THE STRUCTURE OF POVERTY, GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY
SOC 351/POLS 380/WSTD 393-07

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course examines the structural causes of poverty at the global and local levels from a multidisciplinary perspective. It also gives students an opportunity to explore ways in which average citizens can take action to alleviate poverty. While other variables will not be discounted, we will concentrate on the social, political, and economic structures that produce and perpetuate cycles of poverty. The global dimension of the course will focus primarily on developing countries while the local dimension will focus on policies and programs in the U.S. We will also examine the extent to which the structural causes of poverty are the same or different between the global and local levels.

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to
• identify structural sources of, and some solutions to, poverty;
• analyze the impact of social policies on social problems, especially poverty;
• propose some ways that individuals can work together to bring about social change, in particular to alleviate poverty; and
• recognize the value of civic-political engagement for bringing about greater social justice.

TEXTBOOKS: The following texts are required for the course:
• Mark Robert Rank, One Nation, Underprivileged (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
• Paul Rogat Loeb, Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in Challenging Times (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2010).
• There are also a number of additional articles that will be made available electronically.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES: Your final grade in this course will be determined as follows:

Attendance: It is important to attend each class meeting so that you remain engaged with the class material and discussions. I will keep a record of attendance. **You may miss a total of two class periods during the semester for any reason**, including illness (you need not provide an excuse); **additional absences will lower your grade**. I strongly suggest that you “save” your absences for times when you may really need them during the semester, such as when you are ill.
Class preparation and participation. I expect you to do each assigned reading before it is discussed in class (I will announce at the end of each class what material we will cover in the next class meeting). Since the class periods will be a combination of lecture and discussion, your substantial, consistent, and thoughtful contributions to class discussion (as both a speaker and a listener) are essential. **I will use participation in class discussion as a factor in deciding borderline grades for the course.**

To assist students with their social change projects and encourage reflective learning about their experiences, we will have small group discussions in class. Students will meet in groups of three or four during the semester (approximately 20-30 minutes every week or two) to address the following questions:

- What project did you/are you going to choose?
  - Why did you choose this project?
- How did you think it would go?
  - What actually happened?
- What problems have you encountered?
  - How did/might you solve them?
- What worked well?
  - What lessons do you take away from this?

These small group discussions are an opportunity for students not only to talk about their own projects but also to help one another solve problems, come up with new ideas, and provide mutual encouragement. Students will be rotated among groups every 4-5 weeks so that, by the end of the semester, everyone will have had a chance to learn from every other person’s project.

**Lists of reflections about the assigned readings (15% of total course grade):**

You will keep written reflections on both the assigned readings and your project. Write a list of 5 bullet point entries before you come to each class period. At least two of these bullet points should be your thoughts about the assigned readings and at least two about your project for the course (indicate which are “project” and which are “reading” entries; reflections about assigned readings from Loeb’s *Soul of a Citizen* and from Kristoff and Wu Dunn’s *Half the Sky* may go in either category). Your individual entries need not be full sentences, but feel free to include longer reflections if you want. When relevant, include some indication of which readings prompted the entry so that you can find the source later, if you want. We will use these as a basis for some class discussions. These reflections should also assist you when you write your papers for the course. In particular, your notes on the assigned readings will remind you about what you found particularly relevant in the readings and where to locate that information for your final research paper. Likewise, your notes about your project will help you assess how your thinking about social change evolved over the course of the semester, a process that will culminate in the critical reflection essay.

Please type each class period’s reflections on a separate sheet of paper and date each sheet. Turn in the sheets for each week on Wednesday during class. I will grade them credit/no credit. You
can skip turning these in for two class periods during the semester; if you miss more, it will lower your grade for this portion of the course.

Here are some ideas for things you might want to write about (but don’t feel limited by this list):

**About your project**
- What might my project be, and why did I choose this?
- What happened on my project recently, and how do I feel about it?
- What does this experience on my project mean to me?
- Why did this experience with my project happen that way?
- What could I have done differently?
- What worked well? Why?
- What assumptions did I start with that I now realize were incorrect?
- What skills am I learning or getting better at?
- What other experiences or course readings does this connect with?
- What am I learning that pertains to how I can engage in social change activity in the future?
- What am I learning about myself in this process?
- What am I learning about how social change occurs?

**About the assigned readings**
- What did I find interesting or important in the readings?
- Why was it important?
- What surprised me?
- What resonates with my experience?
- How does this connect with other things I have learned in this course?
- How does this connect with things I have learned in other courses?
- What implications does this have for my project?

Social change project and writing assignments: (This will comprise the bulk of your course grade.) As a Jesuit university, St. Louis University has an interest not only in teaching students about social justice but also in helping them explore ways to promote it in practice. For this course, every student is required to complete 20 hours of work on a social change project during the course. Students can work together on a single project if they choose, but each must still log 20 hours. This project will serve as the core of your reflection and research paper and determine the general topic for your annotated bibliography. I will provide a list of sample issue areas and projects to help you start thinking about what to do. All students will meet with me individually twice during the semester to plan and discuss your project; I will circulate sign-up sheets for these meetings in February and in April. Students will also periodically discuss their projects in small groups during class in order to share ideas and suggestions. Following are the individual components of the project:

**Project log:** You will need to keep a log of the time you spend on your project (include date, time spent, and brief description of activity), and turn it in at the end of the
semester. If you do not put in the minimum of 20 hours work on the project, it will lower your final paper grade.

**Annotated bibliography of your research (20%):** Each student must turn in an annotated bibliography of at least 10 reference works that you anticipate will be useful for your final paper. There is an online resource guide prepared by Miriam Joseph, a reference librarian in Pius Library, to help you get started. Each student’s bibliography should contain at least one reference from each of the following categories:

- scholarly books
- scholarly articles
- statistical abstracts or other statistical source
- encyclopedias (e.g., *The Encyclopedia of Poverty*)
- websites run by established organizations (e.g., the U.S. government, international institutions such as the U.N., or NGOs), newspapers, or magazines
- Congressional or other legislative hearings (e.g., *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*)

Each bibliographic entry should contain both a summary of what is in the source and an assessment of how useful it is likely to be for your final paper (do NOT simply copy down the article’s Abstract; your entry needs to describe what you find potentially relevant in the selection, and it should be in your own words). You can find a good online guide for writing an annotated bibliography at the Purdue University OWL website: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/). The due date can be found in the class schedule, below.

**Critical Reflection paper (20%):**
Critical reflection is essential for deep learning and is a hallmark of Jesuit education. Critical reflection not only involves thinking about our experiences and what we have learned from them, but also why they are significant and how they will impact us in the future. In short, it helps us determine what an experience means for our lives. For the purposes of this course, I want you to write a 4-5 page paper that describes what your project means for how you can engage in social change activities in the future. As a guide, answer the following questions in your paper:

- What did you learn about how you can engage in social action? (This might include things about, say, the effectiveness of certain strategies; or it might be something more personal, such as assumptions you made at the start of the project that have changed; or it might be skills you learned; or it might be something broader about how social change happens.)
- Which of your experiences were the most valuable in learning this?
- Why does it matter that you learned this?
- How is this likely to affect your actions in the future?

The best papers will not only answer these questions but also make explicit connections with material from the assigned readings, small group discussions, and/or full class
discussions. I suggest that you look back at your written daily reflections about your project for ideas about what to include in your paper. Think of this paper as the culmination of the reflective process you have been engaging in all semester.

**Final paper (45%):** This paper should be a scholarly analysis of your social change project’s contribution to poverty alleviation. Your goal is to use your research and your experience working on the project to evaluate how citizens can bring about greater social justice for the issue you have chosen. In some cases, students’ projects will fall short of their initial expectations, but these will still be opportunities for learning. Be sure to address the following questions somewhere in your paper:

1. What does this issue have to do with poverty? (Include some history of the issue here.) For example,
   - What have been the dominant political discourses about the issue?
   - What is the history of public policy about the issue?
   - What does the scholarly literature say about this issue?
2. How does your project fit into this broader history of political action and discourse on poverty?
   - Describe what you did for your project.
   - To what extent or in what ways can your project help alleviate poverty?
     You might find some points from Loeb’s *Soul of a Citizen* useful here.
3. What additional things need to happen in order to bring about greater social justice in your issue area? Be as specific as you can.

This paper should be approximately 12-15 pages long (including reference list). You may want to use subheadings. Where possible, incorporate material from your annotated bibliography, your reflection paper, the assigned readings, small group and class discussions, and perhaps things you have learned from your fellow students’ projects. Please include citations for those articles/books/websites assigned in the course that you use in your paper. Use either the APA citation style or the one I can provide for you that is commonly used in sociology. There should be a minimum of 10 citations; as a rule of thumb, the more the better. Note that you may only include a source in your bibliography or reference list if you cite it in the text. And be sure to proofread all of your work before turning it in.

**Keep up on current events:** I expect students to keep abreast of current events and politics, since we will refer to current issues throughout the course. Read a credible newspaper (e.g., *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Economist*) or listen to a reliable broadcast news program (e.g., NPR) on a regular basis.

**Electronic devices:** Students are not allowed to use any electronic devices in class, including cell phones and laptop computers.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Academic Integrity and Honesty

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student’s own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. Possible sanctions for violation of academic integrity may include, but are not limited to, assignment of a failing grade in a course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. Students should review the College of Arts and Sciences policy on Academic Honesty, which can be accessed on-line at http://www.slu.edu/colleges/AS/ under “Quicklinks for Students” or in hard copy form in the Arts and Sciences Policy Binder in each departmental or College office.

Students with Special Needs

If any member of the class has a disability and needs special accommodations of any nature, please let me know immediately after the first scheduled class period. I will work with you and the campus Disability Coordinator to arrange for appropriate assistance or design an alternative procedure to grade your work.

SLU Writing Center

I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center’s services. The Center can help if you want assistance developing answers to the essay exams in this course or preparing the extra credit assignments. They offer one-on-one consultations that address everything from generating and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documentation. Call 977-2930 to schedule an appointment.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

The following schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs.

January 13, 15: Introduction and overview of the course
Focus: What is the difference between an individual and a structural explanation?
• What does social justice entail?
• Is charity the best way to achieve social justice?
• Is there a difference between service and political engagement?
Readings:
- Mark Rank, *One Nation, Underprivileged* (2005), chapters 1-3.

January 22: How do we define and measure poverty?
Focus: What does it mean to be poor in the U.S.?
- How do we define poverty in the U.S.?
- How can poverty be measured?
- How does Sen define poverty?
- Why do measures of poverty matter?

Readings:

Internet assignment: What is the Human Development Index?
- How has it been used, and by whom?
- What are its advantages and disadvantages?

January 27: Global poverty
Focus: Poverty around the world
- Why should Americans care about poverty in other countries?
- How do we measure poverty around the world? Extreme, moderate, and relative poverty
- The development ladder
- In what ways does development affect women’s and men’s lives differently?
- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Readings:

January 29: Socially engaged art
Focus: How can artists impact social change?
- What does Friere mean by authentic community engagement?

GUEST LECTURER: Ilene Berman

Readings:
• Loeb, *Soul of a Citizen*, chapters 5 and 6.

February 3, 5, 10: The demographics of poverty in the U.S.
Focus: • Who is more likely to be poor?
   • What is meant by the “feminization of poverty”?
   • What does race and ethnicity have to do with it?
   • How do gender inequalities intersect with and impact poverty among women?
   • Wealth vs. income: why is the distinction important?
   • Residential segregation and poverty

Readings:
• Mark Rank, *One Nation, Underprivileged* (2005), chapter 4.
• Paul Loeb, *Soul of a Citizen*, chapters 7 and 8.

February 12: Policy advocacy in practice
Focus: The Rebecca Project

GUEST LECTURER: Representative from the Rebecca Project

Internet assignment:
• The Rebecca Project: Find out about this organization from their website:
  http://www.rebeccaproject.org

Readings:
Loeb, *Soul of a Citizen*, chapters 2 and 3.

February 17, 19: The demographics of global poverty
Focus: Poverty in the developing world
- What is meant by the term, “structural violence”?
- How do different axes of oppression (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) affect poverty?
- Why are women key to reducing poverty in the developing world?
- What is the connection between violence and women’s economic livelihood?
- What is the role of health care in reducing poverty?
- What is the role of education in reducing poverty?

