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:

- There are also a number of additional articles. Those that are available on Blackboard are indicated with an asterisk.

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.

⇒ **SLU Acts: Diversity Dialogues event.** This event will bring together students from at least four different courses to discuss issues of diversity (including class, race, gender, etc.) on the
SLU campus. Everyone will be expected to participate, and some of you will be using this for your social change project for the course. The event will be on Tuesday, November 3, approx. 5:30-8:30 p.m. in Carlo Auditorium in Tegeler Hall.

⇒ **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.**

⇒ **Show and Tells (5% of total course grade):**
Each student will be required to do at least one 5-minute show-and-tell during the semester, on a date of their choosing, to be graded credit/no credit. I expect students to keep abreast of current events and politics throughout the course. Please bring in (or use the computer and projector in class) one news/cultural item relevant to the course topics to share with the rest of the class.

⇒ **Lists of reflections about the assigned readings (10% of total course grade):**
Before each class period, write a list of 5 bullet point entries that reflect your current thoughts about the readings and/or project. The first bullet point should describe a main point in one of the assigned readings for that class period. You may want to use the "focus" topics in the syllabus as a guide. 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 write or 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 successfully complete 90% of these (minus 2), you will earn an "A" for this portion of your grade; 80% will earn a "B", and so on.

Here are some ideas for things you might want to reflect 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 12 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 12 hours. This project will serve as the core of your reflection and research papers and probably determine the general topic for your annotated bibliography. All students will meet with me individually early in the semester to plan and discuss your project. There may also be some small group discussions 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 attach it to the end of your final paper. If you do not put in the minimum of 12 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 research guide prepared by Pius reference librarian Dr. Miriam Joseph (977-3584 or josephme@slu.edu) to help you get started. It can be found through the Pius Library website or at http://libguides.slu.edu/poverty. Dr. Joseph is available to assist students, but don't contact her until you have begun doing the research on your own first.

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 World 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., CQ Weekly)

Each bibliographic entry MUST 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/. In addition, label each entry with the category of reference it is. Finally, write your research question at the very beginning of the bibliography. 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 2500-3000 words long (including reference list). You may want to use subheadings. Where possible, incorporate material from your annotated bibliography, your reflection paper, the assigned readings, class discussions, and perhaps things you have learned from your fellow students. 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.

⇒ Electronic devices: Students may use laptop computers in class ONLY for note-taking and referring to the assigned readings. Using your computer for other purposes is very distracting for other students and for the instructor, and will be dealt with severely.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Academic Integrity and Honesty**

*Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors.* The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.


**Title IX**

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU’s Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; akratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and
off campus. If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU’s sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: http://www.slu.edu/general-counsel-home/office-of-institutional-equity-and-diversity/sexual-misconduct-policy

**Student Success Center**

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center, a one-stop shop, which assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning) by visiting the Student Success Center or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

**Disability Services Academic Accommodations**

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at Disability services@slu.edu or 314.977.3484 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

**CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

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

**August 24, 26: 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 doing service and doing activism?

Readings:

- Mark Rank, *One Nation, Underprivileged* (2005), chapters 1-3.

**August 31: Social engagement through 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.

September 2: 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?

September 9: Global poverty
Focus: Poverty around the world
  • Why should Americans care about poverty in other countries?
  • How do we measure poverty around the world? What are the criteria for extreme, moderate, and relative poverty?
  • What is the development ladder?
  • In what ways does development affect women’s and men’s lives differently?
  • The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Readings:

September 9, 14, 16: 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: what have been the causes historically?
• What has been the impact of mass incarceration on poor neighborhoods?

Readings:
• Mark Rank, One Nation, Underprivileged (2005), chapter 4.
• *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink*, by Maria Shriver and the Center for American Progress (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 11-12, 17-24, 36-39, 45-81, 84-91, 142-147, and 128-133.


• *Robert Haveman, “Do Housing Vouchers Work?” In Pathways, a magazine on poverty, inequality, and social policy, Spring 2013, pp. 15-17.

September 21: 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.

September 23, 28: 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, race, and individual vulnerability: Why isn't public education a route out of poverty for many minority children?

Readings:
• Listen to radio show, "The Problem We All Live With, parts 1 and 2" (July 31 and August 7, 2015--2 hours total) on This American Life, at http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with and at http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/563/the-problem-we-all-live-with-part-two
• Paul Loeb, Soul of a Citizen, chapter 9.

September 20, October 5: 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) interact with 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:
• Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Half the Sky (2009), Introduction and chapters 1-9 and 12.
• Paul Loeb, Soul of a Citizen, chapters 7 and 8.

October 7, 12: The global market structure and globalization
Focus: The poverty trap and the developing world: Getting your foot on the ladder
• What are the prerequisites of development?
• Kicking away the ladder: From statism to neoliberalism
• What are the gendered impact of globalization?

Readings:


October 12
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

October 14: 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:

FALL BREAK

October 21, 26, 28: 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:
- *Theda Skocpol, “The Limits of the New Deal System and the Roots of Contemporary Welfare Dilemmas.” In The Politics of Social Policy in the U.S., ed. Margaret

- Mark Rank, One Nation, Underprivileged (2005), chapters 5-6.

November 2: “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:

November 3, 5:30-8:30 p.m.: SLU Acts: Diversity Dialogues
Everyone is REQUIRED to attend this event in Carlo Auditorium in Tegeler Hall.

November 4: 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.microfinancingafrica.org

November 9: 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.

November 9
REFLECTION PAPER DUE

November 11, 16: 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

November 18: 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:
November 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.

THANKSGIVING

November 30: 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

December 2: Poverty alleviation: Active citizens, advocacy, and the role of civil society
Focus: What can engaged citizens do?

Readings:

December 7: 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.

Monday, December 14, 2:00
FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE