

**The Politics of Poverty and Welfare**  
Political Science 217.12  
Hunter College, Spring 2003  
T & F, 11:10-12:25, HW Rm. 208

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Office Hours: T & F 9-11 a.m.

## **Description**

In this course we review the history of American social welfare provision; examine poverty and various ways of defining and measuring it; evaluate evidence about the scope and causes of hunger and homelessness; and examine and evaluate the welfare “reform” of 1996 and its reauthorization. We pay particular attention to the importance of (often mythic) ideas about work, about women and about African-Americans in welfare politics and policy-making. Our focus is on welfare narrowly defined: while we will pay some attention to the broader protections of the *welfare state* (old age pensions, health care, unemployment insurance), our target is means-tested cash and in-kind benefits available only to (some of) the poorest Americans.

## **Requirements**

- Attendance and Participation (10% of Total Grade): Students are expected to attend class regularly, to complete the readings for each session, and to be prepared to summarize and critique the material under review.
- Exam One (25% of Total Grade): Due March 11. Take-Home Exam. Question(s) will be distributed February 28.
- Exam Two (40% of Total Grade): Due April 25 Take-Home Exam. Question(s) will be distributed April 8.
- Final Exam (25% of Total Grade): Due May 20 at 5 p.m. Take-Home Exam. Question(s) will be distributed May 9.

## **Readings**

Two books have been ordered at Shakespeare & Company:

- Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*, Tenth Anniversary Edition, BasicBooks, 1996 [1986].
- Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, Updated Edition, Vintage, 1993 [1971].

All other course readings are contained in a Coursepack available for \$21.52 at Wholesale Copies (1 East 28<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 212-779-4065).

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## 1. INTRODUCTION: (JANUARY 28)

## 2. POVERTY AND WELFARE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 18)

### *A. The Long Nineteenth Century (January 31, February 4)*

Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, Part I, "The Poorhouse Era," pages ix-113

### *B. Progressive Era and the New Deal (February 7, 11)*

Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, Part II, "Building the Semi-Welfare State," pages 117-255

### *C. The Great Society and the Great Backlash (February 14, 18)*

Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, Part III, "From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare," pages 259-334

## 3. THE PROBLEM AS DEFINED IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICS (FEBRUARY 21)

Robert Rector, "Welfare Reform: Requiring Work and Rebuilding Marriage," Heritage Foundation, *Issues* 2002

Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Welfare as a Moral Problem," *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* (Spring 1996)

George Gilder, "End Welfare Reform as We Know It," *American Spectator* (June 1995)

Jay Hein and John Clark, "The Political Economy of Welfare Reform in the United States," Welfare Policy Center of the Hudson Institute, *Occasional Paper Series* (Sep. 1999)

## 4. CONTEMPORARY DATA (FEBRUARY 25-MARCH 11)

### *A. Poverty (February 25, 28, March 4)*

Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein and Heather Boushey, "Poverty: historic progress but high rates persist," Chapter 5 in *The State of Working America, 2002-03*, Economic Policy Institute (2003)

Daniel T. Lichter and Martha L. Crowley, "Poverty in America: Beyond Welfare Reform," *Population Bulletin* 57, No. 2 (June 2002)

Mary Corcoran, "Mobility, Persistence and the Consequences of Poverty for Children: Child and Adult Outcomes," Chapter 4 in Sheldon H. Danziger and Robert H. Haveman, eds., *Understanding Poverty*, Russell Sage Foundation/Harvard University Press (2001)

Timothy M. Smeedling, Lee Rainwater and Gary Burtless, "U.S. Poverty in a Cross-national Context," Chapter 5 in Sheldon H. Danziger and Robert H. Haveman, eds., *Understanding Poverty*, Russell Sage Foundation/Harvard University Press (2001)

### *B. Hunger (March 7)*

Sandra H. Venner, Ashley F. Sullivan and Dorie Seaver, "Paradox of Our Times: Hunger in a Strong Economy," Center on Hunger and Poverty, Tufts University (Jan. 2000)

