

POLITICS OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

POLITICAL SCIENCE 324.001, FALL 2020
MEETING THURSDAYS, 4:00-6:30, ZOOM

This syllabus and course handouts are available in alternative accessible formats upon request. This syllabus will also be updated to reflect changes and additions. When it is updated, a new version number will appear in the header and will replace the posted version in Learn.

INSTRUCTION

Instructor: Dr. Jami Nelson Nuñez, Assistant Professor

Office hours on Zoom: 1:00-3:30 Wednesdays, and other times by appointment (see Learn for link)

Email: jaminunez@unm.edu

Graduate Assistant: David Nunnally

Email: dnunnally@unm.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The issue of inequality is at the heart of politics. Historically, some scholars have viewed inequality and poverty as unavoidable outcomes or stages that countries experience as they industrialize. However, other scholars, such as Thomas Piketty, have called into question the direction of global and national economies, arguing that without any policy intervention inequality will continue to deepen with devastating consequences. What constitutes the “fair” distribution of resources is a debate many are uncomfortable engaging. Perceptions of poverty and inequality are often inaccurate and their causes poorly understood.

This course aims to dig into the issues of inequality and poverty at macro and micro levels in both international and U.S. contexts. We will delve into the facts of what we know and do not know about poverty and affluence and consider the causes and consequences of wealth disparities. We will further explore related policies that aim to address income gaps and ensure that people have the ability to meet their basic needs. Lastly, the course will engage the politics behind the creation and execution of policies, examining institutional arrangements that reinforce or ameliorate poverty and inequality.

The class will culminate with a policy analysis students will conduct on an issue of their choice. Students will be encouraged to engage professionals working on these issues and to critically assess the possible impact and limitations of different policy approaches. For example, a student interested in homelessness in Albuquerque could look at local policies or an organization addressing the issue and assess the shortcomings and possibilities for particular approaches. The class is highly participatory and will invite robust discussion and debate.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

POLS 324 Overall Goals	Learning Objectives	Learning Activities	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
1. Students will have an understanding how conceptions of poverty and inequality have changed over time and how different conceptions influence policy approaches and their success	Students will <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify and critique concepts, measurements and trends of inequality and poverty at macro and micro levels in both international and U.S. contexts; b. Demonstrate knowledge of the consequences of poverty and wealth disparities c. Describe and critically assess the performance of different policies to address poverty and inequality d. Make connections to lived experiences around poverty and inequality and class material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning objective A) Progress through Section 1 materials. • Learning objective B) Progress through Section 2 materials • Learning objective C) Progress through Section 3 materials • Learning objective D) Discussion board and Google Forms responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty measurement activity • Journal activities and discussion board posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy proposal
2. Students will have an understanding of political science skills and approaches.	Students will <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Demonstrate basic literacy in reading charts and graphs; b. Demonstrate analytical writing skills by analyzing different approaches to poverty alleviation c. Develop a policy analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning objective a) Practice in class discussions on charts and graphs • Learning objectives B & C: in class discussion and critique of policy analyses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal assignment or quiz • Draft policy analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final policy analysis
3. Students will make connections to different professionals working on issues related to poverty and inequality.	Students will <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Engage with professionals working on specific poverty-related issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion about interviewing techniques and networking approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class interviews with guest speakers • Interview plan/policy proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview write-up

COURSE STRUCTURE

While you will be able to "get ahead" on readings, the online learning material will be made available weekly and you will need to keep pace with the class. We will "meet" over Zoom during class periods on Thursdays potentially for the entire allotted time. Some weeks, the preparation for our meeting will be heavier than others. Just as with in-person classes, **you should treat the class meetings as a deadline to have the week's material prepared.** That pre-meeting material includes the readings and other material available on Learn. Prior to this class, I took a survey of preferences about lecture material and you were all split down the middle: 1/3 preferred all self-paced lecture with zoom meetings consisting only of discussion and group work; 1/3 preferred zoom meetings to be the time/space for lectures; and 1/3 wanted a mix. Therefore, the mix will change a bit each week with varying amounts of lecture material on zoom or Learn.

