

PPPA 6085.13
Poverty and Social Policy
Spring 2016

Michael Wiseman, Co-Instructor

Theresa Anderson, Co-Instructor

Classroom Location: Rome 352

Poverty and Social Policy is a graduate course/seminar in public assistance policy for students interested in policy analysis and public management as a profession. The course offers a comprehensive introduction to analytic and political issues surrounding the ongoing American and British debates on poverty and social policy. The objective is to train students to ask the right questions when evaluating social assistance programs and to appreciate the complementary roles of policy analysis and public management in formulating such questions and in interpreting the answers.

As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Define and critically evaluate common measures of poverty and social assistance program performance.
2. Understand major issues in current public debate over appropriate objectives and strategies for social welfare policies.
3. Identify and explain the importance of key generic features of social assistance programs and use these generic elements as tools for study of both U.S. and European welfare systems.

First- and second-year MPA and MPP candidates and persons in the Ph.D. program are welcome to enroll in this course. Students should have completed, or choose to concurrently enroll in, applied statistics (i.e. PPPA 6002, “Research Methods and Applied Statistics”) and microeconomics (i.e. PPPA 6014, “Economics and Policy Analysis”) or the equivalent.

There are three “texts”:

- DeParle, Jason. 2004. *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation’s Drive to End Welfare*. New York: Viking.
- Mullainathan, Sendhil, and Eldar Shafir. 2013. *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Halpern-Meehin, Sarah, Kathryn Edin, Laura Tach, and Jennifer Sykes. 2015. *It’s Not Like I’m Poor: How Working Families Make Ends Meet in a Post-Welfare World*. Oakland, California: University of California Press

All three books are readily available on Amazon or from other booksellers and can be downloaded. Required and recommended readings are listed below by class session; readings for some sessions will be identified in consultation with students and announced in the related class plans. Full references for the required readings are provided in the separately distributed *Course Bibliography* that is posted in the syllabus section on Blackboard. This list also includes sources for materials discussed and/or distributed in class and details on suggested additional readings. A *Reader’s Guide* will be distributed for some sections to assist in navigating the reading load.

Each student will be responsible for a state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, a means-tested social assistance program other than TANF, and a research review. These will be selected in consultation with the instructors. All class materials will be posted on the Blackboard website. Readings for the sections devoted to student reports will be determined in consultation with students and will be posted following these discussions.

This is a graduate course, and students concerned about grades might be better served elsewhere. That said, performance evaluation is done on the basis of a midterm examination, four exercises, class participation, and a final examination. The four exercises must be completed to graduate standard (identified in each exercise write-up) and students will be helped to achieve this requirement. Conditional on completion of the exercises, grades are (hypothetically) based 30 percent on the midterm, 50 percent on the final, and 20 percent on class participation and preparation.

Both Anderson and Wiseman generally work off-campus, but they are happy to meet with students by appointment on campus or via FaceTime or Skype. Students are encouraged to contact the instructors as needed by email; Wiseman's address is WisemanM@gwu.edu; Anderson is Tander@gwu.edu. Wiseman's GWU office is located in MPA 620. Questions regarding the readings or problems will be handled as discussions on Blackboard. This ensures that the information is shared.

Students should carefully review the general campus notices on page 10 of the syllabus. Click [here](#) to go to that section.

Session Plans

Reading references below are abbreviated. For full citations, see the *Course Bibliography* posted in the syllabus section on Blackboard. Most readings are available as Electronic Reserves on Blackboard. When it is useful for you to be familiar with reference location, we include the URL.

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| (1) 1/13 | Introduction: Social Policy and Public Assistance |
| Topics: | Introductions. Course objectives. The syllabus. Projects and responsibilities. Evaluation of student performance. A primer on public assistance. Means testing. Nomenclature. The panoply of means-tested programs. Using AFDC/TANF as the baseline reference and <i>American Dream</i> , <i>Scarcity</i> , and <i>It's Not Like I'm Poor</i> as keynote readings. Background for Session 2. |
| Problems: | Problem 1, "Poverty and Income Distribution," distributed (due 1/29; last questions in class 1/27). |
| Readings: | Continue (or begin) DeParle, Jason (2004): <i>American Dream</i> . Please finish the book by February 10.
Read the introduction to Shafir and Mullainathan (2013): <i>Scarcity</i> . |
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(2) 1/20 **Poverty and Income Distribution**

Topics: The distribution of income and wealth in the United States. Measures of inequality. The meaning of “need” and “poverty.” The official poverty standard and alternatives. The Supplemental Poverty Measure. Poverty assessment in Europe. Recent trends.

