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Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 3:30-4:30 and by appointment

:10-3:25  
McGannon 121

**THE STRUCTURE OF POVERTY, GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY**  
WGST 3510/POLS 3800/SOC 3510

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the structural causes of poverty at the global and local levels from a multidisciplinary perspective. It also gives students an opportunity to explore ways in which average citizens can take action to alleviate poverty. While other variables will not be discounted, we will concentrate on the social, political, and economic structures that produce and perpetuate cycles of poverty. The global dimension of the course will focus primarily on developing countries while the local dimension will focus on policies and programs in the U.S. We will also examine the extent to which the structural causes of poverty are the same or different between the global and local levels.

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to

- identify structural sources of, and some solutions to, poverty;
- analyze the impact of social policies on social problems, especially poverty;
- propose some ways that individuals can work together to bring about social change, in particular to alleviate poverty; and
- recognize the value of civic justice. ing about greater social

In this course, we will use an intersectional approach to both the subject matter and to classroom dynamics. Intersectionality is the recognition that we are all individuals with multiple social identities that intersect and shape our worldviews, and that these intersecting identities privilege and disadvantage each of us in different ways. As your instructor, I will try my best to minimize the impact in the classroom of systemic discriminations like sexism, racism, transphobia, heterosexism, and ableism in an effort to create a safe learning environment for all. I ask that you join me in this effort to foster respect for one another, enhance solidarity, and build community.

**TEXTBOOKS:** The following texts are required for the course:

Mark Rank, Lawrence Eppard, and Heather Bullock, *Poorly Understood: What America Gets Wrong About Poverty* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2021).

Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010). There are also additional articles or radio shows assigned, many of which are easily located online. Those that are available on Canvas are indicated with an asterisk.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES: Your final grade in this course will be determined as follows:

] Attendance

It is important to attend each class meeting so that you remain engaged with the class material and discussions. I will keep a record of attendance. **You may miss a total of two class periods during the semester for any reason**, including illness (you need not provide an excuse); **additional absences will lower your grade. If a student misses one of the scheduled in-class small group discussions, it will count as two absences rather than one.** I strongly

choose, but each must still log

Why does it matter that you learned this?  
How is this likely to affect your actions in the future?

The best papers will not only answer these questions but also **make explicit connections with course material** (e.g., the assigned readings and class discussions).

**Project log (required):**

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**research question at the very beginning of the bibliography.** The due date can be found in the class schedule, below.

**Final research paper (40%):**

This paper should be a scholarly analysis of the general topic area you have chosen (e.g., food insecurity; housing; child care; sweat shops) and an evaluation of the contribution your service learning agency/site (or those like it) can make to poverty alleviation. Your goal is to use your research and your experience working on the project to evaluate how citizens can bring about greater social justice for the issue you have chosen. In some cases, the organizations/sites where students do their projects will fall short of their initial expectations, but these will still be opportunities for learning. Be sure to address the following questions somewhere in your paper:

1. What does this issue have to do with poverty? (Include some history of the issue here.)

For example,

What have been the dominant political discourses about the issue?

What is the history of public policy/international policy about the issue?

What does the scholarly/scientific

students' interests, but it should include some sort of synthesis of the group's work over the course of the semester. Here are a few examples, but I encourage you to think of others <sup>2</sup> just get my approval before you proceed:

What were the common themes among each of your projects/topics in terms of how to alleviate poverty?

In what ways were your projects/topics different, why were they different, and in what ways does it matter?

What are some promising practices, approaches, or solutions to alleviating poverty?

They can be modeled on one or more of your projects/sites or they can be about how these approaches could be done better.

What have you learned from each other that you didn't know before?

Your presentations can take any of a number of different forms. Here are just a few ideas:

You can have everyone speak in turn.

You can have one person speak and others do support work, such as write a script, create visuals, etc.

You can create a video to show the class.

You can create some sort of other product, such as a game for the class to play.

#### ] Electronic devices

Based on recent research, in order to maximize student learning, students may not use any electronic devices in class, including computers, phones, or tablets. Bring a paper and pencil to class to take notes.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### Mandatory Face Masks

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, key safeguards like face masks have allowed SLU to safely maintain in-person learning. If public health conditions and local, state, and federal restrictions demand it, the University may require that all members of our campus community wear face masks indoors.

**Therefore, any time a University-level face mask requirement is in effect, face masks will be required in this class.** This expectation will apply to all students and instructors, unless a medical condition warrants an exemption from the face mask requirement (see below).

