Preventing poverty, providing assistance and helping the “deserving”
Topic B: The Challenges of a Diverse Society

**EXAM 1**

**MODULE 3: Poverty in the Developing World – Trends, measures & economics**
Topic A: Worldwide Trends and Measures
Topic B: Economic Foundations of Poverty and Development

**MODULE 4: Feminization of Global Poverty**
Topic A: Women’s Oppression and Subjugation
Topic B: Women’s Autonomy, Health and Education
Topic C: Strategies: Microcredit & Conditional Cash Transfers

**EXAM 2**
Course Reading Schedule:

Module 1: Social Welfare: Politics and Policy in the U.S.

TOPIC A: U.S. Politics and Policymaking on Social Welfare
How is Public Policy made in the U.S.? To what extent is public policy making “rational”? How does politics and ideology shape public policy?

- DiNitto, Introduction & Chapter 1

TOPIC B: Politics and History of Social Welfare Policy in the U.S.
How has poverty relief changed since the colonial era? What are the values and priorities of the U.S. welfare system? Do what extent do you see continuity or change in public policy? How does federalism affect social policy?

- DiNitto, Chapter 3

TOPIC C: Measuring poverty, assessing trends, and determining the underlying causes
What is poverty? How is it measured? How many people are poor? Why might inequality matter for the poor? How do different social scientists view the underlying causes of poverty? To what extent is poverty structural, economic, or cultural?

- DiNitto, Chapter 4.
- Listen to NPR Podcast: http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=331199091&m=331199092

MODULE 2: US Social Welfare Policy and Politics

Topic A: Public Policy Approaches: Preventing poverty, providing assistance and helping the “deserving”
How effective is the American social safety net (e.g. social insurance and personal responsibility) in preventing poverty? Which group(s) benefits the most from the mix of current social policies? Who is “deserving” of government assistance in the contemporary era?

- DiNitto, Chapters 5, 6, 7

TOPIC B: The Challenges of a Diverse Society
What is the ‘feminization of poverty”? How do women’s access to power, wages, and reproductive services affect their quality of life? How have LBGT rights entered into the public policy agenda? What are the historic and contemporary challenges for incorporating racial and ethnic minorities as well as welcoming immigrants to the US?

- DiNitto, Chapter 11 and 12
Exam 1 Window: Saturday, July 4th (8:00am) to Sunday, July 5th (11:59pm).

PART II

MODULE 3: Poverty in the Developing World – Trends, measures & economics

Topic A: Worldwide Trends and Measures
Where do the poor reside around the world? How is poverty measured in a global context? Which regions/countries face the highest rates of poverty? What is at stake in the international development agenda?


United Nations. Millennium Development Goals. – Check out this website: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/ Take a look at some of the recent reports, statistics, etc.

Topic B: Economic Foundations of Poverty and Development
Why does development take place unevenly? Why are some countries falling further behind? What does Collier mean by “poverty traps”? What can political actors do to address the poverty traps for the bottom billion? To what extent can international aid, military intervention, trade, and improvements in governance solve these challenges?

Read - Bottom Billion (All)

Module 4: Feminization of Global Poverty

Topic A: Women’s Oppression and Subjugation
What factors render women and girls, in particular, vulnerable to poverty? What kind of discrimination and oppression do women in the developing world face? How can improvements in women and girls’ empowerment development more generally?

Read - Half the Sky (All)

Topic B: Women’s Autonomy, Health and Education
Why is women’s health a development issue? What are the causes and consequences of high rates of maternal mortality? Why have education, education, and political participation been barriers to women’s exercise of full citizenship? How can greater access in all three arenas further women’s empowerment and alleviate poverty?


**Topic C: Strategies: Microcredit & Conditional Cash Transfers**

Why have microcredit and CCT programs become popular development strategies thought to enhance women’s autonomy? What do we know about their effects on empowerment and poverty relief?


**Exam 2 Window: Friday, July 17th (8:00am) to Saturday, July 18th (11:59pm).**
Further Reading:

If this class sparks your interest for further readings on poverty and politics, consider reading the following:

**Academic Research on poverty in the United States:**

**Trade books on the experiences of the poor and working poor in the US:**

**News Series on poverty in the New York:**