

# Political Science 198: Poverty & Development in the U.S.

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Subject/Discipline: [Political Science](#)

School: [University of Pennsylvania](#)

Project Area: [Hunger & Homelessness](#); [Health](#)

Spring 2004

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## POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE U.S.

PSCI –198-303

Fox Leadership and ABCS Seminar

Thurs, 2-5

Spring Semester, 2004

Prof. Mary Summers

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office hours, Wednesdays 2-4 and by appt

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This academically based community service seminar will explore the ideas and theories, alliances and opposition that have shaped policy and organizing efforts addressed to the problems associated with urban poverty in the United States with a special focus on the issues of increasing inequality, education, low wage work, health, food insecurity and welfare reform. Students will evaluate contemporary policy debates and programs in the light of selected case studies, readings, and their own experience working with community groups, institutions, and federal programs in West Philadelphia. A focus on the role of leadership in politics, theory, institutions, and organizing efforts will include several guest speakers. The course will ask students to think broadly about the problems associated with urban poverty in America at the turn of the twenty-first century and the possibilities for addressing those problems in a significant fashion.

### Community service

All students taking the course should participate in some form of relevant community service. Several community service projects have been established in conjunction with the course: a food stamp enrollment campaign and associated evaluation of food stamp applicants' experience in county assistance offices coordinated by the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger (GPCAH) and the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND); work with students in West Philadelphia schools (a tenth grade social studies class at University City High School and an eighth grade gym class at Drew Middle School), coordinated through the Urban Nutrition Initiative and the Center for Community Partnerships. The Campaign for Working Families' Earned Income Tax and Public Benefits enrollment campaign, the United Food and Commercial Workers' campaign to highlight issues regarding low wage work at Wal-Mart's, and Philadelphia Jobs with Justice will also welcome student volunteers and interns. (See attached description of community service sites.) Seminar participants who wish to work with other organizations addressing problems related to urban poverty may develop their own projects (preferably in groups) in consultation with the instructor.

**Requirements for PS198-303** include at least 100-200 pages of weekly readings, with at least 4 brief (1-3 pages) responses to the readings and 4 reflections on your community service project submitted by email by Wednesdays at noon. These responses will not be individually graded but will count towards the class participation component of your grade. There will be one short discussion paper (3-5 pages) due February 12th and a midterm take home exam (7-10 pages) due March 4th. With at least one partner, you will also be responsible for presenting a debate with regard to issues raised by the readings during one class in the course of the semester. At the end of the semester, students have an option for a 15-25 page paper/project or a take home exam. For those of you taking the research paper option, bring possible topics to class for discussion on March 4th; first draft due April 8th; final draft due May 4th. **You may choose to work either individually or in groups on your research papers. A project that involves significant research and analysis may meet the requirements for both the course and the associated independent study (PSCI 199; see below). If you choose to take the exam option, you are encouraged to discuss the questions with your fellow students, but you must write your own exam.**

**Students will have the option of receiving an additional independent study credit (PSCI 199), if they commit to at least four hours a week on their community service work, produce a 5-7 page analysis of the goals and effectiveness of their project, a journal, and a relevant research paper or multi-media project.** Examples of possible final projects include, but not limited to: an evaluation of the project; research on an issue important to the community organization you are working with; research on "best practices" in other states and cities with regard to a related issue; a proposal for a campaign or public policy initiative that might better address this issue; other options, as discussed with the instructor.

**\*\*You must notify the instructor ([mysummer@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:mysummer@sas.upenn.edu)) if you wish to take this independent study credit by Monday, Jan 19; and she will submit your names**

**for registration for the credit with the Political Science Department.** (Add period ends, Jan. 23rd.)\*\*

**Grading:** For PS198-303 your research paper or final exam will count for 40% of your grade; your class participation (including the overall quality of your reflection responses on reading and community service work for 20%); your first discussion paper 10% and your midterm 30%.

For PS199, 40% of your grade will be based on your final project ; 30% on your reflections on your work and feedback from project supervisors; and 30% on your analysis of the community service project, the issues it addresses and its success in doing so.

**Required books:** Michael Katz, The Price of Citizenship: Redefining the American Welfare State (2001); Lisbeth B. Schorr, Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America (1998); Jonathan Kozol, Savage Inequalities (1991); Janet Poppendieck, Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement (1998); Barbara Ehrenreich, Nickle and Dimed (2001); Martin Gilens, Why Americans Hate Welfare (1999); Deborah Meier, Will Standards Save Public Education?; Harrell R. Rodgers, Jr., American Poverty in a New Era of Reform (2000); Kevin Phillips, Wealth and Democracy (2002). There will also be a bulk pack that includes all other readings.

