

Topics In Labor Studies- Poverty and Work
37:575:491:H6
Index # 84570
Labor Studies and Employment Relations
HYBRID COURSE Monday/Wednesday 6-8:40 pm
Freehold Campus- in class on Mondays

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Course Overview

The U.S. currently faces a period of high unemployment, growing numbers of long-term unemployed and under-employed adults, and increases in both adult and child poverty rates and public assistance enrollment. Today one in three families are working and poor; which means they are working in paid employment but cannot make ends meet financially.

This course focuses on working, low-income families, and the public and workplace policies they confront. Throughout the course we will focus on the impact of the economic recession and recovery on working adults. We will examine the following topics:

- the nature and extent of poverty in the United States;
- poverty theory;
- inequality, poverty and work
- education, training, and workforce development for low-income adults; and
- existing and proposed government programs and policies.

This course will look at how workplace conditions affect low-income adults and their families, as well as how such families are affecting the conditions under which they work. The study of poverty and work is an interdisciplinary endeavor; as such, we will explore this topic using literature from disciplines including sociology, social work, geography, economics, industrial relations, political science, and psychology. While the topic of the course is broad, it enables us to focus on key aspects of the study of poverty and work, and gives room to students to explore more fully their particular areas of interest.

A central part of this class will be exploring poverty and work in Monmouth County, NJ. We will spend time understanding the real cost of living in Monmouth County, available jobs, and the role of social and employment policies in helping Monmouth County workers reach economic security. Part of this assignment will be conducted in pairs; and part will be conducted on your own.

Hybrid Course Requirements

This course is being taught as a online hybrid. What that means is that half the class will be taught in the classroom on the Freehold Cape Campus, and the other half will be taught online. In order to access the online portion of the course, and other course materials you will log onto Rutgers "E-companion" which you may access at <https://ecollege.rutgers.edu/students.jsp> using your netID. In addition, in order to access this site, and other resources be sure that your Rutgers email account is working. Communication from the instructor will go to your Rutgers email account; remember you can set it up to forward mail to another email system if you use that.

The online portion of this course will be asynchronous. What this means is that you will NOT have to log onto the course during the time of the class, but will be able to access the online portion during that week. There maybe specific times that assignments online are due, and that must be paid attention to.

Specifically, contact time will be divided in the following way: 50 % face-to-face AND 50 % online

Online sessions will be a blend of self-paced and group activities using E-Companion and other Web sites. Activities will consist of chat, blogs, discussion forums, email, journaling, blogging, wikis, and web posting. Face-to-face sessions will be held on the Freehold Cape Campus.

In addition because this class is hybrid, if any in-person classes need to be canceled because of weather or other reason, the class WILL be converted to online for that session. This means you need to check the course website regularly and will be responsible for that work.

Required Books:

All books available at Rutgers Bookstore or online. In addition to the book, course readings are available on the course E-Companion website or from me.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America

Class Grade:

Your grade is based on the following distribution:

Journal/Online Exercises	30%
Mid-term Quiz	30%
BEST Wages Group Paper	15%
Final Paper	25%

Assignments

Journal/Online Exercises- Throughout the course you will be asked to journal on the course website and/or complete online exercises. You must check our course website regularly for these assignments. Due dates and assignment parameters are located there.

Quizzes: A Midterm quiz is scheduled. This quiz is based on the weekly readings and discussions. It will require you to construct informed and thoughtful answers to the questions. Therefore, you will be allowed to use your notes and readings for the quiz. The quiz is your own work and students CANNOT work together. Additional quizzes will be scheduled or administered spontaneously as necessary if course participants fail to prepare or participate in class.

BEST Wages in Monmouth County Memo. You will work with a class partner to develop BEST wages memo for cities in Monmouth County during the classes of November August 1 and 6th. The BEST is an economic security measure developed by Wider Opportunities for Women. We will use the national model to understand economic security in Monmouth County. We will review the BEST measure and assignment in class, however included in this syllabus is some background on the assignment.

Background for August 1st class---For a moment, assume our class has been contacted by the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders Office. We have been assigned the task of determining BEST wages for particular cities in Monmouth County. For us to complete this assignment we must put together a memo for the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders. We have decided the best way to do this is to divide into partners in the class and each group will be assigned a city in Monmouth County to investigate. (I will assign the partners/cities in the week prior to this assignment).

The first step is for each group to determine 3 types of families they will look at. You will look at a family of just 1 working adult with employment based benefits; a family of 1 working adult 1 preschooler, and 1 school age child without employment based benefits; and a family of 2 working adults, 1 preschooler and 1 school aged child without employment based benefits.

For the August 1st class, you and your class partner are to gather the data for the BEST measure.

First, using the BEST tables as a model, find the lowest market cost (i.e. do not assume someone can barter, or get things "under the table") for all the items identified in the table, but make sure the family does not starve or put any family members in physical jeopardy. You may need to call housing units, childcare centers, and the local tax office. You may want to take a trip to a grocery store or look at grocery store websites to get an idea on how much food costs. Figure out transportation costs based on having a car, unless you are confident that the city that you are looking at has good public transportation. For personal and household items you can use the numbers that are in the BEST for your family type.

NOTE: You will need to make some reasonable assumptions to get cost figures (e.g. how many bedrooms the family will need; what kind of transportation to use) and sometimes it will be

appropriate to include a range of costs. Make all assumptions explicit and include your sources of information (documentation of where you obtained the information on costs).

For the Class of August 6th –In this class you will work with your class partner to create your tables and a memo to the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders. You will complete this in class and then upload your assignment to the drop box by 12 midnight on August 6th.

You will hand in a memo that has:

1. The 3 BEST Tables (one for each of the family types) in the city you looked at (be sure to include the name of the city on top of your table, along with the family type it refers to).
2. Provide a brief assessment of how monthly income compares with those costs compares to the poverty line; the Federal Minimum Wage and the NJ Minimum Wage.

Final Paper. Your final paper will be your OWN work and will be based on the BEST wages that the class pulled together for cities in Monmouth County, along with an analysis and policy recommendations that each student will develop individually.

First, you are to choose 2 of the cities that our class created BEST Tables for, and use those tables as a dataset for your paper.

Second, you are going to gather data about wages in jobs for individuals with a high school degree in those cities (or nearby cities). I suggest you look at the following types of employment--- retail sales; restaurant/hotel work; building trades, casinos and health care. Chose 3 of these areas identify and then 2 jobs that someone could perform with a high school degree. Then find out the hourly starting wages. You can search online, talk to people working the jobs or call employers. Just be sure you document how you get the information.

Based on the BEST tables created and the wages that are offered, you are to write a paper detailing the gaps between the wages and ways to help families reach BEST wages. For the paper you must use at least ONE reading from EACH unit of the class to make your points. For example, what policies will help families achieve economic security; what is the role of the jobs and low wage work; how can education and training play a role; what about inequality. Also be sure to couch your discussion within the larger framework of the economic recession and the recovery.

As you organize your paper you want to be sure to include the BEST tables for the cities you are looking at; a brief assessment of how monthly income compares with living costs, when working at the available jobs; and a discussion of how Monmouth County can address these issues (particularly building on the readings on anti-poverty and workforce development policies).

This paper is due by August 15th at 12 midnight.

Course Schedule

July 9, 2012-- IN CLASS

Introduction to Course and Current Economic Realities

Plotnick book-- Chapter 1-- “Old Assumptions, New Realities” Available as PDF on course website

July 11, 2012—ONLINE

Profile of the Working Poor

The Working Poor Families Project. 2008. “Still Working Hard, Still Falling Behind.” Available at <http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/pdfs/NatReport08.pdf>

Ehrenreich Book-- Introduction

July 16, 2012---IN CLASS

Low-Wage Jobs and Poverty

Ehrenreich Book-- Chapter 1 and 2

July 18, 2012--- ONLINE

Living on Low Wage Work

Ehrenreich Book--Chapter 3

Updated Afterword, <http://www.tomdispatch.com/archive/175428/>

July 23, 2012---IN CLASS

Inequality, Poverty and Work—Gender and Race

Pew Report. 2011. Two Years of Economic Recovery: Women Lose Jobs, Men Find Them

http://pewsocialtrends.org/files/2011/07/Employment-by-Gender_FINAL_7-6-11.pdf

AARP. 2008. “From Work to Retirement: Tracking Changes in Women’s Poverty Status.”

http://www.in.gov/icw/files/inb156_poverty.pdf

J.B. Isaacs. 2008. “Economic Mobility of Black and White Families.” In J.B. Isaacs, I. Sawhill and R. Haskins Getting Ahead or Losing Ground: Economic Mobility in America(Washington

D.C.: Brookings Institution). Pages 71-80.

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/02_economic_mobility_sawhill/02_economic_mobility_sawhill_ch6.pdf

Economic Policy Brief. 2008. What A Recession Means to Black America

<http://www.epi.org/publications/entry/ib241/>

Center for American Progress. 2011. The State of Communities of Color in the US Economy: A Snapshot As We Enter 2011.

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/01/pdf/comm_of_color.pdf

July 25, 2012—ONLINE

Quiz

July 30, 2012—IN CLASS

Real Measures of Economic Security

Wider Opportunities for Women. 2011. BEST Report

<http://www.wowonline.org/documents/BESTIndexforTheUnitedStates2010.pdf>

Wider Opportunities for Women. 2011. Coming Up Short-

<http://www.wowonline.org/documents/ComingUpShort2011.pdf>

Wider Opportunities for Women. 2011. NJ Elder Index,

<http://www.njfoundationforaging.org/NJElderIndexReport.pdf>

August 1, 2012---ONLINE

Best Wages in Monmouth County.

This class will be used to gather data for your memo

August 6—IN CLASS

Best Wages in Monmouth County Memo

This class will be used to write your memo with your class partner. The memo is due by midnight on August 6.

August 8, 2012—ONLINE

Anti-poverty policy

T. Holt. 2006. "The Earned Income Tax Credit at Age 30: What We Know." Brookings Research Brief. February 2006. (http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20060209_Holt.htm)

R. Blank. 2008. Helping Disconnected Single Mothers. National Poverty Center. Policy Brief # 10. http://www.npc.umich.edu/publications/policy_briefs/brief10/policy_brief10.pdf

Urban Institute. 2002. "Ten Things Everyone Should Know About Welfare Reform" <http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/310484.pdf>

August 13, 2012--- INCLASS

Workforce Development Policy

Gatta, It's more than just job placement!: Re-thinking workforce development policy to raise single mothers out of poverty

Holtzer, Workforce Development Policy as Anti-Poverty Policy, <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc262k.pdf>

Final Paper-- Due by August 15