Students are strongly encouraged to "attend" class meetings. See the attendance policies in the requirements section as well as the policy on keeping up with coursework. Classes will be over Zoom and I ask that you enable your camera so that we can have more interaction. I realize that some students will not have the private space or guaranteed internet connectivity to fully engage over Zoom. Students who truly need to disable their camera should email me to discuss this.

COURSE TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

In this class, we will be using email, Zoom, Learn and Microsoft Teams to connect and engage material. I will communicate regularly with class participants by email and through announcements on Learn. I will also be available via the chat function on Microsoft Teams during office hours or during class times when we are not meeting as a class.

Because I use the LoboWeb system to email class participants, all messages from me will go to the email address you have associated with your UNM student registration. If that is not an account you use regularly, you should set it to forward to the account that you DO use. I cannot customize my email list. I will post course information, announcements, and supplementary materials on the course website in Learn.

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

COURSE TEXTS

If you need accommodations regarding reading formats, please communicate this as soon as possible so I can make readings easily available to you.

There are no required textbooks. Course readings are available on Learn or through public sites.

REQUIREMENTS

Requirement	Due date	Percentage of Final Grade
Participation points	Throughout semester	10%
Reading points	Throughout semester	15%
Policy analysis proposal	Due September 11	10%
Interview write up	Due October 23	15%
Policy analysis rough draft	Due November 6	15%
Policy analysis final	Due December 5	25%

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

We will "meet" on Zoom for this class every Thursday. The grade for participation includes attendance as well as participation, which can include posing questions in Zoom (either verbal or in the chat window), volunteering to be the chat monitor for the week and some miscellaneous assignments in Learn.

Should you have medical complications or other extenuating circumstances, you will need to email me with a full explanation. Without documentation, the attendance grade will be at my discretion. Make-up participation will be available to students who have legitimate reasons to miss class.

READING POINTS

We will have different assignments in Learn (quizzes, journals and discussion board posts) to synthesize the reading each week. You must accumulate 15 reading points to get a full grade.

POLICY ANALYSIS

This course also requires that you write a policy analysis. It will be submitted in four stages: proposal, interview write up, rough draft and final. More information on the expectations for the policy analysis will be made available later in the semester.

POLICIES

POLICY ON KEEPING UP WITH COURSEWORK

In this difficult context of the pandemic and less-than-ideal (to say it lightly) arrangements for class, it could be easy to fall behind. I strongly suggest that all students be in contact with me or the class TA with any concerns about keeping up with course work. **This advice is relevant for this and other courses: it is always better to reach out sooner than later!** Course work should be completed on time and submissions may lose one letter grade for every day of lateness. Students who fail to attend more than five classes can be dropped from the course if they have not been in communication about the absences.

DISABILITIES

Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. Handouts are available in

alternative accessible formats upon request. If you need more information on the Americans with Disability Act, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity at 277-5251. Accessibility Services (Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506) also provides academic support to students who have disabilities.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR & ZOOM POLICIES/ETIQUETTE

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities.

The University of New Mexico Student Code of Conduct applies to online behavior as well as in-person or classroom behavior. You are expected to be professional and respectful when attending class on Zoom. The following are class policies for our meetings with Zoom. Please read carefully, these policies are effective immediately and apply for the remainder of the semester. All students are expected to adhere to the policies. Class meetings on Zoom (including video, audio, and chat text) may be recorded. Violations are subject to the UNM State Student Code of Conduct and will be adjudicated accordingly.

General: Sign in with your full first name and last name as listed on the class roster. Do not use a nickname or other pseudonym when you log in. It makes it impossible to know who is in attendance. Using your full name quickly sorts students into their groups when needed. Users who do not provide their full names will NOT be admitted to class.

Exceptions: Since enrolling in class, some students have changed their names to better reflect their gender identity. If you currently use a different name than what is listed on the official roster, please send a private email so this can be noted on the roster and you can use your current name on Zoom.

