Instructor: R. Moffitt Department of Economics

Syllabus for First-Year Seminar 001.149 What Is Poverty? A View from Economics and the Social Sciences

Thursday 9:00-11:30 Gilman Hall Room 134

Social science is the scholarly study of society and social behavior. This course will introduce you to the social sciences by studying poverty in America through the lens of economics and other social sciences, including sociology and anthropology. The quantitative approach taken by economics will be compared and contrasted with qualitative approaches. "Qualitative" approaches will be illustrated by reading material by sociologists and anthropologists. The lives of the poor will be portrayed through movies and documentaries. By the end of the course, you should have a good sense of the facts about poverty as well as a sense of what it is like to be poor, and a grasp of the complexity of the problem and the challenges in government policy solutions.

The class meetings will be entirely discussion-oriented in a seminar format, with you and the instructor jointly discussing the material. The material for the class consists of the readings on the syllabus below, plus an important extra body of material that will be posted on Canvas each week. You are expected to read the material on this syllabus for each class, plus each week's additional material on Canvas, in advance of each class. You will also be expected to upload to Canvas a short summary of the selected materials no later than the beginning of class every week, as described on Canvas. In some weeks, individual students will be asked to kick off the discussion but, in many weeks, groups of students will be asked to meet ahead of time and make organized oral presentations of the material

You will also be required to write a 3-page course paper on a specialized poverty topic due by the end of the exam period. You will also be required to make a powerpoint presentation on it of about 20 minutes in one of the two last classes. A list of topics, and the deadlines for meeting with me to discuss your topic and your progress, will be given later.

You are expected to learn three elements of the Microsoft Office Suite: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft Powerpoint. The main one is Word: starting in the 3rd week of class, all summaries must be uploaded to Canvas in Word. Excel will only be required once or twice, to create figures. Powerpoint is required for the final presentation. JHU IT Services provides software and consulting.

The requirements for the course are (1) weekly uploads of the above-described summaries (2) participation in class discussion (3) final project presentation and written assignment (4) learning the three elements of the Microsoft Office Suite. There will be no exams and no final. The course is graded S/U. A grade of S will be given if you satisfactorily complete all four requirements.

Foundational abilities to be developed from the course:

- How to read and watch material with a critical eye and to develop critical thinking skills
- How to develop verbal skills in discussing material
- How to write short essays
- How to understand basic statistics, statistical tables and figures, and interpret them
- How to use 3 elements of the Microsoft Office Suite
- How to prepare a presentation

The syllabus is given below. All materials on the syllabus will be available on MSEL Reserves and accessible through the Canvas website for the course.

Other Notes:

Class attendance is expected, but excused absences for doctor appointments, religious holidays, and other events are allowed if the student emails the instructor *in advance*.

If the weather is warm and dry, we will meet outside on the grass. Bring something to sit on if you do not want to sit on the grass.

Office hours and contact information for the instructor:

Instructor: R. Moffitt, moffitt@jhu.edu Wyman Park Building, Room 526

Office Hours: Wednesday 9-11 am (advance notification required; can be by Zoom or in-person) and by appointment (by appointment means to email the instructor to arrange a time to meet, or ask during or after a class for a time to meet).

Laptops are allowed during class to access course material but should not be used for non-course purposes. Cellphones are not permitted during class.

The instructor will usually wear a mask when meeting indoors. I would like to request that you wear a mask indoors for the first two weeks of class. After that, masks are optional.

The instructor will respond to email questions about any aspect of the course within 36 hours of the email receipt.

9/2/22

Course Schedule

Date

Topic and Readings (All accessible via Canvas E-Reserves)

Sept 1	Introduction and Plan for the Course
Sept 8	Portrayals of Poverty
	Movie: The Florida Project, 2017. [Kanopy]
	Michael Harrington, The Other America, 1962, Chapter 1
Sept 15	What is the Poverty Rate and Who is Poor?
	Rebecca Blank, <u>It Takes a Nation</u> , 1998, pp.3-5.
Sept 22	Rural Poverty
	J.D.Vance, <u>Hillbilly Elegy</u> , 2018, Introduction and Chapters 1-3.
	Janet Currie and Mariesa Herrmann, "Socioeconomic Status, Child Health, and Future Outcomes: Lessons for Appalachia," in James Ziliak, ed., <u>Appalachian Legacy</u> , 2012.
Sept 29	Economics of Poverty and Hardship
	Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, Making Ends Meet, 1997, Chapter 2.
	Jonathan Morduch and Rachel Schneider, <u>The Financial Diaries</u> , 2019, Chapter 2.

