Seeing Poverty: Understanding and Addressing Poverty in America  
KHC PH103

Fall, 2014  
Tuesday/Thursday 11:00AM-12:30PM  
KHC Room 114

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Clinical Assistant Professor

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Course Description

“To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships.” – W.E.B. Du Bois.

How do we understand poverty in modern America? Images of poverty might lead us to believe poverty is exclusively a problem of urban people of color, but what do historic and modern depictions of poverty in popular culture – reality TV shows, or films tell us? How is data on poverty calculated and understood? This course will explore the ever-changing and ever-political sociological and public health issues of measuring poverty in America today. Using literature, film, photography, and public data sets, the course will explore the true meaning of “poverty” and what it really means to be poor. The root causes of poverty, intergenerational poverty, and gendered poverty will be examined, and common myths about poverty will be debated. Particular attention will be given to intersections of race and class, and the lifelong impact for children growing up in poverty will be furthered examined.

This course offers students the opportunity to explore the complex issues of American poverty through multiple disciplines and approaches. As a course in the Kilachand Honor’s College, Seeing Poverty will utilize multiple sources of
information for students to examine the historical, political, and public health “view” of poverty. This multi-disciplinary approach will allow students the opportunity to discover for themselves the “truth” or “truths” of what it means to be poor in America today. Students will think about stories that are told about the poor – who is doing the telling? How are the poor depicted? Lastly, this course will expose students to my work in five of the poorest cities in Massachusetts (Chelsea, Holyoke, Springfield, Lawrence, and New Bedford) with young adult and teenage mothers. By developing a deep understanding of the causes and sustainers of poverty, it is my hope that students will become critical assessors of the depiction of the poor in popular media, and indeed become advocates for the poor.

Course Format: This course is a discussion-based seminar. While there will be some lectures, film and photo viewings, and in-class small group work, the majority of time will be spent in interactive group discussion. The purpose of discussion is to solidify concepts from class and readings and to allow you to develop and defend solutions to real-world poverty. Students will be expected to actively participate in all class discussions, so come prepared. IT IS THEREFORE, VERY IMPORTANT TO ATTEND CLASS.

Assessment: Assessment for this course will be based on the following:

| 1. Active, engaged in-class participation and contribution: | 15% |
| 2. Reading Responses: 3 two-page written responses to the week’s reading assignments. 5% each | 15% |
| 3. Op-Ed: a one-page opinion editorial | 20% |
| 4. City Analysis: Students will select a city in Massachusetts to focus on and explore. Students will produce a three page briefing on the current “state of the city” including demographics, services, and community assets. | 25% |
| 5. Podcast: Students will write, create, and produce a podcast (a short recorded talk) about their experience in the course, what they have learned, and their critical thinking about poverty in the media today. Podcasts will be shared in class. | 25% |
| Total | 100% |

Grading Criteria for Assignments: Each of the ten criteria below will be scored from 0-10, and the student’s score for each discussion will be the sum of the scores for these ten criteria (see details below). These criteria were chosen to emphasize your communication skills and the skills you are acquiring in our class.
### Grading Criteria

1. Were responses **grammatically correct and free of spelling errors?**

2. Readability, Logic and Flow: Regardless of whether you (the grader) agree with the student’s comments and conclusions, were their thoughts **expressed logically**? Did the response “flow” in an orderly way? Were the student’s comments **clear and concise**?

3. Were the students observations **factually correct**?

4. Did the student **incorporate terminology** from the course and use these terms correctly?

5. Does the discussion **convey a fundamental understanding of the concepts** addressed in this course?

6. Did the student appropriately **incorporate** information from lectures, the textbook, or assigned readings?

7. Did the student **take a clear position** on controversial points and provide a **rationale and defense** of this position?

