

RESEARCH ON THE URBAN UNDERCLASS

Political Science 102K Spring 2007

Wed. 9-11:50
SSB 108

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COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description:

The “underclass problem” – especially the urban underclass problem – is widely considered to be among the United States’ most troubling, complex, intractable, and controversial contemporary social issues. In this class, we will learn exactly what the term the 'underclass' means, we will look at its origins, we will examine both black and white responses to urban poverty, and we will look at the role that the underclass plays in the American political arena. Over the course of the semester we will try to answer three questions: 1) why do impoverished ghettos/barrios exist in America? 2) what impact, if any, do these neighborhoods have on their residents? and 3) what can we do to reduce concentrated poverty in America's cities? Although much of the course focuses on African Americans, we will look at the status of other racial groups and we will pay particular attention to inter-racial and inter-class conflict within the urban underclass.

Format and requirements:

This is a seminar and not a lecture course. Participation in class is mandatory. Forty percent of your grade will depend on your attendance and ACTIVE and THOUGHTFUL participation during each week’s discussion. To help you organize your thoughts about the assigned materials, you will be asked to prepare one essay in response to the readings each week. Each essay should be 1-2 single-spaced pages --- never more than 2 --- and should: 1) identify the main themes or arguments of EACH work assigned, 2) isolate 2 issues raised, or stances taken by ONE of the readings that you find problematic, intriguing, or otherwise especially deserving of attention; and 3) offer you own takes on those 2 issues, drawing on other readings and your own experience as appropriate. These essays are due at the beginning of class and will make-up 20 percent of your grade. The only other requirement is a research paper. You can write on anything as long as it is somehow related to the urban underclass. At the end of the quarter, students will be expected to make a short presentation to the class on their research. All students must submit a 2 page prospectus for the research paper (paper topic, outline of your argument, sample bibliography) by the beginning of class week six. The research paper will account for the remaining 40% of your grade.

Required Course Packet:

All course readings with the exception of the one required book will be available on e-reserves at at: <http://reserves.ucsd.edu/eres/default.aspx>. I will also make a hard copy course packet if there is enough interest.

Required Books:

Alex Kotlowitz (1991). *There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America*.

Reading List

**Week One
INTRODUCTION**

April 4 Outline of class/Introduction to Underclass Research

**Week Two
WHAT SHOULD WE DO? WHAT CAN WE DO?**

April 11 John Rawls (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. pp 3-22, 60-100, and 258-332

Christopher Jencks (1988) "Whom Must We Treat Equally for Educational Opportunity to Be Equal?" *Ethics* 98 (April) pp 518-533

David Ellwood (1988). *Poor Support*. pp 14-44

R. Kent Weaver (2000) *Ending Welfare as We Know It* pp 169-195

Week Three
DEFINING THE UNDERCLASS

- April 18** John Scholz and Kara Levine (2001) "The Evolution of Income Support Policy in Recent Decades" in *Understanding Poverty*, Sheldon Danziger and Robert Haveman (Eds). Pp 193- 228
- Charles Murray (2000) *The Underclass Revisited* published by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research at:
http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.14891/pub_detail.asp
- Paul Jargowsky (1997). *Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios, and the American City*. pp 1-31, 61-64, 89-115
- Joe William Trotter (1993) Blacks in the Urban North: The Underclass Question in Historical Perspective. In *The Underclass Debate*. Michael Katz (Ed) pp55-81
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Week Four
LIFE IN GHETTO POVERTY

- April 25** Alex Kotlowitz (1991). *There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America*. Whole Book
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Week Five
CAUSES OF GHETTO POVERTY-PART A

- May 2** Charles Murray (1984). *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980*. pp 154-177
- David Ellwood and Lawrence Summers (1986). Poverty in America: Is Welfare the Answer or the Problem? in Danziger and Weinberg (eds), *Fighting Poverty*. pp 78-105
- Loic Wacquant and William Wilson (1991). "Poverty, Joblessness, and the Social Transformation of the Inner City" In *Welfare Policy for the 1990s* Phoebe Cottingham and David Ellwood (Eds) pp 70-102
- Douglas Massey (1993). *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. pp 1-16
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Week Six
CAUSES OF GHETTO POVERTY-PART B