If you do not have access to a computer or smartphone with internet access, call into class using a landline phone. This is not optimal; please try to locate an internet-enabled device to use for class.

Be in contact with me if you are having difficulty with access.

Stay focused. Please stay engaged in class activities. Close any apps on your device that are not relevant and turn off notifications.

Video: Turn on your video when possible. It is helpful to be able to see each other, just as in an in-person class. I will ask everyone to do this and you should let me know if you have reasons for turning off your camera. ***Keep it clean. Don't share anything you wouldn't put up on the projector in class!***

Audio: Mute your microphone when you are not talking. This helps eliminate background noise. Be in a quiet place when possible. Find a quiet, distraction-free spot to log in. Turn off any music, videos, etc. in the background.

No disrespect or hate speech. Just like in our in-person class, respectful behavior is expected. Consider Zoom a professional environment, and act like you're at a job interview, even when you're typing in the chat.

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

In accordance with the UNM policy, academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a failure of the assignment or of the entire course, and will be reported to the proper university authorities. Academic dishonesty is a major violation of the UNM student code of conduct, and can result in serious sanctions up to and including expulsion from programs or UNM.

Any work that you present as your own, whether a paper, exam, or quiz, must be entirely your own intellectual work. Any written material taken from another source must be properly cited; ignorance of academic conventions with respect to citation of sources is not a suitable defense for plagiarism in this course. Any substantial information, interpretation, or argument that is not common knowledge should be cited, in sufficient detail that a reader would be able to find the same source. In your papers, you should use the citation format recommended by the American Political Science Association (see a summary style sheet here: <http://www.csuchico.edu/lref/pols/APSA.pdf>). Graders will impose point penalties for each citation error.

It is particularly important to exercise care in citing Internet sources, attributing the title, author (individual or institutional), the URL, the date of publication of the source (if you can determine this), and the date on which you viewed the source. The date on which you viewed the site is crucial because some URLs are unstable and may change or disappear. If the document is paginated, you should report the specific pages you are citing. Many web (html) documents lack pagination, in which case you may omit the page, or cite the paragraph(s) if they are numbered.

SCHEDULE

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Week 1: Introduction

August 20	No assigned reading. Familiarize yourself with syllabus, go through Learn tasks and get set up. You can read ahead as next week's reading is heavy.
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Week 2: Conceptualizing poverty over time

August 27	<p>"Origins of the Idea of a World Free of Poverty," Chapter 1 in The Economics of Poverty by Martin Ravallion (on Learn), pages 11-79 (read full text but only skim info in boxes)</p> <p>"Origins of the Idea of a World Free of Poverty," Chapter 1 in The Economics of Poverty by Martin Ravallion (on Learn), pages 47-79 (read full text but only skim info in boxes)</p>
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Week 3: Conceptualizing poverty as income

September 3	<p>Amartya Sen. 2006. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Poverty" in <i>Poverty and Inequality</i> by Grusky and Kanbur</p> <p>Eric Ravenscraft. June 5, 2019. "What a Living Wage actually means". New York Times</p> <p>Lowrey. 2020 "Poverty is a choice." <i>The Atlantic</i>. https://amp.theatlantic.com/amp/article/614701/</p>
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Week 4: Conceptualizing poverty as deprivation, capabilities and access

September 10	<p>Excerpt from <i>The Mystery of Capital</i> by Hernando de Soto</p> <p>George Lipsitz. Chapter 1, <i>The Possessive Investment in Whiteness</i></p>
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Week 5: Conceptualizing poverty as a physical constraint

September 17	<p>Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo. <i>Poor Economics</i>: Chapter 3</p> <p>Roberto Ferdman. "The big problem with one of the most popular assumptions about the poor." Washington Post, June 8, 2016.</p> <p>Christian Cooper. "Why Poverty is Like a Disease." Nautil.us. April 20, 2017.</p>
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Week 6: Conceptualizing inequality

September 24	<p>Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez. 2014. "Inequality in the Long Run" in <i>Science</i> vol. 344</p>
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Week 7: Conceptualizing social mobility

