

PPPA 6081
Poverty and Social Policy
Spring 2019

Michael Wiseman, Instructor
Audrey McIntosh, Teaching Assistant
Classroom Location: Duquès Hall Room 152

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 European 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.

Students who successfully complete this course 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 elements as tools for study of both U.S. and European welfare systems.

Put more concretely, the course is designed to equip students to excel in entry-level policy analysis and program assessment positions in state and federal social program administration and in related organizations. It is presumed this capability will serve other social policy career objectives as well.

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 equivalents.

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-Meekin, 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

Last update: April 28, 2019

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 *Readings 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 instructor. 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 based on a midterm examination, four assignments, class participation, and a final examination. The four assignments must be completed to graduate standard (identified in each assignment write-up) and students will be helped to achieve this requirement. The midterm is pass-fail. Conditional on passing the midterm and completion of the assignments, grades are (hypothetically) based 20 percent on class participation and preparation, 30 percent on the assignments, and 50 percent on the final.

I generally work off-campus, but I'm happy to meet with students by appointment on campus or via Google Hangouts or Skype. If you need to contact me, my email is WisemanM@gwu.edu. My GWU office is MPA 620. Questions regarding the readings or problems will be handled as discussions on Blackboard. This ensures that the information is shared.

Audrey McIntosh is the Teaching Assistant for PPPA6081. Her email is AMcIntosh@gwu.edu. Audrey will be available for help with all aspects of the course.

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. The "optional" readings are required for Ph.D. students.

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| (1) | 1/16 | 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. Course-relevant current events. Background for Session 2. |
| | Readings: | Continue (or begin) DeParle, Jason (2004): <i>American Dream</i> . Please finish the book by February 7.
Read the introduction to Shafir and Mullainathan (2013): <i>Scarcity</i> . |

- (2) 1/23 **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.
- Assignments: Assignment 1, “Poverty Measures and Equivalence Scales,” distributed (due date to be announced).
- Readings: “Readings Guide, Session 2: Poverty and Income Distribution,” manuscript. An idiosyncratic guide to what lies before you.
- Income and Wealth Distribution*
 Stone, Chad, Danilo Trisi, Arloc Sherman, and Roderick Taylor (2018): *A Guide to Statistics on Historical Trends in Income Inequality.*
- 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.”
 Fontenot, Kayla R., Jessica L. Semega, and Melissa A. Kollar (2018): *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017.*
- The Supplemental Poverty Measure*
 Fox, Liana (2018): “The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2017.”
- International Perspective*
 Gornick, Janet C., and Markus Jäntti (2016): “Poverty.”
- Technical Details*
 Förster, Michael (2005): “What Are Equivalence Scales?”
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- Optional Readings Meyer, Bruce D., Wallace K. C. Mok, and James X. Sullivan (2015): “Household Surveys in Crisis”
 Moatsos, M. (2018): “The Unbearable Errorlessness of Global Poverty Estimates”

- (3) 1/30 **Income Support and Household Behavior**
- Topics: Graphical and algebraic representations of income support programs. Income support and labor supply. Income-based support as a “negative tax.” The New Jersey Negative Income Tax Experiment. Labor supply and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Behavior and psychology.
- Assignments: Assignment 1 queries.

- Readings: “Session 3: Income Support and Household Behavior Readings Guide,” manuscript.
 “A Rudimentary Transfer Program,” manuscript (hardcopy distributed in class).
 Allen, Jodie (2002): “Negative Income Tax.” (Not required, 2019)
 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.”
 Nichols, Austin and Jesse Rothstein (2015): “The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)”, pp. 1-16
 Moffitt, Robert (2016): “The US Safety Net and Work Incentives: Is There a Problem? What Should be Done?”

- (4) 2/6 **Federalism and the Safety Net: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families**
- Topics: TANF overview. Program requirements and finance. Interstate variation in TANF programs. First thoughts about states as “laboratories.” Peter the Citizen’s critique. Preparing for *American Dream*.
- Assignments: Assignment 2, “State TANF Programs,” distributed. A sample response will be distributed and discussed in class.
 Behn, R. (2013): *The Craft of Memo Writing*. One of the best things you’ll get out of this course.
- Readings: “Readings Guide, Session 4: Federalism and the Safety Net,” manuscript.
- Program Description
- Administration for Children and Families (2018): *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: 12th Report to Congress Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015*, Executive Summary and Chapters 1 and 2. Surprisingly forthright discussion of TANF from within the administration.
- Center for Law and Social Policy (2018): *TANF 101: Policy Briefs on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families*. “Cash Assistance,” “Block Grant,” and “Work Participation Rate.” All of these are by Elizabeth Lower-Basch.
- Schott, Liz, Ife Floyd, and Ashley Burnside (2018). *How States Use Funds Under the TANF Block Grant*.
- Heffernan et al. (2018): *The Welfare Rules Databook: State TANF Policies as of July 2017*. (Skim; note the organization of the report.)
- Waivers
- Parolin, Zachary, and Michael Wiseman (2016): “Restoring the Entrails of Welfare Reform.”

Office of Family Assistance (2017): “TANF-ACF-IM-2017-01 (Rescinding guidance concerning waiver and expenditure authority under section 1115 of the Social Security Act).”

Peter the Citizen strikes back!

(Links for these items are on Blackboard in the “Clippings” section.)

Matt Weidinger (American Enterprise Institute), “While Congress differs on border wall, House and Senate bills agree on trimming welfare block grant,” December 21, 2018 and “Latest bipartisan welfare extension clears Congress,” January 22, 2019

Peter the Citizen, “TANF is Broken! The Real Irony is Believing It’s been a Success”, January 25, 2019.

Optional Readings

Meni, David, and Michael Wiseman (2017): “The TANF Resources Problem”

- (5) 2/13 **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.
- Readings: “Session 5: American Dream and the Realities of Welfare Reform Readings Guide,” manuscript.
- DeParle, Jason (2004): *American Dream*.
- Turner, Jason (2008): “The Experience of Privatization of Welfare Services in Wisconsin.”
- Turner, Jason (2012): “The Wisconsin Experience”
- Wiseman, Michael (2002): “Wisconsin Works.”

- (6) 2/27* **Welfare History After PRWORA**
- Topics: Continuing discussion of *American Dream*. What made TANF, and what TANF made. The history of TANF since welfare reform. TANF today. “Peter the Citizen” and the ethics of public service. The Trump Administration proposals.
- Assignments: Assignment 3, “Program Overview,” distributed. Class presentations will be scheduled later.
- Readings: “Session 6: Welfare History After PRWORA, Readings Guide.” Manuscript.
- Haskins, Ron (2017): “Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.”

* Session rescheduled due to snow day, February 20.

Falk, Gene (2019): *The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant: Responses to Frequently Asked Questions*

“Peter the Citizen” (2015/2016): “TANF is Broken! It’s Time to Reform ‘Welfare Reform.’”

“Peter the Citizen,” “Expanding Work Requirements in Non-Cash Welfare Programs: TANF is NOT a Model, but a Cautionary Tale,” October 22, 2018

“Peter the Citizen,” “Saving Speaker Ryan: 20 Reasons Why TANF is NOT ‘Welfare Reform,’ NOT a Model for Reforming the Safety Net, and NOT Conservatism,” April 24, 2016.

Note: These “Peter the Citizen” readings are among many at <http://mlwiseman.com/?portfolio=peter-the-citizen>.

3/6 **Midterm IAWI Qualifying Test** (in class, one hour)

(7) 3/6 **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. Contracting for assistance.

Readings: “Session 7: Casework and the Help Factory: Readings Guide.”
 Hymowitz, Kay S. (2013): “Saving Welfare Reform”
 Doar, Robert (2014): “10 welfare reform lessons: New York City embraced an ethic of work.”
 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.”

3/11 – 3/16 **Spring Break—No class**

Remedial Students failing to pass the IWIA Qualifying Test (see Session 7, above) will be scheduled for retake during the break.

Reading Mullainathan, Sendhill, and Eldar Shafir (2013): *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*.
 Halpern-Meehin et al. (2015): *It’s Not Like I’m Poor*.
 “Study guide for *It’s Not Like I’m Poor*.”

- (8) 3/20 **Casework and the Psychological Consequences of Poverty**
- Topics: Distinguishing social work, case work, and case management. The psychological and behavioral consequences of scarcity. Executive functioning and coaching. Executive skills and *American Dream*.
- Guest: **Naomi Goldstein**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Readings: “Session 8: Casework and the Psychological Consequences of Poverty: Readings Guide.” The *Guide* includes important additional references, including background for Dr. Goldstein’s presentation.
- Mullainathan, Sendhill, and Eldar Shafir (2013): *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*.
- Gennetian, Lisa A., and Eldar Shafir (2015): “The Persistence of Poverty in the Context of Financial Instability: A Behavioral Perspective.”
- Guare, Richard, Peg Dawson, and Colin Guare (2017): *Executive Skills Coaching with Adults Affected by Conditions of Poverty and Stress*.
- Recommended LaDonna Pavetti (2015): “Using an Executive Function-Informed Goal Achievement Framework to Redesign Employment and Related Human Service Programs” webinar at <http://www.buildingbetterprograms.org/category/executive-function/>.
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- (9) 3/27 **The Awards Banquet!**
- Location: The Awards Banquet will be held at 1805 Crystal Drive in Arlington. The location is one block from the Crystal City Metro station. Formal proceedings, including the banquet, will last through class time.
- Guests: TBA
- Topics: Salad, pizza, cheesecake, libation(s), etc.
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- (10) 4/3 **Learning from Experiments**
- Topics: Welfare experimentation. What an Inspector wants to know. Recalling the New Jersey Negative Income Tax Experiment. The New Hope project interpreted from a *Scarcity* perspective. The counterfactual problem. The “Evidence-Based Policy” movement. Meta-analysis of experimental results. The MIHOPE project.
- Guest: **Carolyn J. Hill**, Senior Fellow, MDRC.
- Readings: “Session 10: Learning from Experiments: Readings Guide.”
- Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking (2017): *The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking*. Executive Summary.

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.”

Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation (MIHOPE)

Bloom, Howard S., Carolyn J. Hill, and James A. Riccio (2003): “Linking Program Implementation and Effectiveness: Lessons from a Pooled Sample of Welfare-to-Work Experiments.” (See Readings Guide for connection to MIHOPE.)

Michalopoulos, Charles, Kristen Faucetta, Carolyn J. Hill, Ximena A. Portilla, Lori Burrell, Helen Lee, Anne Duggan, and Virginia Knox (2019): “Impacts on Family Outcomes of Evidence-Based Early Childhood Home Visiting: Results from the Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation.”

(11) 4/10

Other Programs and Working “On the Margin”

Topics: Class Reports: “Inspections” of social assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV—often called “Section 8”), Medicaid, the Child Tax Credit, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Assignment 5 distributed.

Readings: “Session 11 Readings and Presentation Guide: Other Programs. This session is devoted to the results from Assignment 3.

Falk, Gene, Karen E. Lynch, and Jessica Tollestrup (2018): “Federal Spending on Benefits and Services for People with Low Income: In Brief.”

DeParle, Jason (2004): *American Dream*, Chapters 17 and 18.

Halpern-Meehin et al. (2015): *It’s Not Like I’m Poor* (INLIP). (Various notes on INLIP are posted on Blackboard.)

(12) 4/17

Welfare Elsewhere: The United Kingdom

Topics: Borrowing ideas from abroad. Welfare and social security in the United Kingdom. New Labour’s New Deals and the roll-out of Job Centre Plus. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition, the current Conservative government, and the “Universal Credit.” Accomplishments, problems, and lessons for the U.S.

Readings: “Session 12 Readings Guide: Welfare Elsewhere: The United Kingdom,” manuscript. NOTE: The Readings Guide is very important for this session.

Department for Work and Pensions (2019): *Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the UK income distribution: 1994/95-2017/18*

Middlemas, Jane (2006): *Jobseekers Allowance intervention pilots quantitative evaluation.*

Department for Work and Pensions (2016): “Summary of the Quantitative Evidence on the Efficacy of Fortnightly Jobseeker Reviews.”

(13) 4/24 **A Look at Current Research**

Topics: Student reports on examples of current program research. A list of examples is included with Assignment 5.

Readings: “Session 13 Readings Guide: Examples of Current Research” manuscript.
TBA

(14) 4/30* **Conclusion: Ideas for the Final, and for the Future**

Topics: Basic income proposals —universal or partial. Course review. What have we learned? What have we endured? What have we enjoyed? Discussion of student questions.

Readings: “Session 13 Readings Guide: Ideas for the Final, and the Future” manuscript.

Hoynes, Hilary, and Jesse Rothstein (2019): “Universal Basic Income in the US and Advanced Countries.”

Shaefer, Luke et al. (2018): “A Universal Child Allowance: A Plan to Reduce Poverty and Income Instability Among Children in the United States.”

Arnone, William J., Peter Barnes, and Renee M. Landers. (2019): “Assured Income.”

Recommended Heller, Nathan (2018): “Who Really Stands to Win from Universal Basic Income?”

5/8-5/11 **Final Examination**

* Rescheduled as result of February 20th snow day.

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>.

Out-of-Class Learning

In a 15-week semester, including exam week, students are expected to spend a minimum of 100 minutes of out-of- class work for every 50 minutes of direct instruction, for a minimum total of 2.5 hours a week.

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 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.