

Scribner Seminar

Political Economy and Her Poor

SSP-100

Skidmore College

Fall 2012

T/R 2:10-3:30 PM

M 8:00-9:00 PM

Professor William Lewis

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office hours: M/W10-11:30AM



Goals and Overview

Political Economy is the relationship between political, cultural, and economic institutions and processes. One reality of political economy is that she has always had her poor, her masses, her multitudes. In addition to listening to the poor represent their own experience, this course will use the tools of the social sciences, philosophy, and literature to understand why the poor are perennial.

In addition to being an interdisciplinary inquiry into political economy, this is a course about knowing, particularly about ways to identify problems, formulate productive questions, and go about answering those questions. Students in this course will demonstrate the ability to:

1. formulate and distinguish among types of questions asked by different disciplines
2. read critically and gather and interpret evidence
3. distinguish among the evidence and methodologies appropriate to different disciplines
4. consider and address complexities and ambiguities
5. make connections among ideas
6. recognize choices, examine assumptions and ask questions of themselves and of their own work
7. formulate conclusions based upon evidence
8. communicate ideas both orally and in writing
9. relate the results of the course to their educational goals.

Mentoring

Integral to this first-year seminar is a mentoring component. In line with this component, we will work together as a class and individually with the instructor to understand what it is you are doing at Skidmore and what you would like to accomplish during your four years here. Necessarily, this type of understanding only comes about through experience and by reflection. As we try new things and explore old passions, we find that some activities engage us and help to make us as we would like to be and that others do not. By actively reflecting on our experiences during your first semester at Skidmore and by developing a plan for what you want to experience while here, the mentoring component of this class will help to make your goals explicit and to clarify the necessary means by which to achieve them.

Materials

Required Media

Course Packet and World Wide Web access are all the materials required for this course.

Assignments and Grading

Written Assignments and Presentations*

- Reading Responses and Discussion Prep Questions

[15%]

To facilitate class discussion, about once a week, I will ask you to prepare responses to the reading or to issues which are to be raised in class.

- Critical Reflection Paper on *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers*

[10%]

- Research Article, Summary and Presentation

[20%]

- Poverty and Policy Paper

[30%]

***No late assignments will be accepted without express permission of the instructor obtained at least 24 hours before the assignment's due date. Violations of the Skidmore College Honor Code will result in an "F" for a class grade as well as all penalties imposed by the Honors System.**

Class Participation and Attendance

[15%]

Many of the texts we will discuss in this class are very difficult and very hard to understand on our own. Because of this, and because this class includes discussion and discussions need participants, attendance is mandatory and you are expected to take part in all class discussions. This should also be an easy portion of your grade, given that this participation is basic to the class and demands no more of you than showing up ready to express an informed opinion after having read the texts assigned for the day and having thought about the discussion questions. This grade is based upon the quality (not necessarily quantity) of your participation. However, it is very hard to participate well if you don't show up to class and if you rarely volunteer to speak. You will be asked to assess your own class participation at the end of the semester. This assessment will then be compared against my own records and assessments in order to determine a final grade.

Mentoring Meetings and RAP Drafting

[10%]

SCHEDULE

Defining Political Economy with *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers*

Week 1 September 2-8

Thursday

Reading:

- Boo, *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers*
- Critical Reflection Paper Assigned•••

Week 2 September 9-15

Monday

Extended Screening:

- Meirelles,F., 2002. *City of God*, Brazil (130 min).

Tuesday

Reading:

- Boo, *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers*
- Critical Reflection Assignment Due•••

Where Are Her Poor Today?

Thursday

Readings:

- Davis, M., 2012. *Planet of slums*
- Sumner, A., 2012. "Where Do the Poor Live?"

Week 3 September 16-22

Monday

Web Screening (watch before Thursday):

- Skene, M. 2012. [Fault Lines: History of an Occupation](http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/occupy-wall-street-history-survival/),
USA
(49 min) << <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/occupy-wall-street-history-survival/>>>

Tuesday

Readings:

- Abramsky, S., 2012. "The Other America."
- Rodricks, E., 2012. "Our official national lie – Americans in poverty."
- NPR Staff, 2012. "How America's Losing The War On Poverty."

Thursday

Readings:

- Prashad, V., 2011. "The Philosophy Behind "Occupy Wall Street"
- Chafkin, M. 2011. "Revolution Number 99."
- Schwartz, M. 2011. "Pre-Occupied."

The Birth, Maintenance, and Discovery of Her Poor

Week 4 September 23-29

Monday

Workshop:

•••How to Cite Exercise•••

Tuesday

Reading:

- Smith, A., 1876. *Wealth of Nations* (selections)
- Smith, A., 1759. *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (selections)
- Gilbert, G., 1997. "Adam Smith on the Nature and Causes of Poverty."

Thursday

Readings:

- Ricardo, X., 1821. *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (selections)
- Malthus, T., 1798. *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (selections).

Week 5 September 30-October 6

Monday

Workshop:

•••first RAP assignment•••

Tuesday

Readings:

- Marx, K., F. Engels.1847 *Communist Manifesto*, Parts I & II

Thursday

Reading:

- Hayek, F., 1944 & 1945. *The Road to Serfdom* & "The Use of Knowledge in Society."

Depicting the Poor

Week 6 October 7-13

Monday

Extended Screening:

- Rogosin, L., 1956. *On the Bowery*, USA (65 min.).

Tuesday

Readings:

- Davis, R., 1861. *Life in the Iron Mills*.

•••first RAP assignment due•••

Thursday

Reading:

- Riis, J. 1890 *How the Other Half Lives* (selections)
- Winfrey, O.; et al., 2005. [Invisible Lives](#) (web document)

Week 7 October 14-20

Monday

Extended Workshop: Dr. John Marsh, English, Pennsylvania State. U.

Readings:

- To be distributed

Social Scientific Understandings of Poverty

Tuesday

Reading:

- Sumner, W. G., 1883. *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (selections).

Thursday

Reading:

- Lewis O., 1966. "The Culture of Poverty."
- Anderson, E., 1992. "The Story of John Turner."

Week 8 October 21-27

Monday

Workshop:

•••second RAP activity assigned•••

Tuesday

Reading:

- Bracking, S., 2009 "Poverty in Africa: the parable of the broken television."

- Sachs, A., A. Mellinger, J. Gallup., 2001. "The Geography of Poverty and Wealth."

Thursday

Reading:

- Wilson, W. J., 2011. "Being Poor, Black, and American."

•••Research Summary Paper Assigned•••

Advising week**Week 9 October 28–November 3**

Tuesday

NO CLASS

Thursday

•••second RAP activity due•••

Week 10 November 4-10

Tuesday

•••eMEETINGS•••

Thursday

•••eMEETINGS•••

Week 11 November 11-17

Monday

•••In person advising meetings (if necessary)•••

Tuesday

Reading:

- Sen, A., 1983. "Poor, Relatively Speaking."

Thursday

Research Summary Presentations:

•••Research Summary Paper Due•••

Do We Have a Duty to End Poverty?

Week 12 November 18-24

Thanksgiving 21-25 November

Tuesday

Reading:

- Singer, P., 1972. "Famine and Morality."

Week 13 November 25-December 1

Tuesday

Reading:

- Pogge, T., 2003. "Severe Poverty as a Human Rights Violation"

Thursday

Reading:

- Narveson, J., 2004. "Welfare and Wealth, Poverty and Justice in Today's World."

Week 14 December 2-8

Tuesday

Reading:

- Okin, S.M., 2003. "Poverty, Well-Being, & Gender: What Counts, Who's Heard?"

•••Final Essay Assigned: Poverty and Policy•••

Thursday

Reading:

•Schweikert, D., 2008. "Global Poverty: Alternative Perspectives on What We Should Do--and Why."

Final Paper Preparation

Week 15 December 9-15

Tuesday

Workshop: Final Paper Ideas and Arguments

Week 16 December 16-22

•••Final Paper Due, date TBA•••