

Global Poverty and Inequality

GES 440-01

Math & Psychology 105

Instructor: Dena Aufseeser, PhD

Office: Sondheim Hall, 211-K

Office Hours: Tu Th 11:45-12:45, or by appointment

Meeting Time: Tu, Th 1:00-2:30

Email: daufsee@umbc.edu

Phone: 410-455-3152

Poverty is the worst form of violence. -Mahatma Gandhi

If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin. -Charles Darwin

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little. –Franklin D. Roosevelt

Once poverty is gone, we'll need to build museums to display its horrors to future generations. They'll wonder why poverty continued so long in human society- how a few people could live in luxury while billions dwelt in misery, deprivation and despair. –Muhammad Yunus

Introduction. Despite numerous international and national campaigns to ‘eradicate poverty’, and decades of development interventions, a large number of people still live in dire conditions throughout the world, and global inequality is actually increasing. In this course, we will explore the political, economic and socio-historical factors that cause and sustain poverty. We will look at who ‘the poor’ are and consider whether ending poverty also means addressing inequality. Students will learn about dominant approaches to welfare and international development. We will look at the role key actors and institutions play in addressing poverty, and how this has changed over time. We will analyze various development and poverty-reduction interventions, looking at both the positive and negative effects of programs such as growth-driven development, structural adjustment, micro-finance, charity, and cash transfer programs. We will also think about the role that ‘knowledge’ about poverty plays in reproducing and maintaining that poverty. The course will examine poverty in the context of both the Global South and the United States, as well as the relationship between poverty and privilege. In particular, we will think about the ways in which processes that happen ‘here’ are also connected to processes that happen ‘there’ to more critically examine the (re)production of poverty and possibilities to ‘make poverty history’.

Course objectives. At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Critically discuss poverty, inequality and development.
- Recognize connections between economic, political and social processes in the global north and global south.
- Assess the role of discourse and knowledge in producing poverty.

- Understand the causes and implications of geographies of poverty and privilege
- Improve reading, writing and presentation skills.

Required readings. The majority of the **required** readings (articles and book chapters) will be available on e-reserves. You can access e-reserves from the library's web page. I have also included links from Blackboard to e-reserves to make it easier for you. You will need the following information:

Username: ges400sp16

Password: december

There are also two **required** texts for this course.

Richey, Lisa and Ponte, Stefano. 2011. *Brand Aid*. University of Minnesota Press.

Hanlon, Joseph, Barrientos, Armando, and Hulme, David. 2010. *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South*. Kumarian Press.

Evaluations. You will be assessed for this course based on the following:

1. Reflective reading responses to each week's readings
2. Letter to World Bank
3. An in-class mid-term
4. Sharing a media article with the class
5. Strong participation.
6. A group Ted Talk.
7. A final exam

Readings, assignments and class meetings are designed to inspire students to elaborate new ideas and engage in critical thinking, discussion, and writing. Please note that participation is critical to the success of this course.

Reading Response Posts - Over the course of the semester, I will ask you to respond to reading reflection prompts, to be submitted over blackboard. Responses should be used to prompt inquiry, analysis and discussion, both in class and on-line. In most cases, I will provide you with specific questions or comments to which to respond. More generally, your comments should:

- Critically engage with the readings, highlighting the connections and concepts that tie them together (and any contrasts that may emerge).
- Discuss interesting, engaging or frustrating points.
- Raise one or two questions to help prompt discussion.

In order to receive credit, responses must be received by 10 am the morning before class. I will drop your two lowest grades. Please look over the online version of the syllabus carefully to see which days you have responses due.

Note: Even on days that you do not have a reading response due, I expect you to come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. To facilitate your participation, please take notes on each reading/highlight important quotes, and bring these to class. This will also provide a very useful study guide for both the midterm and the final.

Letter to the World Bank – For this assignment, you will write a two-page letter to the president of the World Bank reassessing the way in which the Bank currently measures poverty. This letter is due Tuesday, February 16.

In-Class mid-term – You will complete one mid-term exam during this seminar. The exam is designed to help you review and synthesize core concepts that will help you as you move towards the second half of the course. The exam will consist of IDs, short answers and essays and will take place on Mar. 22, in-class. I will give you a list of possible essay questions in advance.

Media assignment – For this assignment, you will find one news article focusing on any aspect of poverty that we discuss this semester. You will share the article with the class, explaining 1) why it is significant to course material and 2) how poverty is represented and discussed. I will go over a specific example of what I expect during the first week of class. During our second class session, you will sign up for a day in which you will share your media article. You may not use the same article that another student has already presented. In addition to your presentation, you must provide me with a copy of the article and a short write-up in which you address the above questions.

Participation - This course aims to encourage and enhance critical thinking and analytical skills. For this reason, active participation is a *crucial component* of the course. You are expected to come to all classes and be prepared to discuss the reading material for the day and participate in any in-class activities. While activities each week will vary, they may include short writing responses, group work, or activities designed to help make connections between the readings and any films or news article with which we engage in class. Any questionnaires or reflections on films we see in class will also count towards your participation grade. Finally, you will also occasionally be asked to bring relevant media articles or engage in additional work outside of class to better prepare you to participate. This is not meant to be busy work but rather to help you get the most out of this class. I encourage you to check in with me to see how you are doing on your participation grade, or to ask me if you do not understand the purpose of an assignment.

Group presentation – In small groups (to which you will be assigned), you will choose one organization that is effectively working to reduce poverty. As a group, you will then prepare a 10-15-minute ‘Ted talk’ about why this organization/approach is effective. I will provide you with much more detailed information about how to go about completing this assignment.

Final exam – Your final exam will consist of short answers and essays. It will give you a chance to draw connections through the different themes we have been discussing throughout the semester. The final exam will take place May 17th from 1:00-3:00 pm.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. I strictly adhere to the rules of UMBC's academic integrity policy. Here is an excerpt, quoted from

<<http://www.umbc.edu/provost/integrity/faculty.html>> :

“By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the UMBC Student Handbook, the Faculty Handbook, or the UMBC Policies section of the UMBC Directory.”

No excuses will be accepted, so see me *before* turning in or completing an assignment if you are in doubt.

Grading - Grades will be based on reading response posts (10%), letter to the World Bank (8%), participation (15%), group presentation (12%), media article (5%), mid-term (20%) and final exam (30%). Letter grades will follow the usual scale: A = 90-100%; B = 80-89%; C = 70-79%; D = 60-69%; F < 60%.

Course rules and expectations:

- **Come prepared:** I expect each of you to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. All lectures and discussions will assume a familiarity with the readings. Readings should be completed *by* the date listed in the syllabus below. I expect you to read each piece critically, trying to understand the analysis and connect it to larger class themes. If you are having trouble with the readings or would like additional background information, please email me or come talk to me during office hours.
- **Respect:** I expect each of you to remain respectful of each other and me. One of the advantages of smaller classes is the opportunity they allow for discussion and engagement. We all come with different backgrounds and experiences. This course is designed to push you to question taken-for-granted assumptions. Therefore, it is important that class remains a welcoming place for people to express themselves. I expect you to listen attentively to other people's opinions, even if they differ from your own. While respectful disagreement and discussion is encouraged, personal attacks or putting me or fellow students down will not be tolerated. Additionally, respectful behavior includes silencing your phone, and not texting or using facebook during class.
- **Attend class and be proactive:** You are responsible for turning in your own assignments. If you know that you are going to be out of town, turn the assignment in early. Class activities, lectures and discussions are not only an important component of your participation grade, but are also essential to strong performance on your mid-term, final exam and presentation. If you are going to miss a class, email a classmate to find out what you have missed. Because I understand that 'life happens', one or two class absences will not hurt your grade. However, more absences will significantly affect your course performance.
- **My role:** I will provide you with a foundation to more critically participate in debates about poverty and inequality. Some of my lectures will provide you with the background

for topics of which no specific readings were assigned. Other times, I will try to push you to think more critically or move beyond the readings. Sometimes, I may share an opinion that differs from your own (sometimes it will be my actual opinion and other times, it will not) to facilitate more critical discussion. However, you can expect that I will treat you with respect, listening to your opinions, as outlined above, even if they differ from my own. You can also expect me to be available during office hours (or by appointment) to help you with any issues that may arise or simply to discuss topics in greater depth. Please note, while I generally respond fairly quickly to email, I am *not* always available, especially late at night or on the weekends. Please get in touch with me in advance about issues of a timely matter.

- Syllabus: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus.

Note: Schedule and readings subject to change.

Week 1 (Jan 26, Jan 28): Introduction and Overview.

This week, we will go over the way the course will be set up and our personal goals. In order to understand and analyze contemporary efforts to ‘make poverty history’, we have to think about what poverty is. We will examine the idea of ‘poverty knowledge’ and why constructions of poverty matter in profoundly significant ways.

THURS

- O’Connor, Alice. 2001. Introduction. In *Poverty Knowledge*. Pp.1-18. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Familiarize yourself with the World Bank web site (www.worldbank.org). Start to think about how the World Bank discusses/addresses poverty and development.

Week 2 (Feb. 2, Feb. 4): Measuring Poverty and Inequality.

This week, we will look at different ways of measuring poverty. We will consider whether \$1-a-day poverty lines are meaningful, and what other measures such as multidimensional measures of poverty, poverty as lacking the capability to realize one’s full potential, and even poverty as unhappiness may tell us. Should poverty be understood as a relative condition—and if so, relative to whom? We will then look at inequality and how levels of inequality have been changing over time—and begin to think about why. We will also look at the geography of poverty.

TUES

- Green, Maia. ‘Representing poverty and attacking representations.’ *Journal of Development Studies*, 42(7), 1108-29. 2006.
- Mydans, Seth. ‘Recalculating Happiness in a Himalayan Kingdom.’ *New York Times*. 2009. Available at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/07/world/asia/07bhutan.html?pagewanted=all>

Optional. Hulme, David. “Understanding and explaining global poverty.” In *Global Poverty. How Global Governance is Failing the Poor*. pp.50-62. 2010.

*Reading response due

THURS

- Milanovic, *The Haves and the Have Nots: A brief and idiosyncratic history of global inequality*. p. ix-xii. Essay 3, p. 149-164, and selected Vignettes. 2011. Basic Books: New York.

Week 3 (Feb. 9, Feb. 11): Development and the Making of Poor Places

This week, we will examine the relationship between development interventions and poverty. We will briefly review colonial interventions before moving on to an examination of the Bretton Woods Institutions, especially the World Bank. We will consider how the practice of 'Development' emerged in the post-WWII years, and ways in which theories and practices have shifted in order to start to understand what role various institutions and interventions play in either reducing or creating poverty. We will also ask 'development for whom?', and discuss the role that colonialism and 'development' projects have played in creating growth elsewhere.

TUES

- Sachs, Jeffrey, Mellinger, Andrew, and Gallup, John. The geography of poverty and wealth. In the *Development Reader*, pp. 9-13. 2008.
- Davis, Michael. 'The Origins of the Third World'. In *The Development Reader*. Pp. 14-27. 2008.

THURS

- Mitchell, Timothy. "The Object of Development." In *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 209-243.

*Reading response due

Week 4 (Feb. 16, Feb. 18): New Poverty Reduction Strategies, Millennium Development Goals, and International Aid.

In the 1990s, we begin to see a shift in the World Bank's stated approach to development, with a more specific focus on poverty reduction, rather than just growth. At the same time, we've seen various international efforts to address global poverty, and the creation of the Millennium Development Goals. This week, we will examine these shifts, as well as the debates and considerable tensions about what role international aid should play in 'promoting' development.

TUES

- Familiarize yourself with the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Letter to the World Bank due.

THURS

- Sachs, Jeffrey. The end of poverty, pp. 1-25; 247-257.

- Easterly, William. 2006. "Planners versus searchers." In *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest of Have Done so Much Ill and so Little Good*. London. Penguin, 3-34.

*Reading response due

Week 5 (Feb. 23, Feb. 25): Globalization and economic restructuring.

There are a lot of arguments that globalization will reduce poverty and inequality and lead to a 'flat world'. But has that actually been the case? How has economic restructuring and the New International Division of Labor affected poverty in the United States? What about in the global south? In what ways have the relaxing of financial regulations and off-shoring affected such shifts?

TUES

- Harvey, David. 2004. The New Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession. *Socialist Register*, p. 63-83.
- Marosi, Richard. "In Mexico's Fields, Children toil to harvest crops that make it to American tables." Los Angeles Times. Dec. 14, 2014. Available at <http://graphics.latimes.com/product-of-mexico-children/>

*Reading response due

THURS

- Shaxson, Nicholas. *Treasure Islands*. Prologue, Chapter 1, Chapter 8.
- Factory defies sweatshop label, but can it thrive? Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/18/business/global/18shirt.html?_r=0

Week 6 (Mar. 1, Mar. 3): Shifting Welfare Responses to U.S. Poverty.

This week, we will examine shifting responses to poverty in the U.S. We will look at efforts to end welfare as we know it, deconstruct the idea of dependency, and explore how the recent economic recession affected poverty and wealth. We will also look at the ways in which social services can both help those in poverty and also serve to discipline them.

TUES

- O'Connor, Alice. Chapters 10 and 11. *Poverty Knowledge*. Pp. 242-295.

THURS

- Finish O'Connor reading.
- America's poorest white town. Abandoned by coal: Swallowed by drugs. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/nov/12/beattyville-kentucky-and-americas-poorest-towns>

*Reading response due

Week 7 (Mar 8, Mar 10): Debt, the recession and crises.

We will finish our discussion of debt and the global recession. We will explore connections between historical discrimination, geography, the lack of affordable housing and recent crises regarding access to clean water, and discuss how such factors have long-term effects on poverty and well-being, looking at examples such as Flint, Michigan.

TUES

- Lawson, Victoria and Elwood, Sarah. 2013. "Whose crisis? Spatial imaginaries of class, poverty and vulnerability." *Environment and Planning A*, 45(1), 103-108.
- Flint, Michigan: Did race and poverty factor into water crisis? Michael Martinez, CNN. Available at <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/26/us/flint-michigan-water-crisis-race-poverty/>

THURS

- Brand Aid. Introduction and Chapter 2 (you can skip/skim Chapter 1).

Bring in possible midterm question.

Week 8 (Mar 15, Mar 17): Spring Break.

- No class

Week 9 (Mar 22, Mar 24): Microfinance and philanthro-capitalism.

This week and next week, we will continue some of the discussions we started earlier in the semester about millennium development and aid. First, we will examine micro-finance, which has been touted as a 'magic bullet' to address poverty issues. How has microfinance worked? What are some of the limitations in such an approach? Is it problematic to think of the poor as a potential source of profit or can business and poverty reduction go hand in hand? We will then begin our discussion of creative/philanthro-capitalism to think how it's changing efforts to reduce poverty.

TUES

- In-class mid-term.

THURS

- Roy, Ananya. *Poverty Capital*, pp.22-33. New York: Routledge. 2010.
- Kiva. About Microfinance. Available at <http://www.kiva.org/about/microfinance>

*Reading response due

Week 10 (Mar 29, Mar 31): Volunteering, consumerism and shopping to end poverty.

This week will continue our discussion of philanthrocapitalism before thinking about the role of consumerism and purchasing power in the creation of poverty and wealth. What role do corporations play in the production of poverty? Can we improve our purchasing decisions in

order to address poverty and inequality? What are things we can do as individuals to address poverty? Can we 'volunteer' to end poverty?

TUES

- Brand Aid. Chapter 3 and 4.

THURS

- Brand Aid. Chapters 5 and conclusion

*Reading response due

Week 11 (Apr 5, Apr 7): Ending poverty through smart engineering: the case of education.

There has been an increasingly big emphasis on randomized control solutions as the best way to generate solutions to address poverty. What are such approaches and how do they work? We will seek to answer these questions by looking at the case study of education. Further, we will critically consider the ways in which a lot of approaches to poverty reduction focus on children, who are considered more 'deserving' and a better investment.

TUES

- Banerjee, Abhijit, and Duflo, Esther. 2011. "The Top of Our Class." *Poor Economics. A radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty.* pp. 71-101.

*Reading response due

THURS

- Start Just Give Money to the Poor, Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 (you can skip Chapter 2).

Week 12 (Apr 12, Apr 14): Conditional cash transfers and social security.

Conditional cash transfers are becoming an increasingly popular welfare approach in the global south, and have even been tried in parts of the US. What are they, and how well do they work? In what ways are such approaches gendered? We will then consider the idea of simply giving money to the poor (without conditions) and discuss whether this is a more effective way to address poverty, as well as look at forms of welfare that are not targeted in the same way, such as social security.

TUES

- Just Give Money to the Poor. Chapters 4-6.

THURS

- Just Give Money to the Poor. Chapters 7-10.

*Reading response due

Week 13 (Apr 19, Apr 21): Food Chains and Agriculture

Being able to produce enough food for a country's population is considered essential to well-being. This week, we will examine the relationship between US agricultural policy, foreign aid, and poverty. We will return to earlier debates about free trade and globalization, and examine essential questions about the ways in which trade policy may impact a region's ability to produce food, and explore the connections between food production and food consumption in various places.

TUES

- Dugger, Celia. Ending Famine, Simply by Ignoring the Experts. New York Times. Dec. 2, 2007. Available at:
http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/02/world/africa/02malawi.html?_r=2.

THURS

- Pearce, Fred. The Land Grabbers: The New fight over who owns the earth. Selected chapters.
- *Reading response.

Week 14 (Apr 26, Apr 28): Relational approaches to poverty and cross-class alliances.

This week, we will think more about the idea of poverty as a phenomenon rooted in social relations and power. We will then examine cross-class alliances and social movements that attempt to address poverty and inequality. We will also consider how these approaches differ from the participatory turn within development studies.

TUES

- Lawson, Victoria and Elwood, Sarah. 2014. Encountering poverty: Space, class and poverty politics. *Antipode*, 46(1): 208-229.

THURS

- Bebbington, A. Social movements and the politicization of chronic poverty. *Development and Change*, 38(5): 793-818.
- Bring in a news article about a social movement regarding some aspect of poverty/inequality.

*Reading response due

Week 15 (May 3, May 5): Responsibility and Ted Talks

Who has the responsibility to address poverty?

TUES

- Singer, Peter. *The Life You Can Save: Acting Now to End World Poverty*. New York: Random House. 2009.
- Pogge, Thomas and Khean, Bhatt. Thomas Pogge on global poverty. Available at <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/briefings/data/000201>

*Reading response due

THURS

- Group Ted Talks

Week 16 (May 10): Wrap-up

Where do we stand now in efforts to reduce poverty and inequality and what should be done?

TUES

- Bring in one question for final.

The final exam will be held May 17th from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.