Readings: “Reader’s Guide, Session 2: Poverty and Income Distribution,” manuscript. The authoritative guide to what lies before you.

Income Distribution

Congressional Budget Office (2014): *The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2011*. See the RG for reading instructions.

The Official Standard

Townsend, Peter (1954): “Measuring Poverty.”

Ver Ploeg, Michele and Constance F. Citro (2008): “Poverty Measurement: Orshansky’s Original Measures and the Development of Alternatives.”

DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, and Bernadette D. Proctor (2015): *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014*. (Standard Census Bureau poverty report; read the review materials pp. 1-20.)

The Supplemental Poverty Measure

Blank, Rebecca (2011): “The Supplemental Poverty Measure: A New Tool for Understanding U.S. Poverty.”

Short, Kathleen (2015): “The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2014.”

Meyer, Bruce D. and James X. Sullivan (2012): “Identifying the Disadvantaged: Official Poverty, Consumption Poverty, and the New Supplemental Poverty Measure.”

International Perspective

Gornick, Janet C., and Markus Jäntti (2016): “Poverty”

Rockey, Tyler, and Michael Wiseman (2015): “Child Poverty in the United States and the United Kingdom: What Counts? What’s Happened? What’s Next?” Manuscript.

UK Department for Work and Pensions (2015): “Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 – 2013/14 June 2015 (United Kingdom).”

OECD (2015), *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All*. Paris: OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264235120-en>

Technical

Förster, Michael (2005): “What Are Equivalence Scales?”

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- (3) 1/27 **Income Support and Household Behavior**
- Topics: Graphical and algebraic representations of income support programs. Income support and labor supply. The negative income tax. The New Jersey Negative Income Tax Experiment. Labor supply and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Behavior and psychology.
- Problems: Problem 2, “State TANF Programs,” distributed (part 1 due 2/9; full draft due 2/18). Problem 1 last queries.
- Readings: “Session 3: Income Support and Household Behavior Readings Guide,” manuscript.
Moffitt, Robert (2003): “The Negative Income Tax and the Evolution of U.S. Welfare Policy.”
Rees, Albert (1974): “An Overview of the Labor-Supply Results.”
Eissa, Nada and Hilary W. Hoynes (2006): “Behavioral Responses to Taxes: Lessons from the EITC and Labor Supply.”
Huber, Erika et al. (2015): *The Welfare Rules Databook: State Policies as of July 2014*.
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- (4) 2/3 **Federalism and the Safety Net**
- Topics: Modeling TANF. Interstate variation in TANF programs. Reauthorization Controversies. Federalism: Fiscal and other aspects. Preparing for *American Dream*.
- Readings: “Reader’s Guide, Session 4: Federalism and the Safety Net,” manuscript.
Falk, Gene (2015): “Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Financing Issues.”
Falk, Gene (2016): “The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant: Responses to Frequently Asked Questions.”
Schott, Liz, LaDonna Pavetti, and Ife Floyd (2015): “How States Use Federal and State Funds under the TANF Block Grant.”
Meni, David, and Michael Wiseman (2016): “The TANF Resources Problem” (Draft).
Parolin, Zachary, and Michael Wiseman (2015): “Restoring the Entrails of Welfare Reform.” (Caution: See “Trigger Notice” at beginning.)
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- (5) 2/10 **American Dream: Realities of Welfare Reform, American-Style**
- Topics: Wisconsin Works. Wisconsin as welfare policy leader. Milwaukee and the urban poverty challenge. The unique circumstances of Wisconsin’s reform. The experience depicted in *The American Dream*. The Help Factory: How assistance is produced. Two-generation approaches.

