Description

This course examines the theoretical and empirical literature on the structural causes of poverty at the global and local level from a multidisciplinary perspective. While other variables will not be discounted, this course focuses 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. The local dimension will focus on policies in the U.S., and more specifically, the St. Louis area. We will begin at the local level, and build to the global level. While the course is organized in this manner, this does not suggest that structural causes differ between the two levels. Instead, this is a question to be examined.

Students will get a first hand view of the structure of poverty as they engage in service learning projects at the well-established, nonprofit organization, Queen of Peace Center (QOPC). The Center serves low-income, homeless, and chemically-dependent women and their children. Students will examine and analyze how the problems faced by clients of QOPC in five issue areas (problems related to housing, mental health, domestic violence, child welfare, and the criminal justice system) intersect with poverty.

The course will focus on and be organized around the following core questions:

Questions:

1.) What is poverty? How to measure poverty?
2.) How do we view poverty? Political Ideologies and the Role of Values
3.) What are the attributes of poverty? Who is more likely to be poor?
4.) What are the structural causes of poverty? Global and Local Perspectives
5.) What are the solutions? Global and Local Approaches
6.) Why should we care?

Course Requirements

The service learning component of this class will consist of several components – in class-scheduled lectures and interviews, interviews outside of class, outside research, off campus lectures, and “field experiences”. This might be different than you expected, but your final project is not just an academic exercise, it is also designed to provide important data and information to QOPC to help them serve their clients better. It will be part research paper, part policy proposal, part grant proposal. It will focus on problems experienced by clients of QOPC and how to address these issues – to become advocates.
Class attendance is mandatory! Together with class participation it constitutes an important part of your grade. A record of attendance will be maintained, and it is the students’ responsibility to sign the class roster at each session. I also expect all students to actively participate in class discussions. Students should come to class having read, prepared to discuss the assigned readings, and answered the assigned questions for the day. Just attending class is not sufficient.

To prod you to stay on schedule with the readings and prepare you for the exams and project, I will assign daily questions and/or request notes on the readings. These should be turned in at the beginning of class on the day of the assigned reading. Keep one copy for yourself, and turn one in for me. If you stay on schedule, you should not need to study and you will be prepared for the exams. I suggest you keep a binder for the class to stay organized.

I assign points for all of your assignments. To determine your grade, just add up the points. The grading scale for the course is as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>87 - 83</td>
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<td>82 - 80</td>
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**Academic Honesty**

Saint Louis University takes the issue of academic honestly seriously. Please read the following statement from University policy carefully:

*Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to the instructor and will be investigated and adjudicated according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University.*
**Disability Services**

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disabilities Services at 314-977-2930 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

**Writing Center Services**

I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center’s services; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. The Center helps with writing projects, multimedia projects, and oral presentations. They offer one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, call 977-2930 or visit http://www.slu.edu/x13305.xml.

**Course Schedule**

I. Introduction and Overview

1.) Tuesday, August 26th – Introduction and Overview of the Course

   **Focus:** a.) An interdisciplinary approach to studying poverty  
   b.) Individual vs. Structural explanations  
   c.) Politics & Poverty - Who gets what, the role of values, & power

2.) Thursday, August 28th - ***Orientation at Queen of Peace Center***

   **Activity:** We will make our first visit to Queen of Peace Center as a class. Please Meet in front of McGannon Hall at 1:50. Orientation will focus on the Services offered by Queen of Peace Center, the population served, how poverty impacts their clientele, overview of the service projects you will undertake, and client interview preparation.

   **Focus:** Discourses on Poverty

   a.) How do “we” view “the poor”? “Us” vs. “Them”  
   b.) “the undeserving poor” vs. “the culture of poverty”  
   c.) The missing role of politics


Written Assignment: **To be handed in**

1.) What comes to mind when asked the following questions – please answer this before you do the readings. Be honest!

- What images comes to mind when the media talks about poverty in the US? Poverty in a developing country in Africa?
- What do you think are the causes of poverty? US and Globally?
- How do you view those who live in poverty?
- How do you view welfare in the US?

2.) Did any of your answers to the above question change after the readings?

II. Question #1: What is poverty?

3.) Tuesday, September 2\textsuperscript{rd} – Poverty in the US

Focus: What does it mean to be poor in the US?

   a.) How to define poverty – What is the scope of your study?
   b.) How to measure poverty – Operationalize your variable
   c.) Definitions and Measurements Matter!
   d.) Moving Beyond Economic Measures – the Human Development Index – “Poverty as Deprivation” and “Unfreedoms”


Assignment: Please take notes on the following

   a.) How do we define poverty in the US? Absolute and Relative measures
   b.) How does Sen define poverty?
   c.) How would you define poverty?

4.) Thursday, September 4\textsuperscript{th} – Global Poverty

Focus: The Poverty Gap Around the World

   a.) Extreme, Moderate, and Relative Poverty
   b.) The Development Ladder
   c.) The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Assignment: Please take notes on the following

a.) How do we measure poverty around the globe?
b.) What percentage of the world’s population lives in extreme poverty?

5.) Tuesday, September 9th – ***Client Interview at Queen of Peace Center***

Assignment: Please review the interview questions in advance to prepare for your client interview. If you are interested in a particular issue area, it might help you to do a little internet research on the policy. Also, role play with your fellow classmates. These interviews are designed to give you a view of poverty from the individual level. They also will help you narrow down your research question/policy problem. Interviews are a powerful research tool.

III. Question #2: How do We View Poverty? – Ideologies and Political Values

6.) Thursday, September 11th – Political Ideologies in the US – Poverty & Welfare

Focus: The US View of Poverty and the Welfare State

a.) A Typology of Western welfare states and underlying ideologies
b.) US Views of poverty, inequality, and rights – American exceptionalism – contract vs. charity
c.) From the New Deal to Great Society
d.) individual vs. structuralist explanations


Assignment: Take notes on the following

a.) What is civil citizenship? Political citizenship? Social citizenship?
b.) Explain the “contract” vs. “charity” image of the US welfare state?
c.) What are individual causes of poverty? Structural?
d.) How does the New Deal legacy affect US social welfare policy today?

7.) Tuesday, September 16th – “Welfare Reform” or “War on Welfare”: The Personal Responsibility & Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA)

Focus: a.) The evolution of social welfare policy in the US  
     b.) Political Values and US Social Welfare Policy  
     c.) The 2008 Presidential election – Candidates’ anti-poverty policies 


Assignment: How do the 2008 Presidential candidates stand on poverty? Visit the following websites. What are their policies and proposals? How do they differ? Do their policies reflect different underlying political philosophies and values?  

http://www.onevote08.org/ontherecord/compare.html?c=13&c=8  
http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/  
http://www.barackobama.com/issues/

8.) Thursday, September 18th – Non-Western Views of Justice and Poverty and Differences within the Christian Tradition

Focus: a.) How do Western views of justice, social welfare, and poverty differ from Non-Western views  
     b.) Differing views of justice, social welfare, and poverty within the Christian Tradition 

** Special Guest Lecturer, Dr. Tim Lomperis, Dept. of Political Science  


Assignment: **Research Topic and Client Interview Summary Due**

IV. Question #3: What are the attributes of poverty? Who is more likely to be poor?

9.) Tuesday, September 23rd – Demographics and “Axes of Oppression”
Focus: Who is more likely to be poor?
   a.) Poverty in the US - Demographics and geography
   b.) Who is more vulnerable to falling into poverty?
   c.) Poverty in the Developing World
   d.) Structural violence and axes of oppression


Assignment: Think about these questions as you do the readings
   a.) What is the relationship between demographics and causal explanations?
   b.) Why are some societal groups more vulnerable than others to falling into poverty?
   c.) What does Farmer mean by “structural violence”? “Axes of Oppression”?

10.) Thursday, September 25th – **“Let’s Start” Performance at QOPC **

Activity: We will visit Queen of Peace Center to see the performance, “Stories of Hope”, by the local organization Let’s Start. Let's Start is a process dedicated to assisting women in transition from prison life to society. It is unique in that it is coordinated by women who themselves have been through the criminal justice system. They now enrich the lives of others through advocacy, education, and sharing their stories. To learn more about the organization, visit: [http://www.letsstart.org/hope.html](http://www.letsstart.org/hope.html)


Assignment: Questions to think about when you do the reading
   a.) Were you surprised by the percentage of people affected by poverty across their lifespan in the US?
   b.) Why as Americans are we reluctant to spend more money on poverty prevention, when we spend so much money dealing with the problems that arise as a result of poverty?

V. Question #4: What are the Structural Causes of Poverty?


Focus: a.) “natural rate of unemployment” – musical chairs
   b.) “restructuring” unemployment – sunrise/sunset industries,
   c.) cyclical unemployment
d.) low-wage jobs – at or below poverty line/lack of opportunities


Assignment: Please take notes on the readings and answer the following questions in your binder.

a.) Katz and Wilson both develop structural explanations for US poverty attributable to the market system. What are their arguments?
b.) According to Wilson, US policy and the intersection of race have exacerbated these structural failings. How?
c.) What is the relationship between globalization and poverty in the US? What are the effects?

12.) Thursday, October 2nd – US Social Structures – Gender

Focus: a.) How do gender inequalities intersect with and impact poverty Among women?
b.) What is the “feminization of poverty” in the U.S. context?

*Special Guest Lecturer – Dr. Kathryn Kuhn – Dept. of Sociology and Criminal Justice*


Assignment: Please be working on your Provider Interview!

13.) Tuesday, October 7th – US Social Structures – Race & Ethnicity

Focus: a.) Measuring poverty – wealth vs. income
b.) Racial Inequality and the Wealth Gap
c.) Residential segregation and poverty

Assignment: Outline the argument of each reading and answer the following questions.
   a.) What are the implications if we use an income-based approach for measuring and addressing poverty vs. an wealth-based approach?
   b) What are the policy implications?
   c.) Do US policies continue to perpetuate racial inequality and the wealth gap?

14.) Thursday, October 9th – **The Structural Vulnerability Explanation**

   **Focus:**
   a.) human capital, social class, and and economic vulnerability
   b.) structural failings and individual vulnerability – “musical chairs”

   **Readings:**

   **Assignment:**
   a.) As always, take notes on the readings – think about the Connections between Rank’s argument and the reading Excerpts from Ehrenreich and Kozol
   b.) You should be writing up you provider interview which is due next class – Oct. 14th
   c.) You should have set-up or completed one field experience

15.) Tuesday, October 14th – The Global Market Structure & Globalization

   **Focus:**
   a.) The Poverty Trap & the Developing World –
      Getting your Foot on the ladder – prerequisites of development
   b.) Kicking away the ladder – From Statism to Neoliberalism
   c.) Globalization, poverty, and development

   **Readings:**
Assignment: No Assignment. Finish your midterm!

16.) Thursday, October 16th – **QOPC Special Panel Discussion – at SLU campus**

Reading: No Assigned Readings

** Take-home Mid-term Exam Due in Class**

17.) Tuesday, October 21st – NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

18.) Thursday, October 23rd – International Ec. Institutions: The IMF & World Bank

Focus: a.) IMF – From Embedded Liberalism to the Washington Consensus
b.) Structural Adjustment Programs and the Poor
c.) WTO – Complaints from Developing Countries
d.) World Bank and Development


**And Required Event on Thursday, October 23 from 4:15 – 6:00 p.m.**

United Nations Day Event

Hosted by

The Greater St. Louis United Nations Association
And Cosponsored by Saint Louis University’s
Department of Public Policy Studies and Department of Political Science

Location: Carlo Auditorium, Tegeler Hall

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals:
Focus on Children Globally and Locally

Presenters:
Dr. Usha Nayar, Professor of Social Development (Visiting)
Washington University in St. Louis, George Warren Brown School of Social Work and
Professor of Social Sciences, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Children: Agents of Social Change and Affected by Societal Contexts

Mr. Arrey Obenson, Executive Director, Junior Chamber International
The Legal Framework of Children’s Rights in Africa

Dr. Richard Patton, Executive Director, St. Louis Vision for Children at Risk

Focus: a.) WTO – Complaints from Developing Countries
    b.) WTO, agricultural subsidies, and developing countries
    d.) The World Bank and its poverty reduction mandate

Readings: There are no new readings. Please review the readings from Thursday, October 23rd.

Assignment: You should be finishing up your service provider interview and Identifying your contact for your stakeholder interview.

20.) Thursday, October 30th - Domestic Political Institutions – Bad Governance


V. What are the Solutions? Global and Local Approaches

21.) Tuesday, November 4th - The UN Millennium Development Goals & Foreign Aid

Focus: a.) The Millennium Development Goals and International Security
    b.) Investments in people and infrastructure – on the ground solutions
    c.) The Poverty Trap and the Need for Foreign Aid


Assignment: If you are interested in the “debate” between Easterly and Sachs, check out the following Washington Post articles.


22.) Thursday, November 6th – Global Microlevel Approaches – Microfinance Programs

** Special Guest Lecture with Sr. Toni Temporiti founder of Micro- Financing Partners in Africa ***
Microfinancing Partners in Africa (MPA) develops sustainable businesses and economically viable communities. We work with community-based organizations to create and support funding systems that furnish small, collateral-free, low-interest business loans. Grants are given to organizations that provide business, health and nutrition classes.


Assignment: Check out the following websites for a description of Sr. Toni’s organization – Microfinancing Partners in Africa – And the Grameen Bank and Jamii Bora, two very Successful microfinancing programs.

[http://www.microfinancingafrica.org](http://www.microfinancingafrica.org)

23.) Tuesday, November 11th – US and Global Microlevel Approaches – Asset-Building

Focus: **Special Guest Lecture on Asset-Building Approaches ***

a.) Asset Development around the globe  
b.) Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and microfinance in the US

Julie Birkenmaier, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director of Field Education, School of Social Work  
Jami Curley, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School of Social Work


Assignment: Please turn in your service provider interview if you have not. Your stakeholder interview is due next Thursday, Nov. 20th.

24.) Thursday, November 13th – US Policy Reforms at the Macro Level

Focus: a.) Do we need to re-reform the US welfare state?  
b.) What’s wrong with current policies?  
c.) What poverty-alleviation policies will work in the US?  
d.) What is politically feasible?

Assignment: Work on your stakeholder interview and final research project.

25.) Tuesday, November 18th – The Role of Multinationals (MNCs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)


VI. Why Should We Care? What Can We Do?

26.) Thursday, November 20th – Special Lecture – The Rebecca Project

**No Assigned Readings**

**Stakeholder Interview Assignment Due – Please e-mail them to me, no later than 2:00 p.m. on this day**

27.) Tuesday, November 25th – NO CLASS – Please work on completing your Queen of Peace Research Projects

28.) Thursday, November 27th – NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

29.) Tuesday, December 2nd – Poverty Alleviation: Active Citizens, Advocacy, and the Role of Civil Society


30.) Thursday, December 4th – A Matter of Justice, A Matter of Citizenship and Course Reflection

**Final Research Paper/Service Learning Project Due**

Scheduled Take-Home Final Exam – Due no later than Monday, December 15th by 8:00 a.m. Please e-mail them to me by this deadline.