

**Prof. Keiser****POSC 308  
Poverty and Public Policy****Spring 2001**

Poverty and Public Policy is an upper division course intended for students who have background in American politics. Recommended prerequisites are POSC 122 (Liberty and Equality) and POSC 201 (National Policy Making). Three hundred level courses in the department of Political Science are typically research seminars that are designed to help students produce a quality research paper of 20 pages or more that represents a first draft of a comps paper. The fact that this course is cross listed widely should not obscure the fact of these recommended prerequisites and these research goals.

This course will focus on theories of the policy making process and policy outcomes. We will apply these theories, to which students have been introduced in earlier classes, to poverty policy in the United States. Our goal is to study the process of agenda setting and comprehend how policy outcomes reflect the most basic of questions in political science, who gets what, when, and how?

Our data will be urban poverty (rather than rural), largely African-American poverty (rather than poverty among whites, Latinos, or others), and the policy designed to respond to this problem. The first thing that any student of public policy must learn is that the processes of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation are processes that appear to be technical and rational yet they are highly subjective and political. For instance, how we count those below the poverty line, where we set the poverty line, whether we choose to target women with children, young black males, or all people in poverty (including seniors) impact the highly political issues of whether we are making progress through current policies and whether current policies help certain groups (that are your constituencies or mine) climb out of poverty but hinder others. There are different policy implications and different winners and losers depending on whether we emphasize racial or ethnic discrimination, the state of the urban, suburban and international economy, lack of necessary training, educational conditions, or absence of ambition. Because politics plays such an important role in policy, and so often obscures so-called technical rationality, one of the primary goals of this course will be to sensitize students to the political implications of poverty policy, i.e., the questions of who gets what, whose ox gets gored, how, and why. Only after we know why we measure the things we measure and what the implications are of choosing alternative measures or foci, are we ready to learn the technical crafts of how to measure and this is, of course, what graduate programs in public policy teach.

There are two options for fulfillment of student requirements. For Political Science majors who have not previously taken a 300 level asterisk course, you must choose the first option. All other students may choose either option. Option 1: Class Participation=30%, Student Presentation=20%, Research Paper=50%. Option 2: Class Participation=30%, Student Presentation=20%, Midterm over Midterm break =25%, Final Exam during finals period = 25%. Class participation is a major component of either option. If you are unable to be a regular participant in class discussions, then I urge you to consider another course.

Joint presentations will be on current or prominent literature found by students and agreed upon. Websites of major thinktanks as well as scholarly journals will be your source. All articles/papers must receive prior approval by the instructor.

**Process of Public Policy Making and Outcomes of Public Policy**

Th1: Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives ...*, 2nd ed., chs. 1-5. Easy Background material.

Tu2: Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives ...*, chs. 6-10. Meaty, substantive conceptual tools.

Thu2: Review of Kingdon's model, perhaps via quiz. Also read J. Jennings, *Understanding the Nature of Poverty*, ch. 4.

Tu3: J. Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations*, ch. 16 and W. Hudson, "The Privileged Position of Business."

**Be prepared to Discuss:** What are some of the reasons (stated and unstated rationale) that proponents of welfare reform might have had for advocating this position?

Thu3: Weaver, *Ending Welfare ...*, chs. 1-4. Start thinking about applying our theories.

Tu4: Weaver, chs. 5-6 and joint presentation 1

Thu4: Weaver, chs. 7-9 and joint presentation 2

Tu5: Weaver, chs. 10-12

Thu5: Weaver, chs. 13-14 and joint presentation 3

Tu6: Katz, *The Undeserving Poor*, Intro.- ch. 2 and joint presentation 4

Thu6: Katz, chs. 3-4 and joint presentation 5

Tu7: Katz, chs. 5-6 and joint presentation 6

Thu7: Gans, *The War Against the Poor*, Intro.-ch. 3

Tu8: Gans, chs. 4-6.

Thu8: Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, chs. 1-5.

Tu9: Stone, *Policy Paradox*, chs. 6-10 and joint presentation 7

Thu9: Stone, *Policy Paradox*, chs. 11-Conclusion and joint presentation 8

Tu 10: