General Exam Syllabus: Poverty, Welfare, and Rural America

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Introduction

Course Overview

This is a 12-week course intended to introduce undergraduate Juniors and Seniors to issues of poverty and welfare in America. We will use a focus on rural America as an opportunity to understand the complexity and frontiers of this research, as well as the interconnection between poverty, welfare, and broader issues like identity-based inequality and political movements. The course meets twice a week and will be divided into three sections, each of which will be guided by an overarching question.

1. What is the nature of poverty in America?

The first section of the course explores the issue of poverty. We begin by defining the problem: what is poverty, why do we study it, and how do we measure it? From there we move on to examining the demographics of and historical trends in America poverty in order to build a foundational understanding of the state of American poverty. With that foundation laid, we then ask what the causes of poverty are. In Week Two, we look at the origins of the culture of poverty perspective and the ways it evolved from its original, structural form into an essentialist, individualist theory. Critical evaluation of the culture of poverty perspective then lays the groundwork for a more structural understanding of the origins of poverty. We cover this angle in Week Three, beginning with late-twentieth-century work on urban poverty and ending with more contemporary structural perspectives. Finally, in Week 4, we re-ground ourselves in the realities of American poverty and begin to explore the meaning of American welfare by drawing on qualitative research that brings to life the experience of poverty in America.

2. How has America responded to poverty?

In the second part of the course, we begin to explore governmental and social responses to the problem of poverty. We start at the conceptual level by exploring the welfare state as a concept and diverse category, then return to the American context by reviewing the history of the American welfare state. This review will highlight multiple key tensions that have historically shaped the American response to poverty, which we will unpack further in Week 6 as we explore the issues of deservingness, race, and gender in American welfare. With these tensions in mind, we then turn to modern American welfare. In Week Seven we review contemporary governmental antipoverty programs and nongovernmental welfare provision. Then, in Week Eight, we explore the intersections between poverty, welfare, and criminal justice- an exceedingly relevant issue in the current historical moment.

3. How does poverty affect rural America?

In the final third of the course we focus on rural America. Though excellent research has been done on the topic, poverty in rural America has often been overlooked by scholars more focused

on urban poverty and inequality. To return attention to rurality, we begin by first trying to define rurality and measure rural American poverty. With that groundwork in place, we then assess the applicability (or inapplicability) of urban-centric theories of poverty to rural places and explore some alternative theoretical explanations that have been offered by researchers focused on rurality. We then complicate our own understandings of rural places and rural poverty by exploring two axes of diversity in rural American poverty. First, we explore issues of race, gender, and immigration. Second, we complicate the concept of "rural America" itself by examining the issue of poverty across very different rural geographies" the Deep South, Appalachia, and sovereign Native American territory. With this complexity hanging over us, we turn in Week Eleven to the topic of surviving poverty in rural America. Here we focus on the social safety net, but also on the individual- or network-based survival strategies rurality enables or disrupts. Finally, in Week Twelve, we foreground the agency of rural Americans by exploring rural reactions to poverty problems- both the defensive, political reaction that has captivated too many sociologists since the 2016 presidential election *and* the various forms of rural antipoverty action and activism that often go overlooked.

Learning Objectives

This course is centered on four learning objectives.

1. Empirics: Students will be able to define poverty, explain how it is measured, and describe the quantitative and qualitative empirical realities of American poverty.

> We will meet this learning objective primarily through engaging with the poverty literature in the first six weeks of the course. Readings, lectures, and in-class discussions should prepare students to meet this learning objective, but students can demonstrate mastery of this learning objective through thoughtful and critical in-class participation and through serious consideration of the empirical realities of American poverty in their midterm and final projects.

2. Theory: Students will be able to critically assess various theories about poverty and welfare with reference to empirical evidence for or against those theories.

> We will meet this learning objective by discussing the strengths and limitations of major theories of poverty in the first four weeks and last four weeks. Students can demonstrate mastery of this learning objective by using empirical arguments drawn from in-class readings to identify the strengths and limitations of different theories in their weekly writing assignments and in-class discussion, as well as by adopting a thoughtful and justified theoretical orientation towards poverty in their midterm and final projects.

3. Policy: Students will be able to describe the contemporary American social safety net and describe the historical events and tensions that shaped its development.

> We will meet this learning objective primarily through readings and lectures in the second four weeks of the course. Students can demonstrate mastery of this objective by connecting historical patterns and contemporary welfare systems in their weekly writing assignments and assessing the strengths and limitations of the contemporary safety net in their midterm and final projects.

4. Critical analysis: Students will be able to analyze American welfare and poverty through the lens of non-economic dimensions of inequality, including race and gender.

> We will meet this learning objective throughout the course through readings and in-class discussions. Students should strive to ask questions about race, gender, immigration, and other dimensions of inequality each week, even when the readings do not directly address these topics. Students can demonstrate mastery of this learning objective through in-class participation and by seriously and critically considering issues of race, gender, and other dimensions of inequality in their midterm and final projects.

Course Outline

The following outline lists the topics for each week and class meeting:

- Week 1: The Scope of Poverty in America
    - Studying and Measuring Poverty
    - Trends in American Poverty
- Week 2: Culture and Structure: Cultural Perspectives
    - Origins and Evolution of the Culture of Poverty Perspective
    - Evaluating the Culture of Poverty Perspective
- Week 3: Culture and Structure: The Concentration of Poverty
    - Early Perspectives
    - Contemporary Perspectives
- Week 4: Qualitative Research on Life in Poverty
    - Survival Strategies
    - Challenges and Consequences
- Week 5: Introduction to the (American) Welfare State
    - Theorizing the Welfare State
    - A Partial History of the American Welfare State
- Week 6: Tensions in the American Welfare State
    - Welfare, Race, and Immigration
    - Deservingness Debates
- Week 7: Contemporary American Welfare
    - Contemporary Programs
    - Beyond Federal Programs
- Week 8: Poverty, Welfare, and Criminal Justice
    - Poverty and Criminal Justice
    - Welfare and Criminal Justice
- Week 9: Introduction to Rural Poverty
    - Defining and Describing Rural Poverty
    - Theorizing and Historicizing Rural Poverty
- Week 10: The Diversity of Rural Poverty
    - Race, Gender, and Immigration
    - Diverse Geographies
- Week 11: Surviving Rural Poverty
    - The Safety Net in Rural Places
    - Communities and (Social) Capital

- Week 12: Rural Reactions to Poverty Problems
    - Intersecting Threats
    - Threat Responses and Defensive Politics

Requirements and Grading

This course meets twice a week. Students are expected to come to class with their readings completed and should be ready to actively participate in group discussions. This means that students should complete the week's readings **before the first class meeting of the week.** There will be no more than ~200 pages of readings assigned each week. Additional readings may be recommended- these will be discussed in lecture, but are not required reading.

Additionally, for Weeks 2-12, students will be required to completed a weekly written assignment that will prepare them for the week's in-class discussions. These assignments will be due at the start of the first class period each week. They are not intended to be extensive memos- instead, they are meant to be brief reflections that generate opportunities for discussion. These reflections should:

- be at least half a page, single-spaced, TNR 12pt. font
- be written in complete sentences with correct grammar and spelling
- answer the following guiding questions with reference to the week's readings:
    - **Week 2:** What do you think explains the inequality in American poverty?
    - **Week 3:** If we accept that the culture of poverty theory is not empirically valid, what else explains inequality in American poverty?
    - **Week 4:** What challenges do people living in poverty face? How do they make ends meet?
    - **Week 5:** What policy options can governments use to respond to the problem of poverty?
    - **Week 6:** How do ideas about deservingness shape the way America responds to poverty?
    - **Week 7:** Who is left out of the contemporary American welfare system? Who needs more support?
    - **Week 8:** Why do we see overlaps between poverty, welfare, and criminal justice?
    - **Week 9:** What is the best way to define rural America?
    - **Week 10:** What challenges does the diversity of rural America pose for solving rural poverty?
    - **Week 11:** How is surviving poverty different in rural America?
    - **Week 12:** How have rural Americans responded to poverty, and why?

Students will also complete a midterm and final assignment. More detailed instructions for each assignment will be distributed later in the semester.

- **Midterm:** For the midterm, students will be given two mock antipoverty policy proposals. Using the information learned in the first six weeks of the class, students will write a 7-page paper to persuade a policymaker to adopt one of the policies. These papers will be graded based on use of empirical arguments, not on persuasive rhetoric. Students

will be expected to specifically address issues of racial and gender inequality as part of their analysis.