Selected tables with U.S. and global hunger and other data, *Hunger 2002*, Bread for the World Institute (2001)

*C. Homelessness (March 11)*

Kenneth Kusmer, Chapters 1, 11 and 12 in *Down and Out, On the Road: The Homeless in American History*, Oxford University Press (2002)

Selected Data and Tables, National Coalition for the Homeless and NYC Coalition for the Homeless (2002)

5. WOMEN AND WELFARE (MARCH 14,18)

Karen Seccombe, Delores James and Kimberly Battle Waters, “‘They Think You Ain’t Much of Nothing’: The Social Construction of the Welfare Mother,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60, No. 4 (Nov. 1998)

Leith Mullings, “Households Headed by Women: The Politics of Class, Race and Gender,” in Judith Goode and Jeff Maskovsky, eds. *The New Poverty Studies: The Ethnography of Power, Politics and Impoverished People in the United States*, NYU Press (2001)

Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, “Making Ends Meet on a Welfare Check,” Chapter 2 in *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work*, Russell Sage Foundation (1997)

Barbara Ehrenreich, “Two, Three, Many Husbands,” in *The Worst Years of Our Lives*, HarperPerennial (1991)

Eva Feder Kittay, “Welfare, Dependency & a Public Ethic of Care,” *Social Justice* (Spring 1998)

6. RACE AND WELFARE (MARCH 21, 25)

Martin Gilens, Introduction and Chapter 3, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*, University of Chicago Press (1999)

Sanford F. Schram, “Putting a Black Face on Welfare,” Chapter 6 in *Praxis for the Poor*, NYU Press (2002) and “Race and State Welfare Reform Choices: A Cause for Concern,” undated manuscript at [www.brynmawr.edu/Acads/GSSW/schram/](http://www.brynmawr.edu/Acads/GSSW/schram/)

Judith Goode, “Let’s Get Our Act Together: How Racial Discourses Disrupt Neighborhood Activism,” in Judith Goode and Jeff Maskovsky, eds. *The New Poverty Studies: The Ethnography of Power, Politics and Impoverished People in the United States*, NYU Press (2001)

7. WELFARE AND WORK (APRIL 1-MAY 2)

*A. Overview (April 1)*

Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, pages 1-42

*B. Relief and the Great Depression (April 8)*

Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, pages 45-119

*C. Relief and the Years of Stability (April 11)*

Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, pages 124-180

*D. Relief and the Urban Crisis (April 25)*

Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, pages 184-340

*E. Relief, Deindustrialization and the War Against Labor (April 29, May 2)*  
Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, pages 344-406

Robert M. Solow, "Guess Who Pays for Workfare," *New York Review of Books* (November 5, 1998)

Community Voices Heard, "The Work Experience Program (WEP): New York City's Public Sector Sweatshop Economy" (June 2000)

Linda Gordon, "What Does Welfare Regulate?" and Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "Welfare Doesn't Shore Up Traditional Family Roles: A Reply to Linda Gordon," *Social Research* (Winter 1988)

### 8. EXPLAINING REFORM (MAY 6, 9)

R. Kent Weaver, "Ending Welfare as We Know It," Chapter 9 in Margaret Weir, ed., *The Social Divide: Political Parties and the Future of Activist Government*, Russell Sage Foundation (1998)

Charles Noble, Introduction, Chapters 1-2 and Conclusion, in *Welfare As We Knew It: A Political History of the American Welfare State*, Oxford University Press (1997)

Lucy Williams, "Decades of Distortion: The Right's 30-Year Assault on Welfare," Political Research Associates (December 1997)

### 9. EVALUATING REFORM (MAY 13)

Heather MacDonald, "Don't Mess with Welfare Reform's Success," *City Journal* (Winter 2000)

Demetrios James Caraley, "Ending Welfare As We Know It: A Reform Still in Progress," *Political Science Quarterly* 116, No. 4 (2001-2002)

Sanford F. Schram and Joe Soss, "Success Stories: Welfare Reform, Policy Discourse, and the Politics of Research," *Annals of the AAPSS* 577 (Sep. 2001)

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE MAY 20, 5 P.M.