Recommended: Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom (1999); David Zucchino, Myth of the Welfare Queen ( 1997)

Books are on sale at House of Our Own Book Store, 3920 Spruce St.; open Mon-Sat, 10-7; Sun. 12-5 (215-222-1576). The bulk pack will be available at Campus Copy, 3907 Walnut, 215-386-6410

## COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1: Jan 15: **INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS**  
**Wealth, poverty and inequality in the United States:**

Readings: Kevin Phillips, Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich (2002) , vii-xxii, 47-168, 405-422; Harrell R. Rodgers, Jr., American Poverty in a New Era of Reform (2000) 3-61

Week 2: Jan. 22: **INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY SERVICE SITES**  
Readings: Jonathan Kozol, Savage Inequalities, 1-6; Janet Poppendieck, Sweet Charity,

1-19; Lisbeth Schorr, Common Purpose, ix-21  
**Begin reading Kozol, Savage Inequalities**

**\*\*Email instructor regarding your choice of community service sites and note whether you want to take additional independent study credit for community service.\*\***

Week 3: Jan. 29: **Why are People Poor?** Theories of poverty, development and underdevelopment: class and underclass; race; gender; economic restructuring; globalization

Readings: Rodgers, American Poverty (2000), 63-82; Thomas J. Sugrue, "Poor Families in an Era of Urban Transformation: The 'Underclass' Family in Myth and Reality," in Stephanie Coontz, ed., American Families: A Multicultural Reader (2000), 243-257. Lisbeth Schorr, Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage, ix-xxix (1988, 1989); Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom (1999), 1-53 (all in bulk pack)

Recommended: Micaela di Leonardo, "White Lies, Black Myths: Rape, Race and the Black 'Underclass,'" 53-68 (bulk pack)

Week 4: Feb. 5: **The Politics of Poverty and Education:**

Readings: Kozol, Savage Inequalities; Schorr, Within Our Reach, 215-255 (bulk pack); Deborah Meir, In Schools We Trust (2002), 95-182 (bulk pack); Deborah Meier, ed., Will Standards Save Public Education, 3-43, 81-88; **Goodschools Pennsylvania website**

Recommended, Lisbeth Schorr, Common Purposes, 232-297

**.....Begin reading Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed**

**\*\*Questions for first discussion paper handed out**

Week 5: Feb. 12: **The Politics of Poverty, Health and Medical Care:**

Readings: Helen Epstein, "Ghetto Miasma; Enough to Make You Sick?" New York Times Magazine, Oct. 12, 2003; Schorr, Within Our Reach, 111-178 (bulk pack); Katz, Price of Citizenship, 257-292

Recommended: Justhealthcare.com web site

**\*\*First discussion paper due.**

Week 6: Feb. 19: **The Politics of Poverty and Hunger: the Welfare State**

Readings: Linda Gordon, Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare 1890-1935 (1994) 209-251; Michael Katz, The Price of Citizenship: Redefining

the American Welfare State (2001), 1-56; George McGovern, The Third Freedom: Ending Hunger in our Time (2002), 11-18, 69-82; Douglas Besharov, "We're Feeding the Poor as If They're Starving," (Washington Post, Dec. 6, 2002); Leslie Kaufman, "Are the Poor Suffering From Hunger Anymore," (New York Times, Feb. 23, 2003); Bread for the World, "New Bipartisan Poll Reveals the Politics of Hunger," July 29, 2002 (Readings in packet).

**Week 7: Feb. 26: The Politics of Poverty and Hunger: Charity, Community and Faith-Based Organizing Efforts**

Readings:; Janet Poppendieck, Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement, 20-38, 54- 201-255, 288-318; Michael Gecan, Going Public (2002), ix-32, 65-99; Kenwyn Smith, Manna: In the Wilderness of Aids; Ten Lessons in Abundance, (2002); 1-11, 1-48, 205-211; Jim Wallis, Faith Works (2000, 2001), ix-xix, 1-14, 76-99, 178-196 (bulk pack); Katz, The Price of Citizenship, 137-170.

**\*\*Questions for mid-term handed out**

**Week 8: March 4: The Politics of Poverty and Low Wage Work**

Readings: Barbara Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America (2001), 1-201; Katz, Price of Citizenship, 171-194.

**\*\*Mid-term due\*\* Bring potential topics for research papers to class**

SPRING BREAK

**Week 9: March 18: The Politics of Poverty, Unemployment and Underemployment:** Gordon Lafer, The Job Training Charade (2002), 1-123, 156-189, 210-224; Katz, Price of Citizenship, 341-359.

**Week 10: March 25: The Politics of Poverty: the Media, Public Opinion, Party Politics and Policy**

Readings: Martin Gilens, Why Americans Hate Welfare (1999) 1-79, 102-132, 154-216; Katz, Price of Citizenship, 317-340.  
Jim Wallis, Faith Works, 314-332

**Week 11: April 1: The Politics of Poverty: Programs, Results, and Evaluation**

Readings: Lisbeth Schorr, Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America (1997)

**Week 10: April 8: Presentations on Community Service Work**

**\*\*First drafts of research projects due**

**Week 11: April 15: Presentations on Research Projects**

**Week 12: April 22: Course and Community Service Evaluation**

**\*\*Take home final exam questions handed out**

**May 4 All final papers, projects and exams due**