

Poverty and Place
Community and Environmental Sociology 578
Cross-listed with Sociology and American Indian Studies
Fall 2016

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Office Hours: By appointment

Objectives: This course presents a sociological overview of place-based poverty in the United States, concentrating on the structural dimensions of poverty and poor places. We examine the allocation of economic and social rewards in contemporary society with an emphasis on persistently poor rural regions and communities, analysis of selected minority groups and their economic opportunities and outcomes, and poverty programs and their consequences for structural and cultural changes.

Learning Outcomes: As a result of participation in this course, you should gain:

- 1) Increased understanding of the nature and scope of place-based poverty in the US and the differing perspectives on its causes and cures
- 2) Increased ability to critically evaluate knowledge claims by examining assumptions and data
- 3) Enhanced sociological research skills through gathering of evidence and application of theory
- 4) Increased awareness of history's impact on the present, especially regarding ethnic and racial groups' positions and opportunities within US society
- 5) Enhanced participation in a multicultural society

Readings: Poverty is an extremely important social and economic issue in the United States and many resources available on the web allow us to understand the current realities. In order to incorporate these resources as they become available, I will not have a complete syllabus of assigned reading for you in advance. There are several important think-tank organizations within universities and government agencies, as well as *NGOs* (non-governmental organizations) involved in conducting and disseminating poverty research and policy briefs. We will tap into their research throughout the semester and use their e-newsletters to keep ourselves up-to-date on the latest developments in the field. I will post some of the links to these websites, but if you come across good articles or reports or blogs that highlight relevant research and analysis, please share them with me so that I can share them with the class.

Most of the required reading for this course will be scholarly analyses published in social science journals and on the web. These various on-line sources into the required reading via the course website on Learn@UW. Assigned readings for each class meeting will be posted on Learn@UW at least a week in advance. Sign up for email alerts of postings and develop the habit of checking the course website every day.

Two Required Textbooks:

1) *Poverty in America: A Handbook, 3rd Edition*, by John Iceland. The text is available at *A Room of One's Own Bookstore* and as an e-book from the UW Library.

2) *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, by Matthew Desmond. The book is this year's campus read (Go Big Read) and will be made available to you free of charge.

Etiquette: *Respect* must be shown toward each other at all times. We simply cannot have a quality learning environment without tolerance and respect for each other's views. That said, I expect that your comments will be informed by evidence, and we will privilege research-based evidence over our personal observations, which may reflect our subconscious biases as well as the particular nature of our lives.

Common courtesies and professional conduct are expected. Please remember that the classroom is a place for learning. That means that your **CELL PHONE IS TURNED OFF** while class is in session and that you do not engage in behaviors that place barriers to your and others' learning. Examples that spring to mind include checking your phone, texting, sleeping, chatting, eating, leaving the room, and other distracting actions. If I find your behavior distracting, I will not hesitate to point it out in front of the class and I may ask you to leave if it continues. Also, if you leave the room for any reason, I will expect you to stay out for the rest of the class period.

No laptops or other internet devices including ipads (tablets) or smartphones for note-taking. While computers are a valuable tool for research and study, they are inimical to participation and collegiality in the classroom, creating a "cone of distraction." I will let you know if you need to bring your computer for any data-related activities.

Accommodations: I wish to include fully any students with special needs in this course. Please let me know by the start of the second week if your need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order to enable you to participate fully. The McBurney Resource Center will provide assistance and documentation.

Academic integrity. Cheating (including plagiarism) is not tolerated. Students who are caught cheating will automatically receive an F (zero points) for the relevant assignment. In addition, the incident will be reported in writing to the Dean of your school or college as well as the Dean of Students so that they may decide whether further disciplinary action is needed. A clear definition of plagiarism and information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct can be found at the Dean of Students website. It is your responsibility as a UW student to be knowledgeable of these rules; lack of familiarity with the rules will not excuse misconduct.

Plagiarism sometimes occurs because students do not understand how to correctly acknowledge their sources. The Writing Center provides excellent guidelines that I encourage you to consult:

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

Plagiarism detection software may be used in this course.

