RS/AREc 421/521
Economics of Rural Poverty and the U.S. Social Safety Net
Fall 2013
4 Credits

Bruce Weber  bruce.weber@oregonstate.edu
Office: Ballard Hall 240G
Phone: 541-737-1432
Office Hours: By appointment. Email or call me or contact Rich Sandler (541-737-1442 between 12:30 pm and 4:30 pm) to schedule an appointment
Teaching Assistant:
Course meeting time: 4:00-5:50 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays
Room: TBA

Course Description: This course introduces students to the geography of poverty in the United States and the “social safety net” that the U.S. has constructed to reduce poverty and its negative effects. The course focuses on the geography of the social safety net, the operation and administration of the safety net, and how recent changes in the social safety net may have disadvantaged rural people and places.

This course combines approximately 120 hours of instruction, online activities, and assignments for four credits.

Prerequisites: None.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes: Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

• Discuss causes and effects of rural poverty in the United States
• Describe the major social safety net programs, and how the social safety net has been transformed over the past two decades in a way that may disadvantage rural residents
• Evaluate proposals to reform the social safety net

In addition to being able to achieve the general student learning outcomes for the course, graduate students will be able to

• Summarize and evaluate peer-reviewed journal research in their academic discipline related to rural poverty and the social safety net; and
• Communicate the main findings of this research and their evaluation of the research to students and faculty in other academic disciplines.

Evaluation of Student Performance: Students are expected to be fully engaged in all aspects of the course, including reading, writing, attending and actively participating in all class sessions, asking questions, offering reasoned points of view, and listening attentively to others.

• Weekly writing assignment. (Due each week, except Week 1 and Week 8) Each Tuesday, students will hand in a short writing assignment designed to help them articulate the main points of the readings and to facilitate their participation in class discussions. The assignment will consist of 3-4 discussion questions related to the week’s reading assignment. Students will write short (one paragraph) responses to each of the questions. These questions will be posted on Blackboard the week
before they are due. The writing assignment will be collected at the end of each class. If a student misses a class, the assignment must be emailed to the instructor by 6 pm the day it is due. There are 8 classes in which assignments could be completed, but only 7 assignments are expected from each student. That is, each student gets to skip handing in one week’s assignment of his/her choosing.

- **Volunteer time with a social service provider.** Each student will be asked to volunteer with a local agency that addresses poverty or provides social services. During this first-hand experience students will be asked to provide direct benefit to their agency of choice and to prepare a 3 page report of their experience. Students will be asked to reflect on their experience in class discussions later in the term. A list of local social service providers will be distributed at the beginning of class. Additional guidelines and preparation will be covered in the second week of class.

- **Briefing paper and oral presentation evaluating a social safety net program. (Due in Class during Week 8)** Each student will be expected to pick one program that is part of the U.S. social safety net and summarize the current structure and funding of the program and outline the current policy debates about this program. The 10 page double spaced briefing paper should include a 2 page review of any relevant studies of the impact of the program and identify particular challenges that may be related to geographic access. The first page should be an executive summary of the briefing document. Additional requirements will be distributed in class.

- **Final Examination. (Take-home essay exam during finals week, due Tuesday at noon.)** The final exam will be a take-home essay exam administered during finals week. Exam questions will be posted 24 hours before the exam is due so that students have adequate time to prepare answers.

**Additional Assignment for Graduate Students. (Due Finals Week)**

- Graduate students will be expected to complete an additional assignment consisting of summaries of two journal articles in the student's discipline that relate to the impact of social safety net programs. By the end of the fourth week of the term, graduate students will have met with the instructor to select these articles. These summaries will follow the “four sentence” format developed by Dr. Larry Lev. [See Appendix]

- Graduate students will also be expected to provide oral summaries of the main points of these articles to other students and faculty and explain how their academic discipline would critically evaluate these articles using the rubrics of their academic discipline

**Grading policy:**
Grades will be based on the following distribution of points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly writing assignment (7 assignments @ 3 points)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement Experience and Report</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Briefing Paper</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Examination (and Article Summaries [for graduate students])</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignment of letter grades will follow the conventional scale:

- **A** = 93.0+
- **A-** = 90.0 – 92.9
- **B+** = 87.0 – 89.9
- **B** = 83.0 – 86.9
- **B-** = 80.0 – 82.9
- **C+** = 77.0 – 79.9
- **C** = 73.0 – 76.9
- **C-** = 70.0 – 72.9
- **D+** = 67.0 – 69.9
- **D** = 63.0 – 66.9
- **D-** = 60.0 – 62.9
- **F** = below 60.0

**Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities:** Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 737-4098.

**Expectations for Student Conduct:**
You will be expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner. Academic dishonesty such as plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Therefore, students are expected to be honest and ethical in their academic work. For more information about academic integrity and the University’s policies and procedures in this area, please refer to the Student Conduct web site at: [http://oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct-code-offenses](http://oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct-code-offenses) and the section on Academic Regulations in the OSU Schedule of Classes.

**Diversity Statement:** The Rural Studies Program strives to create an affirming climate for all students including underrepresented and marginalized individuals and groups. Diversity encompasses differences in age, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, physical or mental ability, religion, socioeconomic background, veteran status, sexual orientation, and marginalized groups. We believe diversity is the synergy, connection, acceptance, and mutual learning fostered by the interaction of different human characteristics.

**Religious Holiday Statement:** Oregon State University strives to respect all religious practices. If you have religious holidays that are in conflict with any of the requirements of this class, please see me immediately so that we can make alternative arrangements.

**Textbooks**


Additional readings and links will be provided during the term.
## Course Schedule and Readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>U.S. Poverty: Intro to Causes and Impacts</td>
<td>Burt/ Nightingale, Chapter 2 Partridge/Rickman, pages 1-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Geography of American Poverty</td>
<td>Partridge/Rickman, Chapters 1-2</td>
<td>Weekly Writing 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Causes of Poverty: The Role of Structural and Place-based Barriers to Economic Success</td>
<td>Partridge/Rickman, Chapter 3, parts of Chapter 6 (pp.127-133, 157-159), and all of Chapter 8</td>
<td>Weekly Writing 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>U.S. Social Safety Net: History and Major Programs</td>
<td>Burt/Nightingale, Chapters 1 and 3 Allard, Chapters 1 and 2</td>
<td>Weekly Writing 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>How the Social Safety Net Works on the Ground</td>
<td>Burt/Nightingale, Chapters 4 and 5</td>
<td>Weekly Writing 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Organization of the Social Safety Net</td>
<td>Burt/Nightingale, Chapter 6 Allard, Chapters 4 and 5</td>
<td>Weekly Writing 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Evaluating the Social Safety Net</td>
<td></td>
<td>Briefing Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Repairing the Social Safety Net</td>
<td>Burt/Nightingale, Chapters 7 and 8 Allard, pp. 159-170</td>
<td>Weekly Writing &amp; Briefing Paper Paper Presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+++++++  

**Appendix: Larry Lev's Four-Sentence Format Description**

**Heading:** Name of author, title of work, where published, date (in parentheses),

**Sentence 1:** Name of author, verb (such as "assert", "argue", "suggest", "claim", "imply") and a THAT clause containing the major assertion (thesis statement) of the work.

**Sentence 2:** Explain how the author supports and/or develops the thesis (a bulleted list of three to four items is the easiest way to do this).
Sentence 3: State the author’s purpose in writing the article. A good purpose statement provides a precise answer to the question “Why did the author write this article?” This needs to be different from Sentence 1.

Sentence 4: Identify as specifically as possible the audience whom the author was addressing. Do this by using the format Audience: group1, group 2

**Finally, list all ideas or phrases that you couldn't understand in the article.**