**When a University-wide face mask requirement is in effect**, the following will apply: Students who attempt to enter a classroom without wearing masks will be asked by the instructor to put on their masks prior to entry. Students who remove their masks during a class session will be asked by the instructor to resume wearing their masks. Students and instructors may remove their masks briefly to take a sip of water but should replace masks immediately. The consumption of food will not be permitted. Students who do not comply with the expectation that they wear a mask in accordance with the University-wide face mask requirement may be subject to disciplinary actions

per the rules, regulations, and policies of Saint Louis University, including but not limited to those outlined in the **Student Handbook**. Non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including any of the following:

- o dismissal from the course(s)
- o removal from campus housing (if applicable)
- o dismissal from the University

To immediately protect the health and well-being of all students, instructors, and staff, instructors reserve the right to cancel or terminate any class session at which any student fails to comply with a University-wide face mask requirement.

**When a University-wide face mask requirement is not in effect**, students and instructors may choose to wear a face mask or not, as they prefer for their own individual comfort level.

### **ADA Accommodations for Face Mask Requirements**

Saint Louis University is committed to maintaining an inclusive and accessible environment. Individuals who are unable to wear a face mask due to medical reasons should contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (students) or Human Resources **Policy**. Inquiries or concerns may also be directed to the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity. Notification to instructors of SLU-approved ADA accommodations should be made in writing prior to the first class session in any term (or as soon thereafter as possible).

### Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in academic endeavors. God a compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office website at: [https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/policy\\_academic-integrity\\_6-26-2015.pdf](https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/policy_academic-integrity_6-26-2015.pdf).

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites.

### Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, **that faculty member should be notified immediately, and you should contact the Title IX Coordinator and share the basic facts of your experience**. This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident. The Title IX Coordinator will then be available to

assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

Anna Kratky is the Title IX Coordinator at Saint Louis University (DuBourg Hall, room 36; [anna.kratky@slu.edu](mailto:anna.kratky@slu.edu); 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK or make an appointment by calling 314-977-5269 or online at <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/slu>. The following web addresses: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources/index.php> and <https://www.slu.edu/general-counsel>.

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## CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

The following schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs.

### August 25: Introduction to the course

Focus: What is the difference between an individual and a structural explanation?

What does social justice entail?

Is charity the best way to achieve social justice?

Is there a difference between doing service and doing activism?

Home health care jobs: What is their potential role in poverty reduction?

Readings:

Eduardo Porter, "Home Health Care: Shouldn't It Be Work Worth Doing?" *New York Times* August 29

September 8: Global poverty

Focus: Poverty around the world

Why should Americans care about poverty in other countries?

What is "sustainable development?"

How do we measure poverty around the world?

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Readings:

\*Daniel Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), pp. 1-10.

\*Jeffrey Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development* (2015), pp. 1-7, 45-69, and 244-249.

September 13, 15: The demographics of poverty in the U.S.

Focus: How widespread is poverty in the U.S.?

What does gender, race, ethnicity, and disability have to do with it?

How do gender and other inequalities impact poverty among women?

Readings:

Rank et al., *Poorly Understood* Section I. Who Are the Poor? pp. 9-38.

Pam Fessler, "Why Disability and Poverty Still Go Hand in Hand 25 Years after Landmark Law," National Public Radio story, July 23, 2015 (6.5 minutes long). Available online.

Rani Caryn Rabin, "A Hunger Crisis in the LGBT Community," *New York Times* July 19, 2016, available online on the NY Times Weblog.

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\*The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink Maria Shriver and the Center for American Progress (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 11-12, 17-24, 36-39, 45-81, 84-91, 128-133, and 142-147 (on Canvas: "Shriver, Part 1").

Readings:

\*Melvyn Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (1995), pp. 303-17 (excerpted in Sarah Ferguson, *Mapping the Social Landscape*, 4th edition [Boston: McGraw Hill]) and pp. 45-50 (photocopied from original book).

Andrew W. Kahrl, "Black People's Land Was Stolen," *New York Times* June 23, 2019, available online.

NY Times editorial, "An Unfair Property Tax System," *New York Times* April 4, 2021.

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**Small group discussion #1 in class on September 22.** Topic: Comment on each others' drafts of Preliminary Reflection papers. The group discussions will last about 15 minutes total.

Readings, continued:

Fred Harris and Alan Curtis, "The Unmet Promise of Equality," *New York Times* March 1, 2018, available online.

Mikki Kendall, *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women that a Movement Forgot* (Penguin Books, 2020), "Hunger," pp. 31-46.

September 27, 29: The demographics of global poverty

PRELIMINARY REFLECTION PAPERS DUE ON SEPTEMBER 27. You will turn in this 1-page paper at the beginning of class. No late papers will be accepted.