October 1	<p>Jigsaw exercise (you will be assigned to teach others on one of the following articles):</p> <p>"An Atlas of Upward Mobility Shows Path Out of Poverty" in the New York Times, May 4, 2015.</p> <p>Tyler Cowen. 2015. "It's not the inequality, it's the immobility." New York Times.</p> <p>Jared Bernstein and Ben Spielberg. June 5, 2015. "Inequality Matters." The Atlantic.</p> <p>Economist article, "Like Father, Not Like Son" October 13, 2012 & Telford. September 26, 2019. "Income inequality in America is the highest its been." https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/09/26/income-</p>
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	<p>inequality-america-highest-its-been-since-census-started-tracking-it-data-show/</p> <p>Lowrey. November 5, 2019 "The Inflation Gap." In <i>The Atlantic</i>. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/11/income-inequality-getting-worse/601414/</p> <p>https://www.npr.org/2020/08/16/902977077/how-the-covid-19-pandemic-is-deepening-economic-inequality-in-the-u-s & Van Dorn et al. April 18, 2020. "COVID-19 exacerbating inequalities in the US" in <i>The Lancet</i>. https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30893-X/fulltext</p>
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PART 2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Week 8: Consequences for security and stability

October 8	<p>Elaine Denny and Barbara F. Walter. 2012. "Income Inequality's Strange Relationship to Violence"</p> <p>Joe Pinsker. "Does inequality cause crime?" in <i>The Atlantic</i>. October 23, 2014.</p>
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Week 9: Consequences for societies and economies

October 15	<p>Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson. 2011. <i>The Spirit Level</i>. Chapters 3 & 4.</p> <p>"Having Your Cake" Economist, October 13, 2012.</p> <p>Sections 1-3 & 6 (skim others): Anderson, Miller and Milyo. 2008. "Inequality and Public Goods Provision: An Experimental Analysis." Journal of Socio-Economics.</p>
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Week 10: Consequences for political participation

October 22	<p>Daniel Weeks. "Why are the Poor and Minorities Less Likely to Vote?" <i>The Atlantic</i>, January 10, 2014.</p>
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Week 11: Consequences for policy

October 29	<p>Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson. 2010. "Winner-Take-All Politics" in <i>Politics and Society</i></p>
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PART 3. CAUSES OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY AND POLICIES TO EFFECT CHANGE

The topics for this section of the course are to be determined. They may include any of the following: jobs, labor policies, education in developing countries, education in the US, transfers, loans and credit, savings, insurance, housing, energy, water and health. When the schedule is determined, a new version of the syllabus will be posted, replacing this one.

Week 12: Housing

November 5	<p>Taylor. October 19, 2019. "When the Dream of Owning and Home Became a Nightmare." https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/19/opinion/sunday/blacks-hud-real-estate.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share</p> <p><u>"Slums, Informal Settlements and the Role of Land Policy"</u></p>
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Week 13: Education

November 12	<p>Podcast of interview with Paul Tough, author of the Years that Matter Most: https://www.mprnews.org/episode/2019/10/28/is-college-still-a-good-springboard-for-social-mobility</p> <p>Michael Godsey. <u>"The Inequality in Public Schools."</u> The Atlantic, June 15, 2015.</p> <p>Guest speaker: Bill Jordan, Voices for New Mexico</p>
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Week 14: Labor

November 19	<p>Poor Economics: Chapter 9</p> <p>Lauren Hilgers, <u>"Out of the Shadows"</u> New York Times Magazine, February 21, 2019.</p> <p>Guest speaker: Marco Nuñez, community and labor organizer</p>
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Week 15: Banking

November 26 (no class, only online work)	<p>Poor Economics: Chapter 7</p>
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Week 16: Transfers

December 3	<p>Abhijit V. Banerjee, Rema Hanna, Gabriel E. Kreindler, and Benjamin A. Olken, 2017. "Debunking the Stereotype of the Lazy Welfare Recipient: Evidence from Cash Transfer Programs" World Bank Research Observer.</p> <p>Ideas 42: Work Requirements Don't Work</p>
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