

Economics 190S: Economics of Poverty

Emory University
Spring 2009

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Classes: MWF, 3:00-3:50pm
Room: Candler Library 120
Office Hours: MWF 4:00-5:00pm

Course Description

This seminar examines poverty measurement and trends; consequences of poverty; economic explanations for poverty in the US; and federal, state, and local government policy and program responses to poverty. This course will primarily focus on poverty in the United States, although we will discuss poverty in an international context at the end of the course.

Text

Understanding Poverty, edited by Sheldon H. Danziger and Robert H. Havemen, Russell Sage Foundation, 2001.

Course Outline

Chapter numbers for the readings refer to the chapters in your text. Journal articles are available online through the Emory library. Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Papers are available at <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/dps/dplist.htm>. NBER Working Papers are available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/>. The dates listed below are tentative.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. Course Overview	1/14
2. Poverty Trends	
Ch. 1	1/16
<i>M.L. King Holiday</i>	1/19
Ch. 4 (p. 127-140)	1/21
3. U.S Poverty Measurement	
Blank (2008)	1/23
4. Causes of Poverty	
4.1. Demographics	
Ch. 2	1/26
Raphael and Smolensky (2008)	1/28
4.2. Discrimination	
Heckman (1998)	1/30
Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004)	2/2
4.3. Other	
Ch. 3	2/4
5. Consequences of Poverty	
5.1. Childhood Poverty	
Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997)	2/6

Holzer, Schanzenbach, Duncan, & Ludwig (2007)	2/9
5.2. Health and Nutrition	
Bhattacharya, Currie, and Haider (2004)	2/11
Hayward and Gorman (2004)	2/13
Case and Paxson (2006)	2/16
6. Antipoverty Policies	
6.1. Overview	
Danzinger (2007)	2/18
Ch. 6	2/20
6.2. Welfare Reform and Work Policies	
Ch. 7	2/23
Hotz and Scholz (2000)	2/25
6.3. Health and Nutrition	
Ch. 8	2/27
Davidoff, Kenney, Dubay (2005)	3/2
<i>Paper topic due</i>	3/2
Currie (2005)	3/4
Currie (2002) (just the parts on FSP)	3/6
<i>Spring Break</i>	3/9-3/13
Currie (2002) (just the parts on WIC)	3/16
Presentation on school nutrition policies	3/18
<i>Debate 1</i>	3/20
6.4. Education	
Jacob and Ludwig (2008)	3/23
Ch. 9	3/25
Heckman and Masterov (2007)	3/27
Duncan, Ludwig, and Magnuson (2007)	3/30
Presentation on the Head Start program	4/1
6.5. Marriage and Family	
Ludwig and Mayer (2006)	4/3
Waldfogel (2008)	
7. Communities	
7.1. Housing	
Ch. 10	4/6
7.2. Neighborhoods	
Ch. 11	4/8
Ch. 12	4/10
8. International Poverty	
Ch. 5	4/13
The State of Human Development (2006)	4/15
<i>IRP Conference</i>	4/17
Kanbur (2008)	4/20
<i>Debate 2</i>	4/22
Guest Speaker: Essie Maasoumi	4/24
9. Additional Topics	4/27
<i>Last Day of Class</i>	4/27

