

Welfare Policy Research, POLS 323, CRN 95839, Fall 2010, T/Th: 5:30-7:10, Satterlee 319

Instructor: Phil Neisser; Satterlee 307, neissept@potdam.edu

267-2554 (office), 267-2231 (in the Dean's Office), and 379-9713 (home)

Office Hours in Satterlee 307: T/Th 3:00 – 4:00; Office hours in Dunn 106: T/Th 10:00-11:00

Note: Students should feel free to call, email, or come see me for any reason, and I am often available, not just during my office hours. Just contact me and make an appointment.

Also: if you come to my office (Satterlee 307) and I'm not there, I might be a few doors down with a fellow professor, in the main office of the Politics Department (Satterlee 311), or in my Associate Dean's Office (Dunn 106).

Course Description

This course examines U.S. welfare policy with an emphasis on factors influencing the development of the modern social welfare state and its effects on the poor. Students engage in original research in order to analyze and assess contemporary welfare policy in the light of the historical, economic, and regional contexts in which it operates. Each student group orally presents its research results at the end of the semester and each student writes a paper summarizing his or her contribution.

Learning Objectives

Students who take and successfully complete the course will:

- Be able to comprehend complex arguments
- Be able to analyze and think critically
- Be able to effectively communicate ideas and information
- Possess informational and disciplinary literacy
- Be able to conduct independent welfare policy research
- Be able to analyze welfare policies, at least in an introductory way
- Grasp essential ideas at stake in today's welfare debates
- Know essential facts of U.S. welfare policy

Required Texts in the College Bookstore

Sugrue, Thomas J. 2005 (1996). *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton University Press.

Stone, Deborah. 2001. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, Third Edition. W.W. Norton.

Required Texts on Reserve on Blackboard or Handed Out in Class

Bohn, Anita. 2006-07. "A Framework for Understanding Ruby Payne." *Rethinking Schools*, Vol. 21, no. 2; 13-15.

~~Babbie, Earl. 2004. Chapter 11 from *The Practice of Social Research*, 10th Edition. Thomson Wadsworth.~~

~~Carlson, James M. and Mark S. Hyde. 2003. Chapter 6 and a selection from Chapter 7 from *Doing Empirical Political Research*. Houghton Mifflin.~~

Fording, Richard, Sanford F. Schram, and Joe Soss. 2006. "The Bottom Line, the Business Model, and the Bogey: Performance Management, Sanctions, and the Brave New World

- of Welfare-to-Work in Florida.” Presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 8/31-9/3.
- Fraser, Nancy. 1997. “After the Family Wage: A Postindustrial Thought Experiment.” *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on a Postsocialist Condition*. New York: Routledge.
- Jencks, Christopher. 1985. “How Poor are the Poor?” *The New York Review of Books*, May 9.
- Murray, Charles. 1984. Selections from *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980*.
- Payne, Ruby; Philip DeVol; and Terie Dreussi Smith. 2001. Introduction and Chapters 3-4 from *Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities*. Aha! Process
- Trattner, Walter I. 1999 (1974). Selections: *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*, 6th edition. New York: Free Press.

Recommended Readings (Not Required and Not Provided)