Please note the following from <https://students.wisc.edu/doso/docs/UWS14.pdf>

Academic misconduct is governed by state law, **UWS Chapter 14**. Misconduct includes the following, but is not limited to this list:

- Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation (plagiarism)
- Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise (using notes for a closed-book online exam)
- Forges or falsifies academic documents or records (having a friend sign you in for attendance when you're absent)
- Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others (tampering with another student's experiment)

- Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance (altering test answers and submitting the test for regrading)
- Assists other students in any of these acts

Expectations and Graded elements: This course follows UW's 3-for-1 credit hour expectation. For every hour you spend in the classroom, you should expect to spend 3 hours on classwork.

Reading, discussion, and participation (worth 5% of final grade): Do the reading assigned for each class period and be prepared to discuss it. I may call on you even if your hand is not raised, and I will make note of your contribution to the discussion. Once a week throughout the semester, you should post brief comments or questions on the Discussion Forum of the course website. These posts may be your reaction to the readings, a question for discussion, or a comment on some one else's post. The posts should be made by 5:00pm on either Monday or Wednesday. You should do this 13 times during the semester. I will evaluate these on a "plus/minus" system and consider these contributions as part of your discussion and participation grade.

Exams (worth 40% of final grade): There will be two exams. Each exam will be worth 20%. The likely dates of the exams are October 18 and November 29 (I will confirm exact dates as the semester goes along). The exams may be take-home but I have not decided for sure.

County poverty research project (worth 55% of the final grade): Throughout the semester you will be submitting parts of the course research project, which is a case study of US nonmetropolitan poverty. Each student will choose a different state and identify a nonmetropolitan county with high child poverty within that state. Those students taking this course as American Indian Studies will choose counties with tribal or reservation lands. All other students should avoid choosing nonmetro counties with substantial American Indian populations. The project will comprise 3 parts, each of which will be worth a designated share of the overall grade.

Detailed instructions for the project will be provided several weeks before each part is due. In brief, each part of the project will require you to (1) assemble quantitative data pertinent to the topic, (2) interpret the data, on its own grounds and in comparison to the data from another student's case study, and (3) use the assigned readings to evaluate the data.

Anticipated due dates and weighting:

INTRODUCTION – CLASS STRUCTURE (15%, 5 pages plus tables)

Oct. 3 By noon: Upload county and state population profile tables and summaries

Oct. 4 In class: Meet with partner I assign to compare and discuss your data

Oct. 6 At the start of class: Submit paper that identifies and interprets salient aspects of the class structure in your county, drawing comparisons with partner's county, raising questions about poverty and privilege in your case study (hardcopy turned in and electronic copy uploaded to Learn).

OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE (20%, 7 pages plus tables)

Nov. 16 By noon: Tables and summaries, submitted to Learn

Nov. 17 In class: Meet with partner I assign to compare and discuss your data

Nov. 22 At the start of class: Submit paper that identifies and interprets salient dimensions of the economic structure, drawing comparisons with partner's county (hardcopy turned in and electronic copy uploaded to Learn).

POLITICAL STRUCTURE and CONCLUSION (20%, 7 pages plus tables)

Dec. 12 By noon: Tables and summaries, submitted to Learn

Dec. 13 In class: Meet with partner I assign to compare and discuss your data

Dec. 15 At the start of class: Submit paper that identifies and interprets salient dimensions of the policy arena, draws comparisons with partner's county/state, and formulates conclusions about poverty in your county and state (hardcopy turned in and electronic copy uploaded to Learn).

Grading penalties for late work: The county research project depends on you completing your work on time *and* meeting with a partner in class to learn from each other and compare cases. I will deduct points equivalent to a full letter grade (10% of the points) for each late or missing aspect. For example, if you don't have your data ready on Oct. 3, but bring it with you on Oct. 4, I will deduct 10% from the grade you earn on the analysis. But if you do not have your data ready on Oct. 4, you cannot meet with your partner, which will lead to another 10% deduction and then that element will be missing from your analysis paper due on Oct. 6, which will lower your grade even further. I am sure you can see that this is one class where timeliness is essential.

Final grade "incompletes" will not be given except under the most extreme circumstances pertaining to family or medical emergencies.

A Note for Graduate Students. Graduate students enrolled in the course are expected to meet the same requirements *and* perform at a higher level. That is, you are expected to engage with the material in greater depth (more advanced analysis). Please make an appointment to meet with me about your requirements for the course.

Grades on exams and the term paper will be based on the following scale:

A = 93 +
AB = 88-92
B = 83-87
BC = 78-82
C = 70-77
D = 60-69
F = <60

If you have questions or concerns about any aspect of the class, do not hesitate to make an appointment to meet with me.