

Poverty, the New Economy, and Employment Policy

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Silsby 104

The most obvious solution to the problem of poverty is to give someone a job. More than four decades of employment programs have shown, however, that this is not as easy as it sounds. Recent changes in the economy (downsizing, globalization, technological change) make this situation even more challenging. This course examines the past and future of employment policies as poverty alleviation strategies. It brings together theories of poverty and employment, an analysis of current trends in the economy, and an overview of past and current employment programs. We will apply the class readings and discussions to an analysis of the employment situation in two local communities.

Research Projects

Your research in this class will examine both national and local issues in poverty and employment policy. This year, the class will focus on poverty in the Upper Valley. This research will have several components:

National Policy Research Report

In groups, you will examine the current state of employment policy for a specific population or program. Options include:

- Welfare and welfare reform (primarily programs for single mothers)
- The Workforce Investment Act (the act consolidated a variety of job training programs and required the creation of “one-stop job centers” in all states to provide job placement and training services to a variety of populations)
- School to Work (programs for youth)
- Displaced workers and trade adjustment assistance (adult workers who lose their jobs, retraining, etc)
- Prison and ex-convict employment programs
- Community Colleges

I will provide you with some initial readings for your topic and then you will need to look for additional sources of information. Your national policy report is due on January 25. In addition to the report, you will help lead discussion on your policy area during one of the classes toward the end of the term. At the end of your report you should provide a list of readings you want to assign for that class.

Local Area Report

The second project will require you to look at poverty in the Upper Valley area. You may work as individuals or in groups (not necessarily the same groups as the first report). You have two options for this part of the research:

- 1) *Write a report on the extent, trends, or potential causes of poverty in the Upper Valley area.* We will discuss various options for topics in class.
- 2) *Service learning option.* You may also choose to volunteer for the term with a local community service organization. The program may serve youth, adults, prison populations, etc, but should involve actual work with low income residents of the Upper Valley area. The time commitment should be at least 1.5 hours per week. Your local area report will be a reflection paper on your experience and the extent to which you think that the theories of poverty and employment discussed in class apply to the situation of the individuals you meet.

Final Project

For your final project, you will reunite with your group from the national policy report. You will chose one or two issues that you identified in your national policy report and see how these issues have played out in the local area. In particular, you should contact local agencies in both New Hampshire and Vermont. How are the national concerns relevant to and addressed by the local agencies? How do the two states differ in their approaches to these policy issues?

Class Participation and Daily Questions

This class is a seminar, so completing the readings, class attendance, and class participation are very important. During most classes, you will be asked to spend a few minutes writing your thoughts on a question about the readings. These responses will primarily serve as a foundation for our class discussions. These assignments will not be graded, but I will collect the responses to ensure adequate effort. Your level of effort and participation in these assignments will be a component of the class participation grade.

Grading

The final grade for the course will be based upon the following components:

20%	Class participation, attendance, and reading questions
17%	National policy report & class session
17%	Local area report
21%	Final report
25%	Final Exam

Note that students will be asked at the end of the term to rate the effort and contributions of the group members for the group assignments. Individual grades will be adjusted to reflect these assessments.

Policies

Attendance: Attendance is a crucial aspect of the class. If you miss more than five days of class, you will lose an entire letter grade, regardless of your performance on other activities and assignments.

Academic honesty and conduct: I expect students in the class to conduct themselves in accordance with Dartmouth's honor code and with academic and personal integrity. Students are expected to take responsibility for doing their own work, providing proper

citations whenever using words or ideas borrowed from others. I also expect you to respect other students while in class and when working together on projects.

Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments of accommodations is requested to speak to me *by the end of the second week of the term*. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Disabilities Coordinator may be consulted to verify the documentation of the disability.

Course Schedule

Class	Date	Subject	Assignment
Theories of poverty			
1	4-Jan	Intro: Measuring Poverty	
2	9-Jan	Trends and Experience of Poverty	
3	11-Jan	Culture of Poverty & Family Structure	
4	16-Jan	Discrimination & Spacial Mismatch	
5	18-Jan	Class visit by Tom Ketteridge, Upper Valley Haven	
6	23-Jan	Rural Poverty	
7	25-Jan	The Working Poor & the Workplace	National policy report due
Current issues in employment			
8	30-Jan	The New Economy: Outcomes & Possible Causes	
9	1-Feb	The New Economy: New Work Relationships	
Employment Policy			
10	6-Feb	Approaches to Policy	
11	8-Feb	The Policy Scene	
12	13-Feb	Discussion of local area results	Local area report due
13	15-Feb	Policy Topics	
14	20-Feb	Policy Topics	
15	22-Feb	Policy Topics	
16	27-Feb	Policy Topics	
17	1-Mar	Project presentations	
18	6-Mar	New Approaches	
	8-Mar		Project report due
	14-Mar		Take home exam due

Texts

When Work Disappears William Julius Wilson

Worlds Apart: Why Poverty Persists in Rural America Cynthia Duncan

Course texts are available at Wheelock Books. The remainder of the readings are available in two binders in the sociology office. These binders may be checked out between 9am and 5pm.

Readings

The items with a ➤ are available on the blackboard site in electronic form. Items with a ❖ are in the course texts. Items with a ω are available on the web. *Links to journal articles may require an on-campus connection or VPN.* Items with regular bullets are only available in the readers.

Class#1- Introduction: Measuring poverty

Class#2- Trends in poverty and the experience of poverty

- Gary Burtless and Timothy Smeeding, “The Level, Trend, and Composition of Poverty” Chapter 1 in *Understanding Poverty*. Sheldon Danziger and Robert Haveman (Eds.) 2001. Russell Sage Foundation & Harvard University Press.
- ω Paul Jargowsky, 2003. “Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s.”
<http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/publications/jargowskypoverty.htm>
- Katherine Newman. 1999. *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. New York: Knopf/Russell Sage. Chapter 1. “Working Lives”

Class#3- The Culture of Poverty and Family Structure

- Lewis, O. (1969). “The Culture of Poverty.” in *On Understanding Poverty*, Patrick Moynihan editor.
- ❖ William J. Wilson. *When Work Disappears*. Ch. 3 “Ghetto Related Behavior”
- Orlando Patterson. “A Poverty of the Mind”, op-ed in *The New York Times*. March 26, 2006.
- ❖ William J. Wilson. *When Work Disappears*, Ch. 4 “The Fading Inner City Family”
- ω Read the Wikipedia article on Cultural Capital
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_capital

Class#4- Discrimination and spatial mismatch

- ❖ William Julius Wilson. *When Work Disappears*, Ch. 5 “The Meaning and Significance of Race: Employers and Inner-City Workers.”
- ω W.A. Darity and P.L. Mason, 1998 "Evidence on Discrimination in Employment: Codes of Color, Codes of Gender," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12(2) 63-90.
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0895-3309%28199821%2912%3A2%3C63%3AEODIEC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-R>
- ❖ Wilson, William J. 1996. *When Work Disappears*. Ch. 2, "Societal Changes and Vulnerable Neighborhoods," **only pages 37 to the middle of 42.**
- ω Keith R. Ihlanfeldt and David L. Sjoquist. “The Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis: A Review of Recent Studies and Their Implications for Welfare Reform,” *Housing Policy Debate* 9 (4) pp. 849-892. **only pages 880 to 886**
http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org/programs/hpd/pdf/hpd_0904_ihlanfeldt.pdf

Class#5- Tom Ketteridge, director of Upper Valley Haven

- ω Read all of the “Other Side of the Valley” series, published by the Valley News in 2001. <http://www.vnews.com/news/otherside/index.htm>

Class#6- Rural Poverty

- ❖ Cynthia Duncan. *Worlds Apart: Why Poverty Persists in Rural America*. Chapter 1 “Blackwell” and Chapter 3 “Gray Mountain”
- ω Katherine Boo. “Swamp Nurse.” *New Yorker*. Feb 6, 2006, 81(46): 54-65.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=19615007&site=ehost-live>

Class#7- The Working Poor & the Workplace

- David K. Shipler. 2004. *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Introduction “At the Edge of Poverty”, skim Chapter 1 “Money and Its Opposite”, read Chapter 5 “The Daunting Workplace”
- Katherine Newman. 1999. *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. New York: Knopf/Russell Sage. Chapter 6: “Getting Stuck, Moving Up”

Readings for the remainder of the course will be finalized soon...

Class#8- The New Economy: Outcomes & Possible Causes

Class#9- The New Economy: New Work Relationships

Class#10- Theories behind the policies

Class#11- The policy scene

Classes#12- Discussion of local area studies

Classes#13-16 Policy Topics

Class#17- Presentation of final projects

Class#18- New Approaches