

COURSE OUTLINE

Soci401.43-01: The Sociology of Poverty

University of Calgary - Department of Sociology

Fall 2016

TR 2:00 - 3:15 PM, in MS217 (Mathematical Sciences)

Instructor: Dr. Annette Tézli

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Office hours: Mondays 12:15 – 1:45 PM,

Wednesdays 09:00 – 10:30 AM; and by appointment

"Whenever you feel like criticizing any one, just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*

Course Description

Despite economic prosperity and decades of research, poverty remains a persistent feature of even the most affluent societies, including Canada. Over the course of the semester, we will explore poverty as a social, political, human rights, and moral problem in contemporary Canadian society. Most of us are familiar with poverty, either through personal experience or exposure to public discourses and academic research. Consequently, most of us have specific images, ideas and understandings of poverty and the poor. It is those understandings that we will critically examine in this course using a sociological perspective.

We will begin our discussion with an examination of the poverty landscape in Canada followed by a discussion of the different ways of defining and measuring poverty, which shapes who is considered poor in our society in the first place. Employing a sociological framework, we will then critically discuss different theoretical approaches seeking to explain poverty. However, poverty in Canada is not randomly distributed, so we will explore which social groups are most vulnerable to experiencing poverty. We will consider the lived experience of those living in poverty as well as the consequences of poverty for society at large. We will conclude by exploring different measures to alleviate poverty in our society, both by various levels of government as well as different NGOs. We will engage with the subject matter through various group activities, class discussions, dialogue with guest speakers and written assignments.

Upon completion of this course, successful students will be able to:

- retrieve, effectively read, discuss and apply a collection of sociological material pertaining to poverty;
- summarize central research findings and common controversies related to poverty;
- critically discuss issues pertaining to poverty drawing on different theoretical and methodological approaches;
- critically discuss various perspectives on poverty and evaluate different programs and policies seeking to alleviate poverty;
- communicate effectively in writing;
- independently develop research questions and devise a research program to answer those questions.

Course Format

Please note that this is an upper-level course which will be reading and writing intensive. I view class time as an opportunity for us to interactively engage with course material. I will enter each class period assuming that every student has read all of the assigned texts. I will begin each class with a short lecture to cover key concepts and other pertinent information that will complement but not summarize the assigned readings. The remainder of the class will be interactive and devoted to hands-on exercises, group work, class discussions, and films.

Required Readings

A textbook or course pack is not required for this course. Required course readings are listed in the course schedule and links to assigned journal articles will be provided on D2L.

Recommended:

Yellin, L.L. (2009). *A Sociology Writer's Guide*. Boston: Pearson.

Available as e-book: <http://www.coursesmart.com/a-sociology-writer-guide/linda-l-yellin/dp/9780205646241>

Methods of Evaluation

Assignment Schedule and Outline

Please note that all assignments have to be submitted at the beginning of class (2:00PM sharp) on the day they are due. Papers submitted past 2:00PM are subject to late penalties.

	Date due	% of final grade
Critical self-reflection	September 22	10
Fundraiser report	October 20	30
Transportation challenge	November 15	20
Research report	December 8	25
weekly research status updates	week 3-12	15

Critical self-reflection (10%)

We will start this semester with a critical self-reflection, the results of which you will write up in a short 2-3 page paper. The reflection will be guided by exercises we will engage in at the beginning of the semester as well as a 40-question, anonymous Poverty Awareness Survey adapted from Vibrant Communities Calgary posted on D2L. The goal of this exercise is to help you reflect on who you are and how that shapes what you know about poverty. We need to be reflexive so that we are fully aware of our own position in the social world and how that position shapes our beliefs, values, experiences, opportunities and constraints. It also allows me to get to know you better, both as a person and as a writer. Guidelines and writing resources have been posted on D2L.

Fundraiser report (30%)

Many non-profit organizations rely not only on government funding, but monetary donations from individuals and corporations to provide vital services to individuals and families experiencing poverty. However, due to the current economic downturn, many such organizations in Calgary are facing serious financial challenges as monetary donations are dwindling. This semester, we will partner with the **Calgary Dream Centre** which supports individuals in their journey of recovering from addictions. We will participate in their first annual **Toonies for Turkeys** fundraiser, the proceeds of which will go towards providing a nourishing Thanksgiving dinner to homeless Calgarians. We will form small groups at the beginning of the semester and each group will devise and implement its own fundraising strategy. I will dedicate some class time each week to the project so that teams can connect in person in class. At the end of the project, you will produce a fundraiser report, which includes individual reflections on your experience, a collaborative summary of your fundraising strategy, and a peer evaluation. More details will be provided in class and on D2L.

Transportation challenge (20%)

This exercise is designed for you to experience what it means to rely solely on public transit for transportation, like many of Calgarians living in poverty. For this exercise, use only public transit as a means of transportation for seven consecutive days. Whether you are heading to university, work, social outings, family functions, the mall or the grocery store, leave your car at home and hop on the train and/or the bus instead. You can start at any time in the semester, just make sure you give yourself enough time to write up your results. Note that your fees pay for your transit pass, so make sure to pick up your transit sticker if you have not already done so. You will then write a short, 3-4-page reflection paper, which will give you the opportunity to connect your personal observations to course material. More details will be provided in class and on D2L.

Research report (40% total – 15% for status updates & 25% for the report)

Non-profit organizations do not only provide essential services to individuals and families experiencing poverty, they also generate crucial data and research to inform policy recommendations that seek to systematically address the causes and consequences of poverty. However, due to budget constraints, many important research questions remain unanswered and crucial data that could inform policy directions is never generated. This semester we will collaborate with **Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC)**, a non-profit organization which develops long-term strategies to address the root causes of poverty in Calgary. VCC has identified key research needs and research questions that currently remain unanswered. Over the course of this semester, we will work towards answering those research questions. Research topics will be provided at the beginning of the semester. While you will each work individually, those assigned to the same research question will collaborate in clusters to support each other in their research efforts. Research is an ongoing and social process. To break down a larger task into smaller, more manageable sections and to help you stay on task, you will post weekly status updates on your progress to your cluster's D2L group. Those status updates are worth 15% of your final grade. At the end of the semester, you will produce an 8-12-page research report, worth 25% of your final grade. In addition, you will summarize key points of your research findings in an infographic and upload it to a poverty-related information portal. Detailed paper guidelines and links to free infographic tools will be provided in class and on D2L.

Grading Scale

Letter grades will be assigned and submitted to the registrar based on the following scale:

Grade	Percent range	Grade Point Value	Description
A+	96 – 100%	4.0	Outstanding performance
A	90 – 95%	4.0	Excellent-superior performance
A-	85 – 89%	3.7	
B+	80 – 84%	3.3	
B	75 – 79%	3.0	Good – clearly above average performance
B-	70 – 74%	2.7	
C+	67 – 69%	2.3	
C	63 – 66%	2.0	Satisfactory - basic understanding
C-	59 – 62%	1.7	
D+	55 – 58%	1.3	
D	50 – 54%	1.0	Minimal pass - marginal performance
F	<50%	0	Unsatisfactory performance

The grades for a course component may be scaled to maintain equity among sections and to conform to departmental norms.

Emergency evacuations

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom/lab, please proceed to the assembly point by the Social Sciences - Food Court.

Course Policies

Technology Use

You are welcome to use your laptop/tablet in class. If you are using a laptop/tablet in class, I would kindly ask you to sit in the back of the class so that other students are not distracted. Please use your laptop/tablet for course-related purposes only (i.e. to access course presentations, take notes). Bear in mind that using your computer/tablet/phone to surf the net, shop, email, check Facebook, update your tweets, etc. is distracting to your classmates. It is also a waste of your tuition fees. Permission to use laptops/tablets may be withdrawn if they are not used appropriately. Please mute your cell phone and refrain from using it during class.

Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance and reading the assigned material, an open mind, as well as your active and meaningful participation is required for this class to reach its fullest potential and to make it a rewarding experience for you and me. I expect you to have critically read the assigned texts prior to the session in which they will be discussed, that you are an active participant in class discussions and group exercises, and that your contributions are generally informed by the assigned reading. I expect you to be on time so that other students in the class are not interrupted by your late arrival. If you miss a class, you will miss material relevant to your success in this course. If you have to miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain the covered material from one of your class mates. If you come late or need to leave class early, it is courteous to sit somewhere that will allow you to settle down or leave without disrupting others.

E-mail

Feel free to contact me over email at any time. Please send emails through D2L or from your ucalgary account. I will not answer any emails sent from personal email accounts. Please put your course number and section in your email's subject line. Also, it is courteous to include a proper salutation, your full name, student ID, and a proper closing in the body of your email. All emails violating customary email conventions will be ignored. All other emails will be answered within one business day. I do not answer emails over the weekend. Please take that into account when emailing me questions pertaining assignments or exams. If you have a course-related question, please check the course outline first. Questions that can be answered by consulting the course outline will not be answered. Also, please e-mail me for administrative purposes only, for example to set up an appointment. Please do not use e-mail as a replacement for an office visit, if there is something you want to discuss. Questions about the course content and readings, concerns about grades, or any other personal issues should be dealt with in person during my office hours.

Assignments and Deferrals

It is your responsibility to complete and submit all assignments outlined in this course outline. If at all possible you must provide **advance notice** to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or pass in an assignment on time. All requests for a deferral of an exam or assignment due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while you have the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. **Travel arrangements, misreading of the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment responsibilities** are **NOT** valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student. There are absolutely **NO EXCEPTIONS**.

Assignments submitted late (as of the beginning of class on the dates indicated in the assignment schedule) without due cause are subject to a **5 percentage points deduction** (i.e. 80% instead of 85%) for each day past the due date. Assignments not submitted within 7 calendar days of the due date without approval for extension will automatically receive a grade of 0.

Deferred Term Work Form:

Please note that requests to defer a final paper are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:

https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

Handing in papers outside of class, return of final papers, and release of final grades

1. When students are unable to submit papers in class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor. Electronic submissions via email or D2L, papers placed under the instructor's door, or those submitted to the administrative assistants in the department's main office will NOT be accepted.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the main Sociology Department office. The Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place (i.e. outside an instructor's office, the department office etc.) Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will be available for pick-up only during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or at the beginning of the next term.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are available only online.

Ethics Research

Please be advised that any research involving human subjects - including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, you must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing your plans with me, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Academic Misconduct

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:
(<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>).

Integrity in Scholarly Activity

In addition to its regulations dealing with student academic misconduct, the University has a policy and procedures governing the scholarly integrity of members of the University's faculty and persons holding postdoctoral fellowships or their equivalent. The policy and procedures are titled Integrity in Scholarly Activity and apply to both teaching and research. For more information see: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/l.html>

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation

...disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department's main office. I will return written assignments individually during class, or during my office hours. If you are unable to pick up your assignment, you may provide me with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of your assignment.

Student Representation

The 2016-17 Students' Union VP Academic is Alicia Lunz; email: suvpaca@ucalgary.ca. The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: arts1@ucalgary.ca, arts2@ucalgary.ca, arts3@ucalgary.ca, and arts4@ucalgary.ca. You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>

Safewalk

The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. You can also contact Campus Security from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should contact Student Accessibility Services (MC 293, phone 403-220-8237) in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities available at

http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Please provide academic accommodation letters to the instructor as early in the semester as possible and no later than two weeks after the course begins.

Reappraisal of Grades and Academic Appeals

If you chose to challenge a grade you received for an assignment, please refer to the UofC Calendar for more information and follow the procedures outlined therein:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i-2.html>.

Thrive Priority Support Network

Your academic success and personal well-being is important to me. Please feel free to contact me at any time you need academic or personal support and I will help you identify the appropriate resources. Please note that I am working closely with the Thrive Priority Support Network, which seeks to identify students who are facing academic challenges and provide appropriate support services early. This tool monitors this course's D2L gradebook for sudden changes in a student's academic performance and alerts academic development specialists, who will then reach out to the student to touch base. Engagement with the academic development specialist is entirely voluntary and all information is confidential. More information is provided here:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/advising/thrive>.