- Amott, Teresa L. 1990. “Black Women and AFDC: Making Entitlement Out of Necessity.” *Women, the State, and Welfare*, Edited by Linda Gordon. University of Wisconsin.
- Best, Michael and William E. Connolly. 1982. “Inequality, the American Way.” *The Politicized Economy*, Second Edition. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath.
- Brown, Wendy. 1995. “Liberalism’s Family Values.” *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. New Jersey: Princeton.
- Gilder, George. 1981. “The Myths of Discrimination,” and “The Nature of Poverty.” *Wealth and Poverty*. New York: Basic.
- Pearce, Diana. 1990. “Welfare is Not *For* Women: Why the War on Poverty Cannot Conquer the Feminization of Poverty.” *Women, the State, and Welfare*, Edited by Linda Gordon. University of Wisconsin.
- Piven, Francis Fox, and Richard A. Cloward. 1993 (1971). *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, Updated Edition. New York: Vintage.
- Sapiro, Virginia. 1990. “The Gender Basis of American Social Policy.” *Women, the State, and Welfare*, Edited by Linda Gordon. University of Wisconsin.
- Schram, Sanford F. 2006. *Welfare Discipline: Discourse, Governance, and Globalization*. Philadelphia: Temple.
- Secombe, Karen. 2007 (1999). “*So You Think I Drive a Cadillac?*” *Welfare Recipients’ Perspectives on the System and Its Reform*. Second edition, Pearson.
- Tan Chen, Victor and Katherine S. Newman. 2008. *The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Wolin, Sheldon. 1989. “Democracy and the Welfare State: The Political Connections between *Staatsräson* and *Wohlfahrtsstaatsräson*.” *The Presence of the Past: Essays on the State and the Constitution*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

Assignments and Requirements

1. THE EXAMS: There are two exams. *Exam grade #1 counts for 10% of the final grade. exam grade #2 counts for 15% of the final grade.*
2. THE QUIZZES: Each class that includes a reading assignment will begin with a quiz on those readings. The lowest three quiz grades will be dropped and the others will be averaged to produce an overall quiz grade. Students who are late to class and miss a quiz will receive a zero for that quiz. Students cannot make-up the quiz and cannot take a quiz once the other students

have finished with their quizzes. Also students who are absent on a given day will receive a zero for that day's quiz. *The overall quiz grade counts for 10% of the final grade.*

3. THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND REPORT:

Each student will be assigned to a group, each group will be charged with studying a U.S. region. As part of their group work, and in consultation with their fellow group members, each student will complete a series of research assignments during the semester, each of which will presumably end up folded into their final research report. Also each group will present their findings to the class at the end of the semester, with each group member making a contribution. Also, it is hoped that one or more of the groups will make a public presentation of their findings. The instructor will work closely with each group, in effect serving as an advisory member. Thus each group will meet with the instructor regularly in his office to report on, discuss, and plan its work.

Groups will gather the following kinds of data:

- Information about the region's economic history, current labor market situation, and poverty and low-income situation (e.g. demographics, distribution of income, current wages, and poverty levels).
- Ideas about which variables might be relevant "dependent" variables relative to other "independent" variables (i.e. what might cause what in the arena of wealth and poverty). These can come from books, from your own heads, or from wherever.
- Information about federal and state welfare policies, agencies, and funding that have impacted or apply to the region.
- Content analysis data that reveals competing problem definition and solution suggestions when it comes to poverty, inequality, and welfare (e.g. things said in recent decades in public media and public speeches about income, welfare, poverty, aid programs, the poor, and welfare fraud).
- Information about how the region's various aid programs and education programs do or do not address the actual needs and problems of residents.

Student groups might, for example, decide to do the following:

- Measure poverty levels using several different poverty definitions.
- Discover the distribution of poverty across relevant demographic variables.
- Measure average wage levels for different categories of individuals.
- Assess cost of living, with attention to specific costs (e.g. rent).
- Identify resources available to those in need (e.g. child care costs and availability).
- Assess fit of those resources with actual needs (e.g. costs of needed transportation compared to resources available).
- Identify job availability history and likely future for residents.
- Identify problems and successes when it comes to the requirements that are attached to the receipt of assistance (e.g. hassle factor, control of fraud, fairness of sanctioning process, effectiveness of sanctions, caseworker satisfaction with sanctioning system, degree of caseworker control over sanctioning process).
- Identify degree to which a "business model" of welfare provision is utilized.
- Measure the world view and/or attitudes of welfare policy officials in order to uncover competing understanding of the problems and the solutions.

- Find references to poverty, inequality, and welfare in regional newspapers, magazines, and organizational websites and blogs in order to uncover competing understanding of the problems and the solutions.

