Course Description and Objectives

In her book Social Forces and States, Judith Teichman argues that “significant and long term improvement in distributional outcomes is a daunting political task [that requires] a strong societal consensus on the importance of the reduction in inequality, one that compels political leaders to make difficult policy changes.” Teichman’s words indicate that poverty and inequality are not just socioeconomic problems, but critical political and policy problems both in the U.S. and in the rest of the world that do not have easy solutions. This class attempts to tackle some of those complex problems by looking at poverty, inequality and the social and economic policies designed to ameliorate these problems in the U.S. and selected African, Asian, European and Latin American countries.

This course is divided in four sections:

a) The first one discusses the global nature of inequality
b) The second section will focus on poverty and anti-poverty policies pursued in Europe and the U.S.

c) The third section focuses on three middle-income countries: Chile, Mexico and South Korea. In this section the focus is on the role that social forces and the state play in the generation of socioeconomic responses to poverty and inequality as well as the impact of Conditional Cash Transfers

d) The fourth section analyses poverty, the behavior of the poor and antipoverty policies in very poor countries or regions of the world. It also discusses micro-financing and Unconditional Cash Transfers
2.-**Skills:** The course emphasizes the development of analytical skills.

Students will develop these analytical skills in different forms:

a) **Class discussions** which will allow the students to develop the ability to analyze, discuss, and defend different policy positions in an academic environment.

b) **Writing two policy memos:** It is critical for all of us to be able to summarize a problem, present possible solutions, and recommend policies/solutions to others. The policy memos allow the students to develop these very important skills. Students are expected to assume the role of a policy maker and provide specific policies to the President or another relevant policy maker. The policy memos emphasize the use of data, the analysis of the problem, and the policy design.

c) **Group presentation and paper:** Group presentations are geared to allow the student to develop the ability to work in a project with other students, learn about a specific topic in depth, and prepare a class presentation using either power point or class handouts. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the presentation the instructor meets with the student about a week before the presentation to set the specific topics and parameters of the presentation. The handout or slides need to be submitted to the instructor at least 24 hours before the presentation. The instructor will review the slides or handouts in order to verify the effectiveness of the presentation. The members of the group will also have to provide the instructor with a 10-12 pp. case study paper. The paper will be due five days after the presentation.

d) **Analytical essays:** The final exam consists of two analytical essays or memos in which the students will analyze the core concepts studied in the class and apply them to specific cases.

**Requirements and grading**

It is required to **attend class, do the readings and participate in the class discussions**

**Students who do not attend class will have their grade substantially reduced.**

**Grade reduction will proceed as follows:**

Between 3-4 unexcused absences= One point reduction i.e. from A to B
Between 5-6 unexcused absences=two points reduction i.e. from A to C
Over 6 unexcused absences= students will fail the class

If you have a reason for not attending class, please email me.

**Grading:**

**Policy Memos= 50% of the grade (25% each)**

**Group project: Includes presentation and paper= 25% of the grade**

**Final exam= 25% of the grade**

**Policy memo.** Memo topics and detailed guidelines will be distributed to the class on the assigned date

Students will have the option of submitting a draft of the memo to the TA for comments.
Students are strongly encouraged to use this option. The TA will be able to review the paper’s content, style and citations.

**Group project:** Students will select a country or policy during the second week of classes and the instructor will form groups of about four or five students each. The group will do a class presentation and write a case study paper on the chosen topic. Topics will be organized around policy areas or countries. The length of the paper is between 10-12 pp. double spaced, one-inch margins. The paper will be due five days after the presentation and the instructor will provide guidelines for each paper after the presentation.

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**Memo and Papers Grading Criteria**

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<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Impact</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar and spelling:</td>
<td>minus half grade point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major problems</td>
<td>minus one point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missing sections:</td>
<td>minus half point each</td>
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<td>a) Abstract and/ or conclusions:</td>
<td>minus one point</td>
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<td>b) Missing one of the content sections:</td>
<td>minus one point</td>
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<td>c) Failing to analyze the problem:</td>
<td>minus one point</td>
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<td>Recommendations:</td>
<td>minus one point</td>
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<td>Good idea for a recommendation, but poor development or implementation:</td>
<td>minus half point per recommendation</td>
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<td>Citations:</td>
<td>minus one point to failing grade</td>
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**Cheating and Plagiarism**

Students who plagiarize will receive 0 points in the assignment and consequently **will fail the class.** The instructor will make use of all available University policies. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean and Program Chair.

**Laptops are not allowed in class** unless the student has obtained special permission from the instructor

**Cell phone use and texting:** Please disconnect your cell phone before coming to class and refrain from either checking messages or sending text messages.
**Use of Internet Sources:** Please use reliable sources. Wikipedia and blogs are not reliable sources.

