

AS/HIST 4069.06A

<http://www.yorku.ca/mltaylor/hist4069/>

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POVERTY AND WELFARE IN UNITED STATES HISTORY

Poverty has existed in the United States since its founding, but ideas about who is poor, and why, and what (if anything) should be done about it, have changed over time. This course examines the social and intellectual history of poverty and welfare in the United States from the eighteenth century to the present. We begin with the early republic, but focus mainly on the new forms of poverty – and new efforts to cope with it -- that emerged in the industrial and post-industrial economies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With some attention to European and Canadian parallels, we will chart the rise (and possibly the fall) of the American “semi-welfare state.” We will study changing perceptions of poverty and its cause, explore the social experience and survival strategies of poor people and families, and examine the multiple goals of welfare policy, including relief of want, social control, and political mobilization. The highly politicized distinction between a supposedly “deserving” and “undeserving” poor constitutes a major theme, considered in relation to race, gender, immigration/citizenship, ability, and age.

The course meets every Friday from 11:30-2:30 in Founders 106.

The assigned readings are available for purchase at the York University Bookstore. Most are also on reserve at Scott Library.

Walter Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*, 6th ed.

Kenneth Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road*

Frances Fox Piven & Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor* 2nd ed.

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*

History 4069 Course Kit (2 volumes)

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (optional)

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (optional)

Please note: reading assignments for Nov. 10, Nov. 17, Feb. 23, and March 30 are not in the course kit. They can be accessed online (at the URLs below) or in the library. The books by Addams and Riis are available on the internet, in the library, and at the bookstore.

Course requirements (1) reading the assigned materials on time; (2) regular attendance and active participation in discussions; (3) completion of in-class writing exercises and assignments (4) one ‘show-and-tell’ presentation; (5) three short essays in the fall term; (6) a research paper; and (7) a take-home final exam. All written work must be original, and your notes and rough drafts must be turned in with every essay. Late papers will be penalized, although no work will be failed for late submission alone.

The final grade will be determined by: class participation, 20% (10% each term); weekly writing exercises, 10% (5 % each term); show and tell presentation, 10%; first essay, 5%; position paper, 10%; footnote chase assignment, 15%; research paper, 20%; take-home final exam, 10%. Please note that grades on assignments may include plusses and minuses (eg. B+ or B-). No minus grades (eg., A-) will appear in your final mark.

Class Participation. This is a discussion class, and active participation is essential to your success in, and enjoyment of, this course. Please think about the reading and weekly discussion questions before you come to class, and don't forget to turn off your cell phone. Your participation mark (10 percent each term) is based on regular attendance (6/10) and your thoughtful contribution to in-class discussions, activities, and debates.

Weekly Seminar Format and In-Class Assignments: The first 10 minutes of class will be devoted to a short writing exercise or 'ice breaker' designed to demonstrate your familiarity with the reading material and give you a chance to collect your thoughts prior to the start of discussion. We will usually discuss the reading in the first half of class and have student presentations, debates, films, etc. after a short break. Please note that attendance will be taken at the beginning of class and after the break. The ten-minute 'ice breaker' will be marked 0, 1 or 2, with the sum for each term divided by 4 (to a maximum of 5 percent each term). Your grade for other in-class activities, such as debates and role plays, will be folded into your participation mark

'Show and Tell' Presentations: Each week two or three students will present a 5-10 minute "show and tell" presentation that pertains to the week's reading. The 'show and tell' assignment is an opportunity to pursue a topic in some depth without doing a formal research paper and (if you wish) to examine the similarities and differences between past and present, the US and other countries. Presentations should expand on the issues raised in the week's readings, but take them in a new direction. For example, a show and tell presentation during the week on Jacob Riis might focus on contemporary housing reform in the US or Canada; current views about the relationship between immigration and poverty; or photojournalism. A presentation on "state power and child protection" could compare the SPCC of the nineteenth century with children's aid societies today. One on "state power and public health" could debate the public health powers of the state through a consideration of SARS or AIDS – and so on.) The only requirement is that your presentation includes a visual component; it must 'show' as well as 'tell'. You may do a poster or powerpoint presentation, distribute photocopies of newspaper or magazine articles, cartoons, etc., or show an excerpt from a video or DVD (10 minutes maximum). You could even do a skit – be creative! Please note: if you require a computer for powerpoint or internet, it must be ordered *at least one week in advance*.

Papers and Deadlines. Three short essays are due during the fall term, and a research essay is due in March. A 2-3 page essay reflecting on the values implicit in early U.S. welfare policy is due September 22. This 'diagnostic' essay, designed to help me get to know you better, is worth just 5 percent of your grade. A 3-5-page "position" paper, expressing your opinion on an issue raised in one week's reading, is due at the beginning of class on the date

the reading is discussed (between October 6 and November 17). A 3-5 page essay describing and analyzing a document cited in Kusmer's *Down and Out, On the Road*, is due November 30. The major winter-term assignment is a 10-12 research essay *on a topic approved by me*. Your paper topic and preliminary bibliography are due January 26. The essay itself (with your notes and rough drafts) is due March 16. Late work will be penalized, so please note these due dates on your calendar.

Academic Honesty: All papers must be original and use appropriate methods of citation, and your notes and rough drafts must be turned in along with every essay. Violations of the York Senate Policy on Academic Honesty – including submitting work written by someone else or submitted in another course, failing to use quotation marks and citations when using or paraphrasing the printed or electronically-transmitted work of others, collaborating on written assignments, cheating during examinations, and aiding or abetting academic misconduct – will be treated severely. Recent penalties have included failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University, and withholding or rescinding a York degree. For further information, see <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/legislation/senate/acadhone.htm>.

Listserve & Course Website. All students must join the History 4069 listserve through which discussion questions and other relevant materials will be distributed. Please check your email before every class. Course materials (syllabus, paper assignments, etc.) and links to relevant websites are posted on the course website

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Sept. 8: Introduction: Key Words and Concepts

Sept. 15: Social Welfare in Early America

• Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*, chaps. 1-4

Sept. 22: Discovery of the Asylum

• David Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum*, chaps. 8 and 9

• “Rules and Regulations of the Salem Almshouse” (1816)

• Recall: Trattner, chap. 4

FIRST PAPER DUE!

Sept. 29: Urban Poverty: New York as Case Study

Film: “Five Points”

• Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points*, chaps. 3 & 4

Oct. 6: Scientific Charity and Social Control

Film: “1877: The Grand Army of Starvation”

• Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*, chaps. 8 & 10

• Joel Schwartz, *Fighting Poverty with Virtue*, 3-14, 137-139

• Trattner, chap. 5

Oct. 13: Southern Poverty after Slavery's End

- Jacqueline Jones, *The Dispossessed*, chaps. 3 & 4
- "The New Slavery in the South — An Autobiography: A Georgia Negro Peon" (1904)

Oct. 20: State Power and Child Protection

- Peter Stevens & Marian Eide, "The First Chapter of Children's Rights"
- Linda Gordon, "Feminism, Family Violence, and Social Control"
- Trattner, chap. 6

Oct. 27: State Power and Public Health

- Trattner, chap. 7
- Judith Walzer Leavitt, "Gendered Expectations"
- S. Josephine Baker, *Fighting for Life* (1939), chap. 4

Nov. 3: No Class

Nov. 10: Reformers & the Urban Poor: Jacob Riis & Social Photography

- Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1899), intro & chaps. 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 15, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 <http://www.yale.edu/amstud/inforev/riis/contents.html>
- Recall: Boyer, chap. 10
- [Begin reading Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road*]

Nov. 17: Reformers & the Urban Poor: Social Settlements

- Trattner, chap. 8
- Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910), preface & chaps. 5, 7 & 8 <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/addams/hullhouse/hullhouse.html>
- Anzia Yezierska, "Free Vacation House" <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/yezierska/hearts/hearts.html#IV>
- Recall: Boyer, chap. 10; Gordon, "Feminism, Family Violence, and Social Control"
- [Keep reading Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road*]

Nov. 24: Social History of the Homeless

Film: Charlie Chaplin, "The Tramp"

- Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road*, chaps. 1-8

Dec. 1: Tramps and Tramping in the 20th Century

- Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road*, entire

FOOTNOTE CHASE ASSIGNMENT DUE!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Winter Term:

Jan. 5: Gender, Maternalism, and Welfare

- Barbara Nelson, "The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State"
- Karen Tice, "Mending Rosa's Working Ways"
- Trattner, chaps. 9, 10, 12 (focus on chap. 10)
- Recall: Addams, *Twenty Years* & Gordon, "Feminism, Family Violence & Social Control"

Jan. 12: Origins and Character of America's 'Welfare State'

- Theda Skocpol, "State Formation and Social Policy in the United States"
- Edward Berkowitz & Kim McQuaid, *Creating the Welfare State*, intro
- Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*, intro
- Recall: Nelson, "Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State" & Trattner, chap. 10

Jan. 19: The New Deal

Film: "We Have a Plan"

- Trattner, chap. 13
- Frances Fox Piven & Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, intro, chaps. 2 & 3
- Recall: Nelson, all the readings from last week, & Kusmer, chap. 10

Jan. 26: Hard Times in the Great Depression

- Donald Worster, "The Black Blizzards Roll In"
- John Steinbeck, "Starvation under the Orange Trees" (1938)
- Meridel LeSueur, "Women on the Breadlines" (1932)
- "The Great Depression in Rural America" (1932)
- "The Great Depression in Philadelphia" (1933)
- "The Bronx Slave Market" (1935)
- Studs Terkel, *Hard Times*, 49-56, 58-65, 82-83, 261-264

PAPER TOPIC AND PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE!

Feb. 2: Poverty in a Land of Plenty

Film: "Harvest of Shame" (1960)

- Trattner, chap. 14 (to p. 318)
- Michael Harrington, *The Other America* (1962), chap. 1
- César Chávez, "The Organizer's Tale" (1966)
- Jessie de la Cruz, "The First Woman Farmworker Organizer Out in the Fields"
- Harry Kubo, from *With These Hands*
- Recall: Terkel interview with César Chávez
- [Recommended: Piven & Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, chap. 5]

Feb. 9: The War on Poverty

Film: "America's War on Poverty: City of Promise"

- Joseph A. Califano, Jr., "How Great Was the Great Society?"
- Piven & Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, Part III
- [Recommended: Trattner, finish chap. 14]

Feb. 16: Reading Week – No Class

Feb. 23: The War on Poverty: Documents from the 1960s

- Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action* (1965)
<http://dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/webid-meynihan.htm>
- Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968)
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6545>

March 2: Feminism and Welfare Rights

- Trattner, chap. 15 (esp. to 348)
- Johnnie Tillmon, “Welfare is a Women’s Issue” (1972)
- Premilla Nadasen, “Expanding the Boundaries of the Women’s Movement”
- Elena Gutiérrez, “Policing Pregnant Pilgrims”

March 9: The ‘Underclass’ Debate

- Charles Murray, *Losing Ground*, 3-9, 178-191, 219-236.
- Elijah Anderson, “The Code of the Street”
- William Julius Wilson, “The Hidden Agenda”
- Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels*, introduction
- Trattner, chaps. 15 (finish) & 16 (to p. 376)

March 16: Ending Welfare as We Know It

- Trattner, chap. 16 (finish) & 17
- Bill Clinton, “Remarks on Welfare Reform” (1996)
- Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, “Making Ends Meet on a Welfare Check”
- Recommended: Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, chap. 11
- [Begin Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*]

RESEARCH ESSAY DUE!

March 23: Documenting Poverty at the Century’s End: Working Poor

- Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed* (entire)

March 30: Summing Up: Past, Present & Future of Welfare

- “Working Toward Independence: Bush Administration Proposal”
- Theda Skocpol, “Working Families: the Centerpiece for Reform” (2000)
http://www.ourfuture.org/projects/next_agenda/ch3.cfm
- Frances Fox Piven, “Globalization, American Politics and Welfare Policy”
- Gwendolyn Mink, “Violating Women: Rights Abuses in the Welfare Police State”
- Christopher Jencks, “What Happened to Welfare?” <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18565>

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM: Questions to be distributed