- May 9** Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1994). *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. pp 91-115, 127-142, and 269-318
- Kirschenman and Neckerman (1991). "'We'd Love to Hire Them, But...'" The Meaning of Race for Employers" in Jencks and Peterson (eds), *The Urban Underclass*. pp 203-234
- Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom (1997). *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible*. pp 232-257

TWO PAGE PROSPECTUS FOR YOUR RESEARCH PAPER DUE TODAY
(brief description of topic, your argument, sample bibliography)

Week Seven
BARRIO POVERTY

- May 16** Robert Aponte (1991) "Urban Hispanic Poverty: Disaggregations and Explanations" *Social Problems* Vol 38(4):516-528
- Oscar Lewis (1969). "The Culture of Poverty" in Moynihan (ed), *On Understanding Poverty*. pp 187-200
- Mario Barrera, Carlos Munoz, Charles Ornelas. (1974) "The Barrio as an Internal Colony" in *La Causa Politica*. F. Chris Garcia
- Joan Moore and Raquel Pinderhughs (1993) (eds) *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass Debate* pp 27-50, 51-78, 173-194, 195-202
- Frank Bean and Gillian Stevens (2003) *America's Newcomers and the Dynamics of Diversity* pp 232-249
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Week Eight
NEIGHBORHOOD EFFECTS

- May 23** Christopher Jencks and Susan Mayer (1990). "The Social Consequences of Growing Up in a Poor Neighborhood" in Lynn and McGahey, *Inner-City Poverty in the United States*. pp 111-127
- Elijah Anderson (1991). "Neighborhood Effects on Teenage Pregnancy" in Jencks and Peterson (eds), *The Urban Underclass*. pp 375-398
- Deborah Prothrow-Smith (1991). *Deadly Consequences*. Chapters 5,6,&7
- Ingrid Ellen and Margery Turner (1997) "Does Neighborhood Matter? Assessing Recent Evidence" *Housing Policy Debate* Vol 8(4) pp 833-866
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Week Nine
THE MULTI-RACIAL UNDERCLASS AND PROSPECTS FOR COALITION BUILDING

- May 30** James H. Johnson, Jr., and Melvin L. Oliver (1994). "Interethnic Minority Conflict in Urban America: The Effects of Economic and Social Dislocations" in Pincus and Ehrlich (eds), *Race and Ethnic Conflict*. pp 194-205
- Sumi Cho (1993). "Koreans Americans vs African Americans: Conflict and Construction" in Gooding-Williams (ed), *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*. pp 196-211
- Claire Jean Kim (2000) *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City* Chapter 1 pp 1-13
- Zoltan Hajnal (2005) *The Missing Rainbow: Understanding Inter-Minority Cooperation*. Unpublished Manuscript
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Week Ten
SOLUTIONS

June 6

Lawrence Mead (1989). "The Logic of Workfare." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. V501 pp 156-169

William Wilson (1987). *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. pp 140-164

Christopher Jencks and Kathryn Edin (1995). "Do Poor Women Have a Right to Bear Children?" *The American Prospect*. Winter:43-52

Nicholas Lemann (1994). "The Myth of Community Development" *New York Times Magazine*. January 9. pp27ff

James Rosenbaum and Susan Popkin (1991). "Employment and Earnings of Low-Income Blacks Who Move to Middle-Class Suburbs" in Christopher Jencks and Paul Peterson, *The Urban Underclass*. pp 342-356

Lynn Karoly (2001). "Investing in the Future: Reducing Poverty through Human Capital Investments" in Danziger and Haveman (eds), *Understanding Poverty*. Pp 314-356

Students will make a short in-class presentation on their research papers