The Five Regions (one assigned to each research group):

Group 1: The Northeast (at least four states; be sure to include New York State)

Group 2: The South (at least four states, but not including Florida)

Group 3: The Midwest (at least four states; be sure to include Michigan and Illinois)

Group 4: The Southwest (at least four states, be sure to include Arizona and Texas)

Group 5: California, Washington (the state), and Oregon

SPECIFIC RESEARCH PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Group Managers:

Each group needs to have a group manager who will also serve as a group convener and moderator. His or her group management work will be graded and *that grade will substitute either for the student's research journal grade or research proposal grade, whichever is lower (and providing that the group leadership grade is higher than one of those other two grades).*

The group manager will:

- Meet with the instructor early in the semester to discuss his or her role.
- Communicate regularly with the instructor throughout the semester so as to keep the instructor informed and to get suggestions and instructions.
- Keep a record of group activities including member participation and attendance at group meetings and submit this record to the instructor each week via email.

3a. The Basic Data Report (due October 5):

Students will report initial findings with regard to income and welfare data, including trends: (i) levels of poverty, income, and inequality, in general and by race, gender, and residence (rural/suburban/urban); (ii) names of state aid programs and state-level administering agencies, (iii) state-specific TANF rules, (iv) numbers of recipients and users; (v) programs utilized; (vi) user rates by gender, race, and the like; (vii) benefit levels; (viii) sanction rates; (ix) application rates; and (x) specific agency practices (e.g. how recipients are treated, rules for recipient behavior). **Note that these tasks are to be divided up among the group members, such that each student report is different.**

3b. The Second Data Report (due October 21):

Students will begin to gather labor market data: e.g. trends in unemployment, underemployment, job availability, and wage levels. Ideally the data will distinguish between sectors: e.g. the service sector, the manufacturing sector, agriculture, management, government, professional services, and more specific sectors. **These tasks are to be divided up among the group members, such that each student report is different.**

3c. The Third Data Report (due November 2nd):

Students will begin to gather examples of views expressed in public media on the subjects of welfare, poverty, and inequality. **These tasks are to be divided up among the group members, such that each student report is different.**

3d. The Research Journal (due November 23):

Each student is required to keep a research journal that records what they have found and where they have found it, and that uses a standard bibliographic format (see a librarian or consult a style guide, easily available on the Internet). *The research journal grade counts for 5% of the final grade.*

3e. The Research Proposal (due November 9):

Each student is expected to have chosen individual tasks to perform for their group and to personally submit a description of those tasks to the instructor, in other words to submit a research proposal. Each research proposal should include a list of expected findings and explain why those findings are expected. *The research proposal grade counts for 5% of the final grade.*

3f. The Research Report (due November 23):

Each group member will be responsible for writing the portion of the group report that corresponds to their research component of the group project. Each of those reports should be at least 1500 words long, not counting titles and bibliography, and each should include its own bibliography. *Each student's research paper grade counts for 20% of their final grade.*

3g. The Research Presentation (scheduled November 30-December 14):

Each research group will use an entire class session to make a detailed presentation of their findings. Each group is expected to assign a unique role in their group's presentation to each member, and each member will receive their own grade. *Each student's group presentation grade counts for 10% of their final grade.*

3h. Peer Review (scheduled November 30-December 14):

Each group of students will be designated as the peer review group for one of the other groups. Each member of each peer review group will receive a copy of the research paper created by their corresponding group, and the review groups will provide feedback both in the form of written questions and comments and in the form of questions that they will ask during the other group's end-of-semester presentation. Each group is expected to assign a unique role in their group's peer review process to each member of the group, and each member will receive their own grade. *Each student's peer review grade counts for 5% of their final grade.*

Method of Submission

Students should put each of their submissions into ONE MICROSOFT WORD FILE, not several, and email it to the instructor at neissept@potdam.edu. Students should also put their name into the TITLE of the file. If the file won't attach to an email properly, students might try saving it in another format, say as a "rich text file," and then attaching that file.