**Take care of yourself.**

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings such as anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at [http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/](http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/). Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

**Important dates:**

**Policy memo 1:** Topic distributed Sept 27  
**Memo due:** Oct. 9 before 10:00 PM

**Policy memo 2:** Topic distributed Oct 25  
**Memo due:** Nov. 5 before 10:00 PM

**Take home final:** Topic Distributed Nov. 29  
**Memo due:** Dec 9 before 10:00 PM

**Required Books:**

Francois Bourguignon, *The Globalization of Inequality*, Princeton University Press, 2015 (this book will be made available to the class through Canvas)


Judith Teichman, *Social Forces and States: Poverty and Distributional Outcomes in South Korea, Chile and Mexico*, Stanford University Press, 2012

Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the way to Fight Poverty*, Public Affairs 2011

Please note that some of these books are available in Kindle and paperback
Syllabus

Aug 30:

Topic: Introduction: Measuring Poverty and Inequality; Why to be concerned? What about inequality? The role of social policy
Readings will be emailed to the class

Section 1: Inequality

Sept 6:
Topic: Inequality
Read: The Globalization of Inequality, pp. 1-116
This section of the book will be emailed to the class and it is available on Canvas

Section II: The Welfare State in Europe and Anti-Poverty-Policies in the U.S.
Sept 13:
Topics: The Welfare State: How Poverty was Reduced in Europe after WW II; The Swedish Welfare State
Read:
rszarf.ips.uw.edu.pl/welfare-state/pierson.pdf
Articles will be emailed to the class and placed on Canvas

Sept 20:
Read: Legacies of the War on Poverty, pp. 1-121
**Sept 27:**

**Topics:** U.S. Welfare and Social Security Policies  
**Read:** Legacies of the War on Poverty, pp. 151-234  
Robert Moffitt “A Primer on U.S. Welfare Reform” Institute for Research on Poverty  

**Memo topic distributed: Sept 27,  
Memo due: Oct 9 before 10:00 PM**

**Oct 4:**

**Topic:** U.S. Anti-Poverty Policies: Focus on Health  
**Read:** Legacies of the War on Poverty, pp. 235-298  
For **The Affordable Care Act Read:**  
David Blumenthal, et. al. “The Affordable Care Act at 5 years” The New England Journal of Medicine, June 18, 2015, pp. 2451-2458  
Christine Eibner, “The Affordable Care Act in Depth” Rand Corporation  
Ricardo Nulia, “Poor and Uninsured in Texas” The New Yorker, August 18, 2016  
Articles on Canvas

**Oct 11:**

**Topics:** US Anti-Poverty Policies: Focus on wages, Minimum Wage, Gender Wage Gap  
**Assessment of U.S. social policies and their impact**  
**Read**  
Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, “The State of the Union: Poverty and Inequality, Report 2014”  
I. Sawhill and Q. Karpilow, “Raising the Minimum Wage and Redesigning the EICT”, Center on Children and Families, Brookings Institution, 2014
Section 3: Poverty Reduction through Socioeconomic Policies

Oct 18
Topic: Chile, South Korea and Mexico: Origins of Poverty and Inequality; Impact of economic policies in poverty reduction; the role of government in economic policies
Read: Social Forces and States: Poverty and Distributional Incomes in South Korea, Chile and Mexico, pp. 1-117

Oct 25
Topics:
Distributional Outcomes, Social Conditions and Welfare Regimes in the Twenty-First Century
Read: Social Forces and States: South Korea, Chile and Mexico, pp. 118-183

Social Policies and Conditional Cash Transfers in Developing Countries
Read:
Silvia Borzutzky and Mark Hyde, “A Just Retirement Future for Chilean Workers: Social Insurance or Private Savings”, University of Manchester, Brooks Poverty Institute, 2015
Amanda Glasman, “Cash Transfers and Deeper Causes of Poverty”, Center for Global Development
Articles available on Canvas

Memo 2: Distributed Oct 25. Memo: Due Nov. 5 before 10:00 PM

Nov 1
Topics: Reducing Poverty in China: Industrialization and Inequality: Can others copy the Assessment of the policies studied in this section Comparing China, India and Brazil.
Read:
Section 4: Behavioral Approaches to Poverty among the Poorest

Nov. 8
Topic: Poverty among the Poorest
Read: Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the way to Fight Global Poverty, pp. 1-101

Nov. 15
Topic: Savings, Lending, Entrepreneurship and Microfinance
Read: Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the way to Fight Global Poverty, pp. 101-181
Jpal, “Microcredit: Summary of Seven Studies on the impact of Microcredit: Where Credit is due”

Nov 29
Topic: Savings, Policies and Politics, Gender Issues and Unconditional Transfers
Read
Read: Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the way to Fight Global Poverty, pp. 183-274

Final Exam distributed: Nov 29, Exam due Dec 9
Dec. 6  
**Topic:** Regional Assessments, Inequality Reduction and Conclusions  
Renos Vakis, et. al., “Left behind: Chronic Poverty in Latin America” World Bank Group, 2016, Read the overview and conclusions  
“Anti-Poverty Programs in a Global Perspective Lessons from Rich and Poor Countries” June 20-21, 2011, Social Science Research Center Berlin (on bboard)  
Francois Bourguignon, The Globalization of Inequality, pp 146-189  

**Take home exam due: December 9 before 10:00 PM via email**