Class details

The Politics of Poverty, Inequality and Opportunity

POL-UA-9994
Spring 2016
Thursday, 6:15PM-9:15PM
Location TBA

Instructor Details

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment – please contact to arrange (generally late afternoon and early evening are best times for meeting or speaking).

OFFICE LOCATION: TBA

Prerequisites

This course has no prerequisites. Ideally, students will have prior university-level exposure to political science, political theory, ethics, sociology, economics, public policy or American history; if not, they should speak to the professor at or in advance of the first class meeting to ensure adequate preparation.

Course Description

This course examines enduring concerns in political theory – including poverty, inequality and opportunity, and related concerns such as freedom, justice, rights, obligation, community, class, citizenship, diversity, punishment and the proper role of government - and their expression in contemporary social policy. The focus throughout will be on deeper underlying issues in social policy, rather than approaching theoretical issues purely in the abstract, or policy issues at the level of surface details. The course provides frameworks for understanding theoretical, political and ethical dimensions of contemporary social policy. These frameworks also will deepen understanding of government, politics and society in general, and help students reflect upon their roles as individuals and as citizens.
**Desired Outcomes**

Students will:
- Understand fundamental theories, concepts, and principles in political theory underlying social policy;
- Explore a variety of social policy issues that present challenges and generate conflict;
- Integrate their explorations of theory and policy, with each illuminating, sharpening and deepening understanding of the other;
- Prepare themselves to identify additional social policy issues deserving attention, and to anticipate future challenges and controversies.

**Assessment Components**

Students need to complete the assigned readings as scheduled and participate actively in class, prepare three essays, attend a relevant policy event in DC, and complete a final exam. Specifically:

- **Participation** requirement centers on engaged, thoughtful participation that reflects prior preparation (10% of final grade).

- **First Essay: Theoretical Foundations** will be 3 pp. in length and will examine one of several theoretical topics to be assigned, encompassing the “theoretical foundations” (February 11th-March 3rd) assigned readings and class discussions. The essay will not require additional research or reading beyond the assigned reading (15% of final grade).

- **Second Essay: Policy Event Reflection** will be 3 pp. in length and will critically discuss an event focused on social policy (e.g. conference, symposium, public address, political rally, campaign event, or congressional hearing), to be selected and attended by students. This assignment will allow students to apply insights from the course to an important policy issue, to observe how various stakeholders define the issues and exert pressure, and to draw upon this exposure in subsequent class discussions and assignments. (There are many free local policy events and relevant congressional hearings, and the professor will suggest events as they arise [15% of final grade]).

- **Third Essay: Policy Examination** will be 5 pp. in length and will apply theoretical insights to one of several assigned policy topics, or to an alternative topic proposed by students. Topics will correspond to the “policy examinations” (March 10th-April 28th) assigned readings and class discussions; alternative topics must be approved by the professor at least one week in advance of the due date. The essay will not require additional reading or research beyond the assigned reading (25% of final grade).
• **Final Exam** will be a “take-home” exam consisting of 2-3 essay questions and requiring a total of 8-10 pp. writing. This comprehensive exam will allow students to integrate themes across the entire course and to further apply theoretical insights to specific policy issues – in short, it will help students synthesize material and solidify their understanding. The exam will be distributed at the last class meeting (May 12th) and is due by the scheduled exam time (May 19th) *(35% of final grade)*.

All written work should display original thinking, substantial analysis, clear organization, polished and concise writing, and careful and proper citation. Further guidance on writing assignments will be provided early in the semester.

### Assessment Expectations

**Grade A:** The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in his/her work. The student writes comprehensive essays / exam questions and his/her work shows strong evidence of critical thought and careful reading.

**Grade B:** The student displays good understanding of the problem or issue and demonstrates the ability to formulate and execute a coherent analysis.

**Grade C:** The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the problem or issue. However, the work fails to organize analysis coherently and is in need of major improvement.

**Grade D:** The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be problems of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research, or seriously deficient presentation.

**Grade F:** The work shows that the problem or issue is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the analysis is negligible or absent.

### Grade conversion

NYU Washington, DC uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

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<tr>
<th>Numerical Grade</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-94</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>76-74</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-70</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>69-67</td>
<td>D+</td>
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Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. Since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. **To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students' semester grades.** Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure. At all Global Academic Centers, unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade.

To seek an excused absence for medical reasons, students must email or discuss with the Academic Program Coordinator in advance of their missed class. For an excused absence, students must produce a doctor’s note dated with the exact dates of the missed class and/or exam.

Non-medical absences must be discussed with the Academic Program Coordinator prior to the date(s) in question, who will communicate the absence to all relevant faculty members. If faculty members do not receive notification, the student has not procured an excused absence.

NYU Washington, DC expects students to arrive to class promptly (both at the beginning and after any breaks), to be attentive, and to remain for the duration of the class. If full class attendance and participation becomes a problem, it is the prerogative of each instructor to apply the rule for unexcused absences, which may include a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade.

Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. This means they should initiate email and/or office hour discussions to discuss any missed lectures and assignments and arrange a timeline for submitting missed work.

### Late Submission of Work

1) Written work must be submitted in paper by the due date (please avoid plastic folders, etc when assembling essays and the exam, and simply staple the paper in the upper left-hand corner. Please include your full name, contact information, and course number).
2) Late work should be emailed to the faculty as soon as it is completed. (If the assignment must be submitted in person, the Academic Program Coordinator can collect on behalf of the faculty between the hours of 9–5, M–F.)

3) Late work will be reduced for a fraction of a letter grade (e.g.,: A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) for every day it is late, including weekends.

4) Written work during the semester that is submitted 5 days after the submission date (including weekends) without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

5) Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be discussed with the Site Director.

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<th>Students with Disabilities</th>
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<td>Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at +1-212-998-4980 or see their website <a href="http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html">http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html</a> for further information.</td>
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<th>Plagiarism Policy</th>
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<td>As the University's policy on &quot;<a href="http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html">Academic Integrity for Students at NYU</a>&quot; states: &quot;At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others.&quot; <strong>Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.</strong></td>
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The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

NYU Washington, DC takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the instructor. Your instructor may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.
For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:  
http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html

http://gls.nyu.edu/page/gls.academicintegrity

http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity


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<th>Religious Observances</th>
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<td>Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday.</td>
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<td>Students must notify their professor and the Office of Academic Support in writing via email at least one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.</td>
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<th>Required Text(s)</th>
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<td>Please acquire hard copy (i.e. not electronic) version (a copy will be on reserve for borrowing, but you will find it helpful to have your own readily available and to make margin notes).</td>
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I. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Session 2 – Thursday, February 11, 2016 – Capitalism and Freedom


Session 3 – Thursday, February 18, 2016 – Rights and Entitlements


Session 4 – Thursday, February 25, 2016 – Compassion and Community

Session 5 – Thursday, March 3, 2016 – Justice and Fairness


*First Essay: Theoretical Foundations Due 6 pm Monday, March 7

II. POLICY EXAMINATIONS

Session 6 – Thursday, March 10, 2016 – Security and Inclusion


* Class does not meet March 17 – enjoy Spring Break!

Session 7 – Thursday, March 24, 2016 – Health Care and Reform

Jacobs and Skocpol, Health Care Reform and American Politics, pp. 1-30, 121-189.
Session 8 – Thursday, March 31, 2016 – Welfare and Work

*Chart Book: TANF at 19*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, August 20, 2015 (on reserve and available at [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)).


Second Essay: Policy Event Reflection Due 6pm, Monday, April 4

Session 9 – Thursday, April 7, 2016 – Race and Criminal Justice


Session 10 – Thursday, April 14, 2016 – Race and Social Justice


Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” Atlantic Monthly, June 2014, pp. 55-71 (on reserve)


Session 11 – Thursday, April 21, 2016 – Class and Inequality


Session 12 – Thursday, April 28, 2016 – Inequality and Opportunity

Putnam, Our Kids, pp. 191-261.


Third Essay: Policy Examination Due 6pm, Monday, May 2

Session 13 – Thursday, May 5, 2016 – Immigration and Exclusion


Session 14 – Thursday, May 12, 2016 – Extreme Poverty and Global Responsibility


*Final Exam Distributed

Session 15 (Finals Week) – Thursday, May 19, 2016

*Final Exam Due 6 pm, Thursday, May 19

Classroom Etiquette

As indicated above, classroom participation is a critical component of this course. In the event of an excused absence (other than for a medical or family emergency) you should submit a 2-page essay that discusses the reading for the class missed, by 6pm Monday of the following week.

The classroom should be a focused and inclusive environment for exploring ideas, challenging assumptions, broadening perspectives and sharpening understanding. Accordingly, students are expected to listen and express themselves thoughtfully and respectfully. Questions and contributions should be relevant. To participate fully you should carefully prepare in advance by completing and reflecting upon the assigned reading.
The use of electronic and multimedia devices (e.g., smart phones, iPods, laptops, earphones) and related activity (e.g. conducting research, checking for new email and text messages, sending messages, providing status updates, checking status of others, tweeting, blogging, browsing websites, completing online transactions) are not permitted during class time. All such devices should be silenced and stored during class (they may be used during the breaks). Students should notify the professor at the first class meeting if they are unable to meet this requirement.

**Required Co-curricular Activities**

Identify and attend at least one local policy event (see “Policy Event Reflection” assignment).

**Suggested Co-curricular Activities**

As schedules permit, students should attend additional relevant policy events that are of interest – Washington, DC offers an extraordinary array of such opportunities (probably more than anywhere in the world) and your semester in DC is the perfect time to explore!

**Instructor**

**Disclaimer:**
The instructor’s primary employer is the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The views expressed by the instructor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department or of the U.S. Government. All information referred to is in the public domain.