

Political Economy and Her Poor

Skidmore College
Professor William Lewis
T/R 9:10-10:00 PM

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“The poor you will always have with you...”

Matthew 26:11

Goals and Overview

Political Economy is the relationship among political, cultural, and economic institutions and processes, and powers. One reality of political economy is that she has always had her poor, her masses, her multitudes. In addition to listening to impoverished peoples represent their own experiences, this course will use the tools of the social sciences, philosophy, and literature to understand why the poor are thought to be perennial. Complimenting our summer reading, the course will focus not only on global poverty, but also on the relationship between poverty and race in the United States.

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.

¹ [KYA SANDS / BLOUBOSRAND](#), South Africa, Drone Photo, ‘post-apartheid built environments,’ johnny@millefoto.com - ©2016

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

Summer reading, Course Packet and 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 and 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 *Between the World and Me* [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 difficulty 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%]

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation, you must formally request accommodation from the Skidmore Coordinator for Students with Disabilities. You will also need to provide documentation that verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request. For further information, please call 580-8150, or stop by the office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center.

SCHEDULE

Defining Political Economy with Coates

Week 1 September 4-10

Thursday

Introduction:

- What is Political Economy?

Reading:

- Coates, T-N. (2015) *Between the World and Me*

Week 2 September 11-17

Tuesday

Reading:

- Coates, T-N. (2014) "The Case for Reparations."

•••Critical Reflection Paper Assigned•••

Where Are Her Poor Today?

Thursday

Readings:

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

•••Critical Reflection Paper Due•••

The Birth, Maintenance, and Discovery of Her Poor

Week 3 September 18-24

Tuesday

Readings:

- Rousseau, J-J. & G. D. H. Cole (1950) "Political Economy" *The social contract: and discourses*.

•••How to Cite Exercise•••

Thursday

Readings:

- Morley, N. (2006) "The Poor in the City of Rome"
- Himmelfarb, G. (1984) "The Idea of Poverty"

Week 4 September 25-October 1

Tuesday

Readings:

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

Thursday

Reading:

- Smith, A. (1876) *Wealth of Nations* (selections)

Week 5 October 2-8

Tuesday

Readings:

- Marx, K. & F. Engels (1847) *Communist Manifesto*, Parts I & II
- Marx, K. (1859) "Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy*"

●●●first RAP assignment●●●

Thursday

Reading:

- Hayek, F. (1965) "Road to Serfdom" (selections)
- Bengtsson, I. "Hayek, Poverty, and the Poor"

Depicting the Poor**Week 6 October 9-15**

Tuesday

Readings:

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

●●●first RAP assignment due●●●

Thursday

Screen before class:

- M. Glawogger (2005), *Workingman's Death*, 1h50m

Reading:

- Riis, J. (1890) *How the Other Half Lives* (selections)

Poverty, Race, and U.S. Political Economy**Week 7 October 10-22**

Tuesday

Reading:

- Gordon, C. (2013) "Growing Apart: A Political History of American Inequality" (view on web: <http://tinyurl.com/lmdq5re>)
- Fox, L. *et al* (2015) "Trends in Deep Poverty from 1968 to 2011: The Influence of Family Structure, Employment Patterns, and the Safety Net."

Thursday

Readings:

- Lewis O. (1966) "The Culture of Poverty."

●●●second RAP activity assigned●●●

Week 8 October 23-29

Tuesday

Reading:

- Hinton, E. (2015) "A War within Our Own Boundaries": Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and the Rise of the Carceral State.

or

- Thompson, H. (2010) "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History."

Thursday

Readings:

- Anderson, E., (1992) "The Story of John Turner."
•••Research Summary Paper Assigned•••

Advising week

Week 9 October 30–November 5

Tuesday

Workshop:

- Summary Paper Assignment
SPECIAL CLASS MEETING in Library 118 w/ Librarian Johanna Mackay, bring your notes.

Wednesday

•••second RAP activity Due•••

Thursday

•••advising & paper MEETINGS•••

Week 10 November 6-12

Tuesday

•••advising & paper MEETINGS•••

Thursday

Readings:

- Desmond, M., M. Bell (2015) "Housing, Poverty, and the Law"

Week 11 November 13-19

Tuesday

Screen before class:

- Freidrichs, M. (2011) The Pruitt-Igoe Myth (1h19min)

Thursday

Research Summary Presentations:

•••Research Summary Paper Due•••

Do We Have a Duty to End Poverty?

Week 12 November 20-26

Tuesday

Reading:

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

Thursday

Thanksgiving Break, 23-25 November

Week 13 November 27-December 3

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 4-10

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 11-17

Tuesday

Workshop: Final Paper Ideas and Arguments

Week 16 December 18-24

•••Final Paper Due, date TBA•••