Grading Standards for the Research Paper

The research paper grade is based primarily on two factors: how well it is written and how much depth of coverage is provided. Writing improves when writers read drafts out loud, show drafts to friends, and use the College Writing Center. Papers with errors of word usage, grammar, sentence construction, or clarity of meaning will be marked down.

Summary of Grades and Due Dates

Exam #1 (on October 14):	15%
Quizzes Overall:	10%
Basic Data Report (due October 5):	5%
Second Data Report (due October 26):	5%
Third Data Report (due November 4):	5%
Group Research Plan (from manager on November 11):	No grade
Research Proposal (due November 23):	10%
Exam #2 (on November 18):	15%
Research Journal (due November 30):	5%
Research Report (due November 30):	15%
Research Presentation (December 2 – December 14):	10%
Peer Review (December 2 – December 14):	5%

Attendance

Attendance is expected and is promoted by means of the quizzes and the other in-class requirements. Students who miss more than 7 classes will, no matter the reason, fail the class (unless of course the College grants them a withdrawal of some kind).

Electronic Devices

Computers and other electronic devices may not be used in class.

Accommodative services

Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations should speak with the professor or contact Sharon House, Coordinator of Academic Services at 267-3267, Sisson 112, or e-mail her at housesese@potsdam.edu. All disclosures will remain confidential.

Course Schedule and Assignments (Each student should bring the day's reading to class):

Thursday, September 2: Stone, Preface and Introduction.

Tuesday, September 7: Stone, Chapters 1-4.

Thursday, September 9: Stone, Chapters 5-8.

Tuesday, September 14: Stone, Chapters 11, 12, 14, and Conclusion.

Thursday, September 16: No class.

Tuesday, September 21: Trattner, 1-4, 5, and 8, on Blackboard.

Thursday, September 23: Trattner, 10 and 13, on Blackboard.

Tuesday, September 28: No class.

Thursday, September 30: Library Visit. Students should prepare for class by thinking ahead of time about the tasks in the bulleted lists above under the heading of Assignment 3 (**we meet in the Crumb Library lobby**). We will also have time to further discuss Trattner.

Tuesday, October 5: Trattner, 14 and 16-17, on Blackboard. **The Basic Data Report is due.**

Thursday, October 7: No Class. Students can send the instructor short written summaries of the Trattner chapters for comment, in order to prepare for the exam).

Thursday, October 14: Exam #1.

Tuesday, October 19: Sugrue, Introduction and 1-3.

Thursday, October 21: Sugrue, 4-7;

Tuesday, October 26: Sugrue, 8-9 and Conclusion; library visit (**we meet in the Crumb Library lobby**)

Thursday, October 28: Murray, Selection from *Losing Ground*, on Blackboard.

Tuesday, November 2: Library visit (**we meet in the Crumb Library lobby**); **The Second Data Report is due.**

Thursday, November 4: Jencks, on Blackboard. **The Third Data Report is due.**

Tuesday, November 9: Payne, on Blackboard, and Bohn, as handout.

Thursday, November 11: Fording, Schram, and Soss, on Blackboard. **Group Research Plans and Individual Assignments are due, from manager.**

Tuesday, November 16: Fraser, on Blackboard.

Thursday, November 18: **Exam #2.**

Tuesday, November 23: No class. **The Individual Research Proposals are due.**

Tuesday, November 30: **Research Reports and Research Journals are due.**

Thursday, December 2: **Research Presentation by Group 1, Review by Group 2.**

Tuesday, December 7: **Research Presentation by Group 2, Review by Group 3.**

Thursday, December 9: **Research Presentation by Group 3, Review by Group 4.**

Tuesday, December 14, 5:00-7:00: **Research Presentation by Group 4, Review by Group 1.**