8. Did the student identify **alternative interests or points of view** and acknowledge them appropriately?

9. Were solutions proposed by the student reasonably **feasible**?

10. Were responses **thoughtful and serious**, or were they overly brief, incomplete, or dismissive?

### Scale for Each Criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Outstanding, among the best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Excellent, but minor improvements would have improved it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Good. Meets the criterion, with no major deficiencies but there is room for improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Satisfactory. Fundamental requirements are met, but there is definite room for improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Performance is marginal for this criterion. There are major problems or omissions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It is clearly deficient for this criterion. Substantial improvement is needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>Varying degrees of abysmal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Unanswered, or so utterly bad that it would have been better to not answer.</td>
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</table>

**NOTE:** It is standard academic practice to provide appropriate citations when you cite work by others. This does not have to be elaborate, but you should include appropriate references at the end of your written assignments.
**Required Readings/viewings:** The required reading for each session comes from primary and secondary journal articles; these readings and hyperlinks to the articles are almost all listed in the detailed schedule of classes, learning objectives, and reading assignments listed after the summary table of the course schedule. Additional readings, and sometimes links to video, will be posted on Blackboard.

**Blackboard site:** The Blackboard site for KHC PH103 Fall 2014 can be found at learn.bu.edu.

**Facebook Page:** I use Facebook in all of my classes as an informal networking opportunity for students to connect outside of class. A Facebook page for this seminar is open to all, and while not a required element of the course, is a good place to learn more about poverty issues, post articles you read about poverty in popular news, and to learn about internship and occasionally job opportunities. All you have to do is search Facebook for “KHC###” and “Like” the page to be connected.

**Grading:** Your semester grade will be computed based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>% of Semester Grade</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>94.0 - 100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>90.0 - 93.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op-Ed</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>88.0 - 89.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Study</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>82.0 - 87.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcast</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>80.0 - 81.9%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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</table>

Your semester average will be rounded off to the nearest tenth of a percent, and semester grades generally are assigned as shown to the right.
Absences and Extensions

Absences
Students are expected to attend class and regular attendance is CRITICAL to your success in KHC PH103. However, I recognize that emergencies arise that require students be absent. If you cannot attend class, please send an email to me prior to class. Please put “absent” in the subject line. You are expected to catch up on material covered in class through Blackboard notes and other students’ notes.

Requests for Extensions on Assignments
Assignments are due on dates posted unless prior arrangement has been made with the instructor 48 hours prior to the due date. Assignments that are not received on the expected due date will be lowered by three points (e.g. from 95 to 92 if turned in one day late). For each additional day the assignment is late, one additional point will be deducted per day (e.g. from 95 to 91 if turned in two days late). If due to circumstances beyond your control you need to request an extension you must email me 48 hours prior to the due date. Please put “extension request” in the subject line. Part of our goal at KHC is to teach students skills and habits for the professional world. Meeting deadlines and managing multiple responsibilities is part of the learning process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes/Assignments due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Course overview, introduction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Measuring poverty</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Poverty thresholds</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>The political nature of poverty measurement</td>
<td>1st Reading reflection Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>History of poverty in the US</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Johnson’s War on Poverty</td>
<td>Guest speaker (TBD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Historic imagery about poverty in America</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Immigration, poverty, industrialization</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>The war on poverty, or a war on the poor?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Changing sympathy and public views of the poor</td>
<td>2nd reading reflection due</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Income inequality: is poverty relative?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Discussion: The Great Gatsby</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Root Causes: teen pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Intergenerational Poverty</td>
<td>Op-Ed due</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Case Study: Native American Indian Poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Case Study: The Gulf Coast, Mississippi</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Case Study: Chicago, IL</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Case Study: Poverty in Massachusetts</td>
<td>City Study Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Visit to Roca, Inc. Chelsea, MA</td>
<td>Field Trip to Roca, Inc. Chelsea, MA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Discussion &amp; Debrief: Chelsea, MA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Inadequate responses to poverty</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Inadequate responses to poverty, Con’t.</td>
<td>3rd Reading Reflection Due</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Strategies out: Building a bridge to self-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>sufficiency</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Crittenton Women’s Union: an approach</td>
<td>Guest speaker (TBD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Strategies out: Building a bridge to self-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>sufficiency, Con’t.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Podcast Presentations</td>
<td>Podcasts Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Podcast Presentations</td>
<td>Podcasts Due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Podcast Presentations</td>
<td>Podcasts Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Podcast Presentations</td>
<td>Podcasts Due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>COURSE WRAP UP</td>
<td></td>
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**Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