Readings

- Bertrand, Marianne and Sendhil Mullainathan (2004) "Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination," *American Economic Review*, 94(4), 991-1013.
- Bhattacharya, Jayanta, Janet Currie, Steven Haider (2004) "Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Nutritional Outcomes in Children and Adults," *Journal of Health Economics*, 23, 839-862.
- Blank, Rebecca M. (2008) "How to Improve Poverty Measurement in the United States," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 27(2), 233-254.
- Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne and Greg J. Duncan (1997) "The Effects of Poverty on Children," *Future of Children*, 7(2), 55-71.
- Case, Anne and Christina Paxson (2006) "Children's Health and Social Mobility," *Future of Children*, 16(2), 151-174.
- Currie, Janet (2002) "U.S. Food and Nutrition Programs,"
- Currie, Janet (2005) "Health Disparities and Gaps in School Readiness," *Future of Children*, 15(1), 117-138.
- Danzinger, Sheldon H. (2007) "Fighting Poverty Revisited: What Did Researchers Know 40 Years Ago? What Do We Know Today?" *Focus*, 25(1), 3-11.
- Davidoff, Amy, Genevieve Kenney, and Lisa Dubay (2005) "Effects of the State Children's Health Insurance Program Expansions on Children with Chronic Health Conditions," *Pediatrics*, 116(1), e34-e42.
- Hayward, M.D. & Gorman, B.K. (2004) "The Long Arm of Childhood: The Influence of Early-Life Social Conditions on Men's Mortality," *Demography*, 41(1), 87-107.
- Heckman, James J. (1998) "Detecting Discrimination," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 12(2), 101-116.
- Heckman, James J. and Dimitriy V. Masterov (2007) "The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children," NBER Working Paper 13016.
- Holzer, Harry J., Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, Greg J. Duncan, and Jens Ludwig (2007) "The Economic Costs of Poverty in the United States: Subsequent Effects of Children Growing Up Poor," Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper 1327-07.
- Hotz, Joseph V. and John Karl Scholz (2000) "Not Perfect, But Still Pretty Good: The EITC and Other Policies to Support the US Low-Wage Labour Market," OECD Economic Studies No. 31, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/6/2697856.pdf>.
- Jacob, Brian and Jens Ludwig (2008) "Improving Educational Outcomes for Poor Children," IRP Discussion Paper no. 1352-08.
- Kanbur, Ravi (2008) "Poverty and Distribution: Twenty Years Ago and Now," available at: <http://www.arts.cornell.edu/poverty/kanbur/PovAndDistTwentyYears.pdf>.
- Ludwig, Jens and Susan Mayer (2006) "'Culture' and the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty: The Prevention Paradox," *Future of Children*, 16(2), 151-174.
- Raphael, Steven and Eugene Smolensky (2008) "Immigration and Poverty in the United States," IRP Discussion Paper no. 1347-08.
- The State of Human Development (2006) in Human Development Report 2006, available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/thestateofhumandevlopment.pdf>.

Waldfogel, Jane (2008) "The Role of Family Policies in Anti-Poverty Policy," IRP Discussion Paper no. 1351-08.

Course Requirements / Grading

Determination of grades:

Paper	30 %
Debates (team grade)	30 %
Presentations	20 %
Class Participation	20 %

Paper: The paper will be due during the final exam period for the class no later than 3:00pm on May 1. A one page single-spaced proposal of your paper topic will be due on March 2 at the beginning of class. This paper, which should be 20 double-spaced pages not including references, will be an analysis of any aspect of poverty discussed in the course. Late papers will not be accepted for any reason.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program: The VITA program is a volunteer program established by the IRS to ensure that families that qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) receive this benefit. Trained volunteers assist low- to moderate-income families with free tax preparation. This course will facilitate volunteer opportunities for students. Some of the benefits to students will be a greater understanding of the EITC, which is the largest cash antipoverty program in the United States.

As an incentive to volunteer, students may volunteer (attend a training session and then volunteer for 3 days for 3 hours each day) and write a 4 page (double-spaced) paper reflecting on their experience with the VITA program and the EITC instead of completing the paper assignment described above. If you choose this option, you should let me know by March 2 at the beginning of class.

Information about the training date and location will be posted at the beginning of the semester. Additional information about the VITA program is available at www.atlantaprosperty.org.

Debate: There will be two debates that occur throughout the semester. The details of the debate will be described as the semester progresses. Students will be divided into 2 teams. In the debate each team will be assigned a position on the assigned policy and will debate the pros and cons of the policy using the economic concepts developed in class. Teams will research and prepare the arguments together and all team members will be assigned the same grade.

Presentation: Students will lead a discussion of the assigned articles in class at two separate times throughout the semester. For the class periods that you lead the discussion, you should introduce and summarize the readings during the first 10-15 minutes of class. For the remaining 35-40 minutes of the class, you should facilitate the class discussion.

Class Participation: All students are expected to attend each class and participate in the discussion. Some of the readings will have definitions or concepts that you may not be familiar with. You are not expected to have any prior experience with economics prior to this class, but you are expected to ask questions in order to increase your understanding of economic concepts.

Additionally, for 4 separate classes, students will be responsible for preparing discussion questions for the class. By the preceding class, students should e-mail to the student leading the discussion (and cc me on the e-mail) at least 3 questions based on the reading that will be used to stimulate the in-class discussion.

Course Policies

Course Management: All files for the course will be posted on Blackboard. To get to the Blackboard main page, go to <https://classes.emory.edu> and then use your e-mail ID and Password to log in and select your course.

Honor Code

The Emory University Honor Code is taken seriously and governs all work in this course. Details about the Honor Code are available at:
http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html