This course is intended for junior and senior political science majors. This 300 level class is not a lecture class, it is a discussion seminar that is one of the capstones of the department. If you personally prefer lectures and feel uncomfortable in a class that requires and grades oral participation, then I advise you to turn to one of the many other courses available in this department. The quantity of readings and the level of expected effort from each student will be commensurate with a 300 level seminar.

Goals:

This course will focus solely on urban poverty (rather than rural) and largely on African-American poverty (rather than poverty among whites, Latinos, or others). 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.

Because this is a 300 level seminar course, major emphasis is given to the research and writing of a required research paper of 20-25 pages. A list of potential topics will be distributed. For juniors, this paper represents an opportunity to begin a comps project and possibly have your research funded during the summer or school year in the campus-wide grants competitions. For seniors, there will be no senior option and your final term of your senior year will not be a breeze.

Requirements:

For each set of assigned readings, a group of students will turn in, typed, a minimum of two elaborated talking points that will total one to two pages. Keep a second copy for yourself. If you had 45 minutes to lecture on the readings to students who had read the material, what would you discuss in your lecture, what would be the highlights most deserving of treatment? These should be insightful observations that capture the essence of the argument, linkages between the works of authors or ideas, or important issues raised in the text that you believe have very salient implications for our understanding of poverty; criticism is not the emphasis of this exercise. These talking points must not be in outline or listed form; they must be prose paragraphs that fully convey your view, preferably with specific page citations to text. These talking points will provide the entire class with an agenda for discussion and all will be expected to participate. Talking Points are a mandatory assignment. They must be turned in, preferably by e-mail or under my office door, no later than 11 am the day of class. In many instances you will not receive direct feedback on your talking points.
When doing your reading and preparing for class, I advise you to keep in mind the following questions: What are the independent variables that explain the causality of poverty and how are other variables treated? For instance, how does the author treat the role of race in African-American poverty? What importance is given to variables like education and job skills? What is the role of gender in the author's explanation of African-American poverty? Are the changing domestic and international political economies given consideration? What is the role of government in causing or reducing poverty? Are there other variables that are considered causal? Is the relative political powerlessness of the poor given attention? Other important questions include the following: What methodology does the author use for generating his/her arguments and conclusions? What constitutes data? Who is the author arguing against? What policy proposals are offered by the authors to fight poverty and what is your evaluation of these proposals? What do the policy prescriptions assume about the causes of poverty? Finally, keep discussions of causes of poverty and policy recommendations linked, i.e., which causal analysis typically leads to what kind of policy prescription. But also keep them separate enough so that you can discuss either a typology of causes or the range of policy prescriptions.

Grading:

There are two grading options:

1. Grading will be based on the talking points and assignments (20%), class participation and attendance (20%), a short paper on one book (20%), and the research paper (40%). Political Science majors (or potential majors) are strongly urged to choose this option, as are other students who face the prospect of the comprehensive exercise.
2. Grading will be based on the talking points and assignments (20%), class participation (20%), two short papers on course books (20%), a short paper on another book selected by the student and approved by the instructor (20%), and a final examination (20%).

PAPER DEADLINES ARE FIRM, I DON'T WANT TO READ A PAPER WRITTEN AFTER OUR CLASS DISCUSSION AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO MISS THE DISCUSSION.

My office is Willis 417. Office hours will be Monday, 1:30-4:00 pm. Office phone is 646-4122 and vax address is RKeiser.

Schedule:


4/1: Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged, chs. 1-4

4/6: Wilson, chs. 5-7.

    Wilson, "Another Look at the Truly Disadvantaged." RR

4/8: Rosenbaum and Popkin, "Employment and Earnings of Low-Income Blacks Who Move to Middle Class Suburbs." RR

    Crane, "Effects of Neighborhoods on School and Teenage Childbearing." RR

    Greenstone, "Culture, Rationality, and the Underclass." RR

    Moore and Vigil, "Barrios in Transition" RR
Rodriguez, "Economic Restructuring and Latino Growth in Houston" RR
Gonzales, "Historical Poverty Mexican American Neighborhoods" RR

O'Kane, *The Crooked Ladder*, ch. 3 RR
Hagedorn, "Gangs, Neighborhoods, and Public Policy" RR

Popkin, Rosenbaum, and Meaden, "Labor Market Experiences" RR
Burnham, "Public Housing Sets Latino Areas." RR
Soza, "Sins of Omission: housing for Latinos" RR
Henderson, "Scattered Successes" RR

4/13: Ellwood, *Poor Support*, chs. 1-4 (read 4 most carefully)
4/15: Ellwood, chs. 5-6.

**Rusk Paper Due:**

(His) Analysis, (His) Prescription, (Your) Evaluation, (Your) Next Step

In light of what we have learned about contending explanations for urban poverty, where does Rusk stand in the typology you have been developing and what is his analysis? [This is a bit complex, requiring understanding and presentation of Rusk's analysis and then comparison to preceding course materials.] What is/are Rusk's policy prescriptions and how will they address urban poverty? How realistic, in the political environment you see and foresee, are they? [Straightforward, perhaps. With respect to my grading, the first two parts of the paper separate good from not so good papers.] What is your evaluation of Rusk's work? [One can be respectful and critical at the same time, and one can evaluate with the aid of insights provided by others. This is the part of the paper that separates good from excellent.] What would be a detailed, methodologically sound next step for an undergraduate research paper? [Straightforward, important for distinguishing between not so good and good papers.]

4/22: Rusk Discussion.

**Assignment:** Homework: Choose one of the three topics, Living Wage Campaigns in Cities (what/where/record), Empowerment or Enterprise Zones (goals/record), Welfare to Work Programs (what/goals/record). Make your choice with thoughts of your research paper in mind. Three page text minimum, with additional half page current and prospective bibliography. Purpose is to introduce you and students. Sources should be newspapers, magazines, and academic journals.

Begin reading Friedlander and Burtless.

4/27: Friedlander and Burtless, *Five Years After*.

4/29: TBA (Ethnic Societies; Social Security; Delinquent Dads; Mpls. Housing; Min Wage)
5/4: Orfield and Ashkinaze, *The Closing Door*.

**Orfield and Ashkinaze Due:** Follow same instructions as with Rusk paper above.

5/6: TBA (Film discussion? Above topics; Paper progress report)

5/11: Schwarz, *The Forgotten Americans*

**Schwarz paper Due:** Follow same instructions as with Rusk paper above


5/18: Piven and Cloward, chs.

5/20: Piven and Cloward, chs.

5/27: Presentations of Research?

6/1: Presentations of Research?