1. **(Knowledge)** Define what poverty means in the US in 2013;
2. **(Comprehension)** Explain the political nature of poverty definitions;
3. **(Application)** Demonstrate the changes in eligibility for social programs as a consequence of changing definitions of poverty;
4. **(Analysis)** Differentiate between the imagery of the poor and the reality of poverty;
5. **(Synthesis)** Formulate a critique of the solutions to poverty;
6. **(Evaluation)** Assess the effectiveness of strategies to end poverty.

**Required Texts**

1. All readings for KHC PH103 will be accessible online using your BU ID. When needed additional articles will be distributed in class. There are several films, videos, and podcasts as part of class. All of these will be made available in class or on the Blackboard site.

**Academic Dishonesty**

[http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/](http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/)
Course Outline & Readings

Week 1. TUES: Course Introduction, Overview
THURS: Measuring Poverty

Reading/Class Preparation:

Coudouel et al. (2002), Poverty Measures and Analysis, in the PRSP Sourcebook, World Bank, Washington D.C.


Week 2. TUES: Poverty Thresholds
THURS: The political nature of poverty measurement

Reading/Class Preparation:


Week 3. TUES: History of poverty in the US
THURS: Johnson’s War on Poverty

Reading/Class Preparation:

Listen: White House Recording, Lyndon B. Johnson with Thomas Hughes, Director of the Office of Intelligence and Research, US State Department, April 14, 1964.

http://millercenter.org/presidentialrecordings/lbj-wh6404.09-3020

http://www.jstor.org/stable/1887754

Week 4. Tues: Historic Imagery about poverty in America
Thurs: Immigration, poverty, industrialization

Reading/Class Preparation:


The Natchez Poverty Report
http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/feature/natchez/


Week 5.
TUES: The war on poverty, or a war on the poor?
THURS: Changing sympathy and public views of the poor.

Reading/Class Preparation:


“She’s Oooo’d Herself.” Here Comes Honey Boo Boo. TLC. August 15, 2012. [Television].

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQJACVmankY
http://www.trapmuzik.com/
Week 6.  TUES: Income inequality: is poverty relative?
            THURS: Discussion on “The Great Gatsby”

Reading/Class Preparation:


AmericanPoverty.org

Week 7.  TUES: Root causes: teen pregnancy
            THURS: Intergenerational poverty

Reading/Class Preparation:


Week 8.  TUES: Case Study: Native American Indian Poverty
            THURS: Case Study: the Gulf Coast, Mississippi

Reading/Class Preparation:


Week 9.  TUES: Case Study: Chicago, IL
            THURS: Poverty in Massachusetts

Reading/Class Preparation:


Week 10. TUES: Visit to Roca, Inc. Chelsea, MA
THURS: Discussion and Debrief

Reading/Class Preparation:

http://www.rocainc.org/


Week 11. TUES: Inadequate responses to Poverty
THURS: Inadequate responses to Poverty, Con’t.

Reading/Class Preparation:


E. Jane Costello; Scott N. Compton; Gordon Keeler; Adrian Angold Relationships Between Poverty and Psychopathology: A Natural Experiment JAMA. 2003;290(15):2023-2029.


Week 12. TUES: Strategies out: Building a bridge to self-sufficiency
THURS: Crittenton Women’s Union

Reading/Class Preparation:


Week 13. TUES: Strategies out: Building a bridge to self-sufficiency, con’t.
THURS: Podcast presentations

Week 14. TUES: Podcast presentations
THURS: Podcast presentations

Week 15: TUES: Podcast presentations
THURS: Course wrap-up