Oct 6	Education Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz, The Race Between Education and Technology, 2010, Chapter 9.
Oct 13, 27	Jobs Katherine Newman, No Shame in My Game, 2000, pp. ix-xvi and Chap 1. David Autor, "The Polarization of Job Opportunities in the U.S. Labor Market," Center for American Progress, the Hamilton Project, 2010 Documentary video: "Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope", first 25 minutes [Youtube/PBS]
Nov 3	Neighborhoods William J. Wilson, <u>The Truly Disadvantaged</u> , 1990, Chapter 2. John Iceland and Erik Hernandez, "Understanding Trends in Concentrated Poverty: 1980-2014," <u>Social Science Research</u> 62 (2017): 75-95.
Nov 10, 17	Government and Welfare John Iceland, Poverty: A Handbook, Third Ed., 2013. Chapter 7 only. Movie: Welfare, 1975 [Kanopy] Angela Rachidi and Robert Doar, "Work, Family, and Community: A Framework for Fighting Poverty," Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science, Volume 686, November 2019, pp.340-351 Hilary Hoynes and Jesse Rothstein, "Universal Basic Income in the United States and Advanced Countries," The Annual Review of Economics, 2019, Volume 11, pp.929-58.
Dec 1,8	Student Presentations

Additional Notices

<u>The Johns Hopkins Writing Center</u> The Writing Center offers students free, individual conferences with experienced tutors, all of whom are trained to consult on written work in the humanities and social sciences. For more information, see https://krieger.jhu.edu/writingcenter/

<u>Disability Services</u>. Any student with a disability who may need accommodation in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from the Office of Student Disability Services, 410-516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

Academic integrity. The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you are aware of to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student conduct (or designee) by calling the Office of the Dean of Students at 410-516-8208 or via email at studentconduct@jhu.edu_ For more information, see the Homewood Student Affairs site on academic integrity, https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/policies-guidelines/undergrad-ethics/.

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Note. If you are struggling with anxiety, stress, depression or other mental health related concerns, please consider contacting the JHU Counseling Center at 3003 N Charles Street, Suite S-200. https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/counselingcenter. If you are concerned about a friend, please encourage that person to seek out their services. They can also reached at 410-516-8278 (press 1 if after hours). Another good source of people to talk to are those at https://www.timely.md/faq/mental-telehealth-faq/. General wellness services can be found at https://wellness.jhu.edu. Students can also contact Student Outreach and Support at 410-516-7857 or email deanofstudents@jhu.edu.

Classroom Climate. The instructor is committed to creating a classroom environment that values the diversity of experiences and perspectives that all students bring. All students have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Fostering an inclusive climate is important because research and experience shows that students who interact with peers who are different from themselves learn new things and experience tangible educational outcomes. Please join in creating a welcoming and vibrant classroom climate. Note, too, that you should expect to be challenged intellectually by the instructor, the TAs, and your peers, and at times this may feel uncomfortable. Indeed, it can be helpful to be pushed sometimes in order to learn and grow. But at no time in this learning process should someone be singled out or treated unequally on the basis of any seen or unseen part of their identity. If you ever have concerns in this course about harassment, discrimination, or any unequal treatment, or if you seek accommodations or resources, I invite you to share directly with the instructor or the TA, who will take your communication seriously and to seek mutually acceptable resolutions and accommodations. Reporting will never impact a student's course grade. You may also share concerns with the

department chair (Professor Yingyao Hu, yhu@jhu.edu), the Director of Undergraduate Studies (Professor Somasree Dasgupta, sdasgupta@jhu.edu), the Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion (Dr. Araceli Frias, afrias3@jhu.edu), or the Office of Institutional Equity (oie@jhu.edu). In handling reports, your privacy will be protected as much as possible, but faculty and staff are required to officially report information for some cases (e.g. sexual harassment).



Migrant Mother, Dorothea Lange, 1936