- Readings: “Session 5: American Dream and the Realities of Welfare Reform Readings Guide,” manuscript.
 Finish DeParle, Jason (2004): *American Dream* by this date.
 Turner, Jason (2008): “The Experience of Privatization of Welfare Services in Wisconsin.”
 Wiseman, Michael (2002): “Wisconsin Works.”
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(6) 2/17 **Welfare History After PRWORA**

- Topics: What made TANF, and what TANF made. The history of TANF since welfare reform. Major issues in TANF reauthorization. Why the “success” of welfare reform has become a common myth. The reauthorization boondoggles. Developments under Obama. The heroic “Peter the Citizen.”
- Problems: Problem Set 2 Due. Problem set 3, “Program Overview,” distributed. Class presentations will be on 3/23.
- Readings: “Session 6: Welfare Policy in the Wake of PRWORA and Beyond, Readings Guide.” Manuscript.
 Anderson, Theresa, Katharine Kairys, and Michael Wiseman (2014): “Activation and Reform in the United States: What Time Has Told.”
 Bane, Mary Jo (2009): “Poverty Politics and Policy.”
 Sandstrom, Heather et al. (2014): “Understanding the Dynamics of Disconnection from Employment and Assistance” (Executive Summary).
 Loprest, Pam (2015): “Welfare and Poverty in America.” Statement before the Committee on Finance, United States Senate.
 Congressional Research Service (2015): “TANF Reauthorization: House Ways and Means Committee Discussion Draft of July 10, 2015.”
 “Peter the Citizen” (2015): “TANF is Broken! It’s Time to Reform ‘Welfare Reform.’” Personal Statement of Peter Germanis. See also Michael Wiseman, “TANF Reauthorization: A ‘Cri de Coeur.’”
 Begin or continue reading Mullainathan and Shafir, *Scarcity*.
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(7) 2/24 **The Help Factory**

- Topics: The management of assistance enterprise. Case management, old and new. The Turner Process in New York City. The evolution of the Turner system through DeBlasio
- GUEST (via video) **Tyler Rockey**, PPPA6085 Badgholder (Spring 2013), City Research Scientist, Office of Evaluation and Research, New York City Human Resources Administration.

- Readings: “Session 7: Casework and the Help Factory: Reader’s Guide.”
 Turner, Jason (2008): “The Experience of Privatization of Welfare Services in Wisconsin.” (repeat).
 Desai, Swati, Lisa Garabedian, and Karl Snyder (2012): “Performance-Based Contracts in New York City: Lessons Learned from Welfare-to-Work.”
 Julie Birkenmaier, Marla Berg-Weger, and Marty Dewees (2013): “Understanding Social Work Practice.”
 NIGP (2012): “Public Procurement Practice: Performance Based Contracting.”
 Taylor-Powell, Ellen (ND): “Logic Models to Enhance Program Performance.”
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(8) 3/2 **Casework and the Psychological Consequences of Poverty**

Topics: Distinguishing social work, case work, and case management. The psychological and behavioral consequences of scarcity. Brain Science, Mobility Mentoring, and coaching.

- Readings: “Session 8: Casework and the Psychological Consequences of Poverty: Reader’s Guide”
 Mullainathan, Sendhil, and Eldar Shafir (2013): *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*. (finish the book)
 Babcock, Elisabeth B. (2014): *Using Brain Science to Design New Pathways Out of Poverty*.
 Gennetian, Lisa A., and Eldar Shafir (2015): “The Persistence of Poverty in the Context of Financial Instability: A Behavioral Perspective.”
 Pavetti, LaDonna (2014): “Using Executive Function and Related Principles to Improve the Design and Delivery of Assistance Programs for Disadvantaged Families”
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(9) 3/9 **Learning from Experiments**

Topics: Welfare experimentation. Recalling the New Jersey Negative Income Tax Experiment. New Hope as an alternative. Changing employment incentives for housing assistance recipients. Using brain science concepts to design a coaching-based assistance experiment.

- Readings: “Session 9: Learning from Experiments: Reader’s Guide”
New Hope
 Huston, Aletha et al. (2003): “New Hope for Families and Children: Five-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare.” Executive Summary.

Gassman-Pines, Anna and Hirokazu Yoshikawa (2006): “Five-Year Effects of an Anti-Poverty Program on Marriage among Never-Married Mothers.”

Bos, Hans et al. (2007): “New Hope: Fulfilling America’s Promise to ‘Make Work Pay.’”

Work Rewards and FSS

Nuñez, Stephen, Nandita Verma, and Edith Yang. (2015): “Building Self-Sufficiency for Housing Voucher Recipients: Interim Findings from the Work Rewards Demonstration in New York City.” Executive Summary.

FSS-X

Riccio, James, and Michael Wiseman (2015): “The ‘FSS-X’ Demonstration: Combining an Executive Skills Coaching Model with Financial Incentives to Improve Economic Mobility for Families with Housing Subsidies.” Manuscript.

Riccio, James (2016): “The ‘FSS-X’ Demonstration: Presentation for NYC Agencies.”

3/16 **Spring Break—No class***

Readings: Halpern-Meekin et al. (2015): *It’s Not Like I’m Poor*.
“Study guide for *It’s Not Like I’m Poor*.”

(10) 3/23 **Those Other Programs**

Topics: Student reports on other means-tested programs and benefits: SSI (for children, adults, and the elderly), Section 8 (voucher), SNAP, EITC.

Problems: Problem set 5, “Student Reports,” distributed. Class presentations will be on 4/13.

Readings: Finish Halpern-Meekin et al. (2015): *It’s Not Like I’m Poor*.
Gilbert, Samantha, Justin Johnson, and Vania Pizano (2016): SNAP.
Hadjililoo, Arezu, Arpan Dasgupta, and Kristen Pritchard (2016): EITC.
McCarthy, Karissa, and Shane Loughran (2016): SSI-Adults.
Ajoku, Kenneth, and Olivia Barrow (2016): SSI-Kids.
Smith, Curtis, and Miriam Vishniac (2016): Section 8.

(11) 3/30 **Welfare Elsewhere: The United Kingdom (1)**

* Students traumatized by class deprivation should contact the instructors for additional assignments.

- Topics: Welfare and social security in the United Kingdom. New Labour's New Deals. Paternalism in the U.K. Borrowing ideas from abroad. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition and the "Universal Credit." Accomplishments and lessons for the U.S.
- GUEST (via video) **Simon McNorton**, PPPA6085 Badgeholder (Spring 2012), Senior Research Officer, Insight and Analysis Division, United Kingdom Department for Work and Pensions.
- Problems: Take-Home Midterm posted for student access on 4/1 (Problem 4); completion by midnight 4/3.
- Readings: "Session 11 Reader's Guide: Welfare Elsewhere: The United Kingdom (1)," manuscript. NOTE: The Reader's Guide is very important for this session.
- Griggs, Julia, Andrew Hammond, and Robert Walker (2010): "Activation for All: Welfare Reform in the UK, 1995 to 2009."
- Department for Work and Pensions (2010): *Universal Credit: Welfare that Works*, Executive Summary and Annex 2.
- Boteach, Melissa, Helly Lee, Elizabeth Lower-Basch, and Megan Martin (2014): *Universal Credit: A Primer*.
- DWP: *Our Reform Story*. London: Department for Work and Pensions. (On Blackboard).

(12) 4/6 **Welfare Elsewhere: The United Kingdom (2)**

- Topics: More on the new British regime and the implications for social policy, with a guest speaker. Social inclusion as a policy objective.
- Special: This session is held jointly with the **Annual PPPA6085 Awards Banquet**. More detail on location and appropriate attire will be provided in class
- GUESTS Melissa Boteach, Vice President, Poverty to Prosperity Program, Center for American Progress; Peter Germanis, National Policy Expert, Office of Family Assistance, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families
- Readings: TBA

(13) 4/13 **Policy Research**

- Topics: Student reports on research related to means-tested social assistance.
- Readings: TBA

(14) 4/20 **Conclusion**

- Topics: What have we learned? Course review. Discussion of student questions.

5/2-5/10 **Final Examination**

Important Notices

Academic Integrity

All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with The George Washington University *Code of Academic Integrity*. It states, in part, “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

Support for Students Outside the Classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the DSS office at 202-994-8250 in Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

University Counseling Center (UCC) 202-994-5300

The UCC offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals

<http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>

Security

In the cases of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building in which the class is held is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.