Focus: Poverty in the developing world

Focus: The history

October 18: Discourses on poverty

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³ 8 V ' Y V ³ W K H P '

Who are the " X Q G H V H U Y and Q H S R R U from this concept?

In what ways is poverty discourse gender-specific?

What is the role of politics in policies to alleviate poverty?

Readings:

Rank et al., *Poorly Understood*, Section V. How Extensive Is Inequality? pp. 127-154  
and Chapter 19, Why Do The Myths Persist? pp. 157-165.

\*Sharon Hays,

October 27, November 1: The crisis in affordable housing

- Focus: Who is affected by the lack of affordable housing in the U.S. today?  
What difference does one's neighborhood make?  
What are the causes of the current housing crisis? Are they the same for the un-housed as they are for the stretched middle class?  
How is the housing crisis connected to racial/ethnic discrimination?  
What are some current efforts to create affordable housing? What strategies work best?

Readings:

- \*Mikki Kendall, *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot* (Penguin Books, 2021), "Housing," pp. 205-216.  
Nicholas Kristof, "A Better Address Can Change a Child's Future," *New York Times* August 3, 2019, available online.  
\*Linda Gibbs, Jay Bainbridge, Muzzy Rosenblatt, and Tamiru Mammo, *How Ten Global Cities Take on Homelessness: Innovations That Work* (Oakland, CA: The University of Calif. Press, 2021), Chapter 4. Developing an Affordable Housing Strategy, pp. 70-85 and Chapter 6. Prevention That Works, pp. 104-118.

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Conor Dougherty, "Build, Build, Build....," *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 2020, available online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/13/business/economy/housing-crisis-conor-dougherty-golden-gates.html>

Sarah Mervosh, "Minneapolis, Tackling Housing Crisis and Inequity, Votes to End Single-Family Zoning," *New York Times*, December 13, 2018, available online at <https://nyti.ms/2GgoJP0>.

\*Heather McGee, *The Sum of Us*, Chapter 7. Living Apart, pp. 167-191.

November 3: Structural inequality: The racial and class segregation of schools

- Focus: Whatever happened to education as the great equalizer?  
What is the current state of school desegregation?  
Why don't colleges admit more low-income students?

Reading:

Nikole Hannah-Jones, "It Was Never About Busing," *New York Times*, July 14, 2019, available online.

\*Excerpt from Paul Tough, "The Impossible Math of College Admissions," *New York Times*, September 15, 2019.

November 8: Structural inequality: The organization of work in the U.S. today

Focus:

Readings:

\*Jeffrey Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development* (2015), pp. 239-243.

Nicholas Kristof, "McDonald's Workers in Denmark Pity Us," *The New York Times* May 10, 2020, available online.

Listen to Terry Gross, Fresh Air interview with Rick Wartzman, "The Decline of Good Jobs in America," first aired July 5, 2017 (30 minutes long), available online.

Neil Irwin, "The Great American Janitor Test," *New York Times* September 3, 2017, available online.

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New York Times July 24, 2020, available online.

November 10: Rethinking the structure of work; Guaranteed basic income

**Small group discussion #4 in class today.** Topic: Based on your service learning experiences, what policies or practices do/don't seem promising for alleviating poverty?

Focus: : K D W ¶ V Z U R Q J Z L W K Z R U N W R G D \ "

Is work as currently structured obsolete?

How can independent contractors acquire benefits that full-time workers get?

How would a guaranteed basic income work?

What is politically feasible?

Readings:

To the Best of Our Knowledge with Anne Strainchamps, "What's Wrong With Work?" aired September 1, 2018, available online (50 minute podcast).

Look at the website of The Freelancers' Union, especially the tab, "In the Press."

\*Brishen Rogers, "Basic Income in a Just Society," *Boston Review* Forum 2: Work, Inequality, Basic Income (2017), pp. 11-29.

November 15: Non-college routes to middle class jobs

**Guest speaker:** To be announced

Focus: Should everyone have to go to college to get a good job?

Readings:

John Hanc, "With Innovation, Colleges Fill the Skills Gap", *NY Times* June 7, 2017, available online at <https://nyti.ms/2sSkAVI>.

Steve Lohr, "'Second Route' to Middle Class," *NY Times* June 29, 2017, available online.

November 17: The impact of climate change on global poverty

Focus: How does climate change exacerbate global inequality?

What are some solutions?

Readings:

To be announced.

\*Jeffrey Sachs, The Age of Sustainable Development [(\*u792 re W\* n BT /F5 12 Tf 1 0 0 1 191.45 6