Readings:

February 24, 26: The U.S. market economy and structural vulnerability
Focus: The structure of employment and unemployment in the U.S.
- Cyclical unemployment, sunrise/sunset industries
- Low-wage jobs at or below the poverty line; lack of opportunities
- Human capital, social class, and individual vulnerability

Readings:

March 3, 5: The global market structure and globalization
Focus: The poverty trap and the developing world: Getting your foot on the ladder
- The prerequisites of development
- Kicking away the ladder: From statism to neoliberalism
- The gendered impact of globalization

Readings:

March 5
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

SPRING BREAK

March 17: Discourses on poverty
Focus: How do we view “the poor”?
• “Us” vs. “them”
• “The undeserving poor” and “the culture of poverty”: Is it possible to talk about a “culture of poverty” without blaming the victim?
• In what ways is poverty discourse gender-specific?
• What is the role of politics in policies to alleviate poverty?

Readings:
• Sharon Hays, Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform (2003), pp. 121-128 and 136-177.

March 19, 24, 26: Political ideologies in the U.S. regarding poverty and welfare
Focus: The U.S. view of poverty and the welfare state
• Different types of Western welfare states and their underlying ideologies
• U.S. views of poverty, inequality, and rights
• Contract vs. charity, and their implicit gender codes
• From the New Deal to the Great Society
• What does poverty have to do with citizenship?
Readings:
- William Julius Wilson, When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor (1997), pp. 155-164. [This pulls everything together nicely, but could be eliminated if there’s no time.]
- Mark Rank, One Nation, Underprivileged (2005), chapters 5-6.

March 31: “Welfare reform” or a “war on welfare”? The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA)
Focus: • Political values and U.S. social welfare policy
• The evolution of social welfare policy in the U.S.

Readings:

April 2: Poverty alleviation strategies: The role of microfinance
Focus: • Microfinancial services: Microcredit, microsavings, and microinsurance
• Microlending in the developing world: Grameen Bank and Jami Bora

Readings:
• Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Half the Sky (2009), chapter 11

Internet assignment:
• Check out the following websites for a description of Microfinancing Partners in Africa and the Grameen Bank, two successful microfinancing programs:
  • http://www.GrameenFoundation.org
  • http://www.microfinancingafrica.org
April 7: Poverty alleviation strategies: Asset building approaches in the U.S.
Focus: Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and microfinance in the U.S.

GUEST LECTURERS: Dr. Julie Birkenmaier, Assoc. Prof. and Director of Field Education in SLU’s School of Social Work, and Dr. Jami Curley, Assist. Prof., SLU’s School of Social Work

Readings:

Internet assignment: Find out what the “earned income tax credit” is if you don’t already know.

April 7
REFLECTION PAPER DUE

April 9, 14: Poverty alleviation strategies: Macro-level policy changes
Focus: Do we need to re-form the U.S. welfare state?
  - What’s wrong with current policies?
  - What poverty-alleviation policies will work in the U.S.?
  - What is politically feasible?
  - What does it mean to be an “informed advocate”?

Readings:
- Paul Loeb, *Soul of a Citizen*, chapter 10

April 16: International economic institutions: The International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO)
Focus: IMF: From embedded liberalism to the Washington consensus
- Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and the poor
- The World Bank and its poverty reduction mandate
- WTO: Agricultural subsidies and complaints from developing countries
Readings:

April 23: The role of political institutions: Bad governance
Focus: Bad governance: Poverty, politics, and corruption
- Democratic vs. authoritarian regimes
- Political development: Political decay or political institutionalization
- U.S. Millennium Challenge account

Readings:
- William Easterly, The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good (2006), pp. 112-159.

April 28: The UN Millennium Development goals and foreign aid
Focus: The Millennium Development goals and international security
- Investments in people and infrastructure: On-the-ground solutions
- The poverty trap and the need for foreign aid

Readings:
- Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Half the Sky (2009), chapters 10 and 13

April 30: Poverty alleviation: Active citizens, advocacy, and the role of civil society
Focus: What can engaged citizens do?

Readings:
- Duncan Green, From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World (2008), pp. 2-6, 18-33, and 58-63.
- Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Half the Sky (2009), chapter 14.
May 5: A matter of justice, a matter of citizenship, a matter of security

Readings:

- Lael Brainard, Derek Chollet, and Vinca LaFleur, “The Tangled Web: The Poverty-Insecurity Nexus,” in *Too Poor for Peace*, eds. Lael Brainard and Derek Chollet (2007), pp. 1-30. If you are pressed for time, you can read only pages 1-5.
- Paul Loeb, *Soul of a Citizen*, chapter 12.

Wednesday, May 7, 2:00

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE