

PSC 2240: Welfare, Work, and Poverty

Summer 2018, Session II
July 2nd to August 11th
348 Phillips Hall
Mon. & Wed. 6:10-8:40pm

Instructor

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Office hours:
Mon. & Wed. 5:15pm - 6:00pm
(or by appointment)
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Course Overview and Description

What is welfare? Why are welfare programs designed the way that they are? Are welfare programs effective? These are the central questions guiding this course; and there are contrasting perspectives on the answers to these questions. Whatever your answer may be, students should walk away from this course with *their own* answer to these questions. Centrally, this course will provide students with an overview of social policy in the United States. We'll learn about various kinds of social policy programs: *social assistance* (programs for low-income households), *social insurance* (like Social Security), and tax expenditures (deductions and credits). In addition to learning about the details of these programs, we'll discuss the experience of poverty in the U.S. and pay special attention to the liberal vs. conservative perspectives on welfare.

We will only have six weeks to get through all of the necessary instruction and assessment. If this were a normal semester-long course, we would have 2.5 hours of class time each week; instead, we have 5 hours of class time each week. The course will move quickly so it is imperative that students attend every class session and keep up with the assigned readings. Additionally, there will be a graded assignment during each class period—either a quiz on Mondays or discussion on Wednesdays—so students will need to attend every class session in order to gain full credit in the course.

The course schedule provides details on each lesson and its assigned readings. In brief, this class will proceed as follows. During the first section of this course, "Poverty and Economics," we will place the U.S. welfare state in a comparative perspective, trying to understand what explains differences in poverty and social spending across countries. In addition, we will see a liberal and conservative perspective on whether rational decision-making is possible for the impoverished. During the second part of this course, "Social Policy Programs," we will discuss the *upper tier* of the U.S. welfare state, Social Security and Medicare, as well as the *lower tier* of the U.S. welfare state, traditional welfare programs like Food Stamps and cash assistance. We'll also be discussing how the tax code is used as a social policy tool. During the final part of this course, "Politics of Social Policy," we'll attempt to answer the question of why U.S. social policy is so weird, with lessons on social policy change and public opinion.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Understand the causes, consequences, and extent of poverty in the United States.
2. Compare social policy regimes across industrialized nations.
3. Explain the difference between social insurance and social assistance (“welfare”). Assess whether there is a meaningful distinction between these two concepts.
4. Describe the eligibility and benefits for major social policy programs and assess their effectiveness at reducing poverty.
5. Explain and give examples of the hidden and submerged welfare states.
6. Explain why social policy-making in the United States is so difficult.
7. Explain the determinants of policy preferences for welfare spending.

Required Texts & Readings

There is one book that students are required to purchase for this course:

Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Feel free to buy the book used or to rent it; however, it is an older book, so it should not be too expensive to buy it new. Listed in the “Course Schedule” section of this syllabus, all other required readings will be posted to Blackboard. Read each set of readings before the next class period. Readings are listed in the order in which they are intended to be read.

Assignments

Final grades will be assessed based upon students’ performance in four categories of assignments. **The total number of points that you can earn in the course is 100.** At my discretion, I reserve the right to “curve” individual assignments by making the highest grade on the assignment a 100%. (For example, if the highest grade on an assignment is 8 out of 10 points then all students’ grades will receive a two-point bonus.) Since this is a small class, I may not curve every assignment. The four types of assignments are as follows:

1. **Quizzes (25 points / 25%):** There will be a multiple-choice quiz each Monday at the beginning of class (except for the first class period). Each quiz is worth 5 points, or 5% of the final grade. Quizzes will be based upon topics covered during a previous lecture but can include questions about the readings that were never discussed during lecture. This means that you should keep up with the readings.
2. **Participation (10 points / 10%):** Each Wednesday, there will be time for informal discussion at the end of the class period. Students are expected to follow along with course readings and participate in discussion of the course content. There is no strict requirement for the number of times a student should participate during discussion, but I expect students to participate at least once during each Wednesday discussion session.

3. **Essay (30 points / 30%):** In six pages or less, argue whether Social Security (OASI) and Medicare are “welfare” programs. Be specific. Discuss details of both programs in light of what we know about the differences between welfare/social assistance and social insurance. Essays are due on Blackboard at Saturday, August 4th at 11:59pm. Essays should be double-spaced using a 12-point font and one-inch margins. Refer to the rubric for more details.
4. **Final Exam (35 points / 35%):** The final exam will be an open-note exam on Blackboard with short answer and long answer questions. Students will be required to answer 5 of 8 short answer questions and 2 of 4 long answer questions. (Exact number of questions subject to change.) The final exam will become available at 12:01pm (noon) on Thursday, August 9 and is due 11:59am (noon) on Saturday, August 11. You will have two hours to complete the exam once you start it.

Independent Learning Expectations

In this 3-credit, 6-week course, students will receive 5 hours of in-class instruction per week and they are expected to dedicate 16 hours of out-of-class time to independent learning. Outside of class, students should be reading the assigned readings, studying for quizzes and the final exam, and writing their essay. Students will dedicate an average of roughly 21 hours per week to the course—including in- and out-of-class time—for a total of 112.5 hours of learning in the semester.

University Policies

University policy on observance of religious holidays

In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: students.gwu.edu/accommodations-religious-holidays

Academic integrity code

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 details and complete code, see: studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity

Safety and security

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at the predetermined rendezvous location, Monroe Court (the fountain behind Monroe Hall/Hall of Government).

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 Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information, see: disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/

Mental Health Services: 202-994-5300

The University's Mental Health Services 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. For additional information, see: counselingcenter.gwu.edu/

Course Schedule

Part I: Poverty and Economics

1. Monday, July 2: Introduction

- Béland, Howard, and Morgan, "The Fragmented Welfare State."
- Semega, Fontenot, and Kollar, "Income and Poverty in the United States." (Census Report)
- Fox, "The Supplemental Poverty Measure." (Census Report)
- Smeeding, "Poor People in Rich Nations."

Wednesday, July 4: Independence Day, NO CLASS

2. Monday, July 9: Comparative social policy

- Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Intro & chapters 1-3. (Chapter 4 recommended.)

3. Wednesday, July 11: The economics and psychology of poverty

- Murray, *Losing Ground*. Chapters 11 & 12. (Chapter 16 recommended.)
- Mani et al., "Poverty Impedes Cognitive Function."

Part II: Social Policy Programs

4. Monday, July 16: Social Security Old Age and Survivor's Insurance (OASI)

- Martin and Weaver, "Social Security: A Program and Policy History."
- Nuschler, "Social Security Primer." (CRS Report)

5. Wednesday, July 18: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Medicare

- Moulta-Ali, "Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)." (CRS Report)
- Davis et al., "Medicare Primer." (CRS Report)

6. Monday, July 23: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- Weaver, “Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.”
- Falk, “The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant.” (CRS Report)

7. Wednesday, July 25: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Medicaid

- Aussenberg, “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).” (CRS Report)
- Morton, “Supplemental Security Income (SSI).” (CRS Report)
- Elicia J., “Medicaid.” (CRS Report)

8. Monday, July 30: Presentation by affordable housing financial analyst during the first half of class, then other means-tested programs during the second half of class

- Congressional Budget Office, “Federal Housing Assistance for Low-Income Households.”
- Falk, Lynch, and Tollestrup, “Federal Spending on Benefits and Services for People with Low Income.” (CRS Report)
- Falk et al., “Need-Tested Benefits.” (CRS Report)

9. Wednesday, August 1: Taxes

- Meyer, “The Earned Income Tax Credit.” (AEI Report)
- Marr et al., “EITC and Child Tax Credit Promote Work, Reduce Poverty, and Support Children’s Development, Research Finds.” (CBPP Report)
- Faricy, *Welfare for the Wealthy*. Chapter 1.

****Essays due on Saturday, August 4th at 11:59pm on Blackboard****

Part III: Politics of Social Policy

10. Monday, August 6: Social policy change

- Maks-Solomon, “Social Policy Change Explainer.” (Summary of key terms. Read first.)
- Mettler, “Reconstituting the Submerged State.”
- Béland, Rocco, and Waddan, “Reassessing Policy Drift.”

11. Wednesday, August 8: Public opinion of welfare

- Rehm, Hacker, and Schlesinger, “Insecure Alliances.”
- Garand, Xu, and Davis, “Immigration Attitudes and Support for the Welfare State in the American Mass Public.”
- Crepaz and Damron, “Constructing Tolerance: How the Welfare State Shapes Attitudes About Immigrants.”

****Final exam available at 12:01pm on Thursday, August 9th and is due 11:59am on Saturday, August 11th****