Course Schedule

Subject to change. Changes will be announced and discussed in class.

The following questions should guide your reading of course material and will help you prepare for class discussions: What are the author's main arguments? What new concepts/ideas/arguments does the author introduce? How do these readings relate to my learning in previous courses and to what I experience as a member of this society? How am I reacting to these findings/arguments? Do they support or challenge my values, beliefs, knowledge? Why and how? How would I respond to the author's arguments? What questions remain unanswered? What is confusing/difficult to understand or brilliant about this reading?

Week 1 - Introduction

September 13 – Introduction

September 15 – Poverty in Canada: An Overview

Required reading: Duffy & Mandell (2010), CPJ (2014)

Week 2 – Defining & Measuring Poverty

September 20 – Defining Poverty

Required reading: Guppy & Hakshaw (2009)

September 22 – Measuring Poverty

Required reading: Ross, Scott, & Smith (2000), Sarlo (2008)

Critical self-reflection due

Week 3 – Explaining Poverty: Academic Discourses

September 27 – Theoretical Approaches

Required reading: Johnson & Mason (2012)

September 29 – The Shortcomings of Academic Poverty Research

Required reading: Novac (1995), Beresford & Croft (1995)

Week 4 – Explaining Poverty: Public and Political Discourses

October 4 – Public Perceptions

Required reading: Lepianka, van Oorschot & Gelissen (2009), Reutter et al. (2006)

October 6 – Political Discourses

Required reading: Chunn & Gavigan (2004)

Week 5 – Demographic Characteristics: Who are the Most Vulnerable?

October 11 – Location Matters

Required reading: Chokie & Partridge (2008), Walks & Bourne (2006)

October 13 – The Racialization of Poverty

Required reading: National Council of Welfare (2012), Wilson & Macdonald (2010)

Week 6 – Demographic Characteristics: Who are the Most Vulnerable?

October 18 – Family Adversity and the Feminization of Poverty

Required reading: Evans (2010), Nelson (2004)

October 20 – Child Poverty

Required reading: Crossley & Curtis (2006), Pagani (2007)

Fundraiser report due

Week 7 – Demographic Characteristics: Who are the Most Vulnerable?

October 25 – The Elderly

Required reading: Sharma (2012, Ch. 3), Gazso (2005)

October 27 – When Work is Not Enough: The Working Poor

Required reading: Zuberi & Ptashnick (2012), Mason (2012)

Week 8 – The Consequences of Living in Poverty

November 1 – The Stigma of Living in Poverty

Required reading: McIntyre, Officer & Robinson (2003), Reutter et al. (2009)

November 3 – Food and Transportation Insecurities

Required reading: Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner (2014), Sanchez (2008)

Week 9 – The Consequences of Living in Poverty

November 8 – Accessing Education and Health Care

Required reading: Albanese (2010, Ch. 3), Spinney & Millward (2010)

November 10 – Reading Break, NO CLASS

Week 10 – Responses to Poverty: The Federal Government

November 15 – Housing Insecurities

Required reading: City of Calgary (2008), Fallis (2010)

Transportation challenge due

November 17 – The Canadian Welfare State

Required reading: Lightman & Riches (2000), LeRoy & Clemens (2003)

Week 11 – Responses to Poverty: The Provincial Government

November 22 – British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta

Required Reading: Little & Marks (2006), Boessenkool (2003)

November 24 – Welfare Challenge (exercise)

Week 12 - Responses to Poverty: The Alberta Government and NGOs

November 29 – Alberta Works

Required Reading: Breitkreuz (2005), Gazo (2007)

December 1 – Reducing Poverty: Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative

Required reading: <http://www.enoughforall.ca/>; <http://www.vibrantcalgary.com/>

Week 13 – Responses to Poverty, cont.

December 6 – Ending Poverty as a Social Justice Issue

Required reading: Albanese (2010, Ch. 8), Howlett (2006)

December 8 – Final Class Discussion

Research report due