

# The Politics of Poverty

GOV 312L/Unique 37985

Spring 2023 – T-Th 11-12:30 – Mezes Hall 1.306

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## About this course

Government 312 L satisfies the second half of the mandated six hours of government that every UT student must take. Its topic – the politics of poverty – deals with questions concerning what poverty is and why it exists, with welfare policies in Texas, in the United States, and with poverty and politics, and how to measure it, around the world. The course assumes the basic knowledge of government from GOV 310L, but nothing more.

Questions concerning the nature and cause of poverty and inequality and what to do about them are often controversial and subject to much debate. This course does not presume that either the professor, teaching assistants, or the readings have “The Answer” to such questions. Rather, our collective goal for the semester is to identify the major schools of debate around such questions and for you to think about them. If you have already decided how you feel about poverty, the course may prompt you to think again; if you have never given the question any thought, the course may provoke you into thinking about such questions.

Given the size and nature of the course, it is taught by lecture. There will always be time for discussion and participation in class, however. Attendance will make a *major* difference, particularly because the lectures *do not* follow the readings. (I am convinced of your ability to read the texts – which are selected for ease of understanding, relevance, and for its likelihood to keep you engaged – without having to spend time regurgitating them in class.) The lectures, in other words, will be entirely different from what you read for that day. The exceptions will be individual (short) newspaper articles I might ask you to read from time to time.

## Grades

Your grade will be drawn from three in-class tests. They will contain multiple choice, true/false, and essay questions. All exams will be taken in class; for make-up exams you must have a valid medical certificate.

## Grading Policy

First Test	25
Second Test	35
Third Test	40

Final grades, as per university policy, will be determined on a +/- basis as follows (there will be no curving).



93-100 = A  
83- 86 = B  
73- 76 = C  
63- 66 = D

90-92 = A-  
80-82 = B-  
70-72 = C-  
60-62 = D-

87-89 = B+  
77-79 = C+  
67-69 = D+

below 60 = F



## Required Readings

(A) Atkinson, Anthony B. *Measuring Poverty Around the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019)

(D) Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2016)

and a few selected newspaper articles.

## Class Schedule (with *Suggested* Reading Schedule)

1. T, January 10: Introduction to the class
2. Th, January 12: Basic Concepts (PoP#1)  
Read: D 1-31
3. T, January 17: (A bit of) History of Poverty (PoP#2)  
Read: D 32-63
4. Th, January 19: PBS Frontline Documentary: "Poverty, Politics, and Profit"  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/poverty-politics-and-profit/>  
Read: D 64-107
5. T, January 24: Explanations of Poverty (PoP#3)  
Read: D 111-143
6. Th, January 26: Applying Explanations of Poverty (PoP#4)  
Read: D 144-176
7. T, January 31: Texas Poverty I: National Comparisons and Colonias (PoP#5)  
Read: D 177-203
8. Th, February 2: Texas Poverty II: Bail and Bail Reform  
Guest: Mr. Randall Sarosdy, Texas Justice Court Training Center
9. T, February 7: Texas Poverty III: Colonias, Health, Urban Poverty, etc. (PoP#6)  
Read: D 207-241
10. Th, February 9: Feeling Rich, Feeling Poor (PoP#7A)
11. T, February 14: **First test**
12. Th, February 16: US Poverty History (PoP#7B)  
Read: D 242-269
13. T, February 21: US Poverty Policy: 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century (PoP#8)  
Read: D 270-291
14. Th, February 23: US Poverty/Policy in the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (PoP#9)  
Read: D 292-336

15. T, February 28: LBJ and the War on Poverty (PoP#10)  
Read: A 1-27
16. Th, March 2: Poverty Policy under Presidents Nixon and Reagan (PoP#11)  
Read: A 28-57
17. T, March 7: President Clinton and Welfare Reform (PoP#12)  
Read: A 58-104
18. Th, March 9: "Growing Up Poor in America," PBS documentary, then Q & A  
with its co-producer, Lauren Santucci

## SPRING BREAK! (USE RESPONSIBLY!)

19. T, March 21: US poverty Policy Trend-lines (PoP#13)
20. Th, March 23: **Second test**
21. T, March 28: Comparing the US and Third World poverty (PoP#14)  
Read: A 105-145
22. Th, March 30: Measuring and Symptoms of World Poverty, Megacities (PoP#15)  
Read: A 166-176
23. T, April 4: Documentary (TBA)  
Read: R 177-183
24. Th, April 6: Global Inequality and the Theories that Try to Explain It (PoP#16)  
Read: A 184-193
25. T, April 11: Eradicating Global Poverty: Strategies since WWII (PoP#17)  
Read: A 194-209
26. Th, April 13: World poverty: Goals for the Future (PoP#18)  
Read: 210-217
27. T, April 18: TAs' Third Test Preparation Session
28. Th, April 20: **Third test**

## Rules

1. You **may not** use a laptop in the classroom. All electronic devices must be shut off throughout the entire class period. I want to look at your face, not the back of your computer. Think of it this way: by the time you write your notes down in class and transcribe your notes on your laptop (presuming you do that), you'll probably know the material. If this is a deal-breaker for you, I understand. Just take another class.

If you are interested in why you are actually going to learn much more and have a better time doing it this way, go ahead and read this brief article from the November 22, 2017 issue of *The New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html>

2. I will treat you as adults and I want you to treat this class as adults. I will be in class on time and so should you be. If you do not think you can make it at 11AM or stay until 12:15PM, **please do not** register for this class. Just take another class. Also, please do not come in late or leave early: it distracts your fellow students and me.

3. Speaking of treating you as adults: I will not call roll, it is entirely up to you if you choose to attend. All Power Point Presentations will be available on Canvas – though they do not cover the entire lecture. The “Reading Schedule” is only a suggestion: if you are comfortable reading all the assigned readings the night before an exam, that is your prerogative. (There will be no quizzes on the readings.)

## Honor code and academic integrity

The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Should you have any questions regarding University policies concerning academic integrity, please visit the website of the Office of the Dean of Students: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu>.

## Accommodations

The University provides, on request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Students for whom such services are needed should contact – at the beginning of the semester -- the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities. (512-471-6259: <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>)

## Religious holidays

The University requires students to notify instructors at least fourteen days prior to a pending absence due to religious observance. If you must miss a class, an assignment or a project in order to observe a religious holiday, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

## Emergency evacuation policy

The Office of Campus Safety (512-471-5767; [www.utexas.edu/safety](http://www.utexas.edu/safety)) recommends the following safety practices: When a fire alarm is activated, please evacuate the building, assemble outside and follow instructions from the faculty; do not re-enter the building until instructed by the Austin Fire Department, the UT /Austin Police Department or the Fire Prevention Services office. Please familiarize yourself with the closest exit doors in the building. Should you need assistance for possible evacuation, please inform me during the first week of class.