- **Final:** For the final exam, students will propose their own antipoverty initiative for rural America (generally, or for a specific region). Students can choose to either play the role of a policymaker pitching a new governmental program or of a non-governmental group proposing a private/nonprofit program. In either case, students will write a 15-page proposal describing their proposed initiative, outlining a feasible implementation plan, and justifying their initiative's potential for addressing the issue of poverty. As with the midterm, students should make sure to specifically address issues of racial and gender inequality as part of their analysis.

Grading Distribution

Students' grades will be determined as follows:

- 11 weekly reading reflections: 35 points (3 points each, plus 2 points for completing all assignments on time)
- Midterm project: 20 points
- Final project: 30 points
- Attendance and participation: 15 points

Letter grades will be based on the following cutoffs:

- A: 90.0 points and higher
- B: 80.0 to 89.9 points
- C: 70.0 to 79.9 points
- D: 60.0 to 69.9 points
- F: 59.9 points and lower

Final grades will be rounded to the nearest tenth (i.e. an 89.96 will be rounded to 90.0).

Week 1: The Scope of Poverty in America

Topic One: Studying and Measuring Poverty

Assigned Readings:[1]

Defining Poverty:

Atkinson, Anthony B. 2019. "What Do We Mean by Poverty?." Pp. 28-57. In *Measuring Poverty Around the World*. Edited by J. Mickelwright, A. Brandolini, F. Bourguignon, and N. Stern. Princeton University Press.

Measuring Poverty:

Iceland, John. 2006. "Methods of Measuring Poverty." Pp. 20-37. In *Poverty in America: A Handbook*. 2nd ed. University of California Press.

Fisher, Gordon M. 1992. "The Development and History of the Poverty Thresholds." *Social Security Bulletin* 55(4):3–14.

Fox, Liana. 2019. "The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2018." Pp. 1-11. United States Census Bureau.

Meyer, Bruce D., and James X. Sullivan. 2003. "Measuring the Well-Being of the Poor Using Income and Consumption." Pp. 1-12 Working Paper No. 9760. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Recommended Readings:

Atkinson, Anthony B. 2019. "Clarifying Concepts." Pp. 58-104. In *Measuring Poverty Around the World*. Edited by J. Mickelwright, A. Brandolini, F. Bourguignon, and N. Stern. Princeton University Press.

Shaefer, H. Luke, and Joshua Rivera. 2018. Comparing Trends in Poverty and Material Hardship Over the Past Two Decades. 5–17. University of Michigan: Poverty Solutions.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Discuss the multiple meanings and definitions of poverty.
2. Compare and contrast different means of measuring poverty, with special attention to the American OPM and SPM.
3. Identify some of the main challenges in poverty measurement.

Readings:

[1] Any work referenced in the "Rationale" sections of this syllabus that was not cited in that week's reading sections is cited at the end of this syllabus.

Complicating the concept of poverty is a prerequisite to thoughtful engagement with poverty research. As such, we begin the class with Atkinson's (2020) chapter on the meaning of poverty because Atkinson offers a clear but detailed discussion of the multiple meanings of poverty. Most importantly, he clearly establishes that 'poverty' is both a political concept used for governmental performance monitoring (or the motivation of new programs) *and* a subjective lived reality. He also outlines the different standards by which poverty can be defined: access to basic needs (as an absolute standard or moving target), the deprivation of capabilities, and minimum rights. Finally, he introduces to two paradigms for thinking about measuring poverty by these (or other) standards: absolute and relative poverty. Each of these topics will help introduce students to the ways researchers think about poverty at the theoretical level. They will also help contextualize the later readings on American poverty measurement and help us understand what researchers relying on official US poverty data implicitly assume about poverty.

While the Atkinson reading operates at the theoretical level and is oriented towards international poverty measurement, the Iceland (2006) chapter emphasizes operationalization. Iceland begins by discussing the difference between absolute and relative poverty measures, but focuses less on the conceptual/theoretical meanings of these measurements and more on the specific forms they take. He also goes on to discuss various other concrete approaches to measuring poverty, such as the consumption approach. This focus on the functional side of poverty theorizing is useful for translating Atkinson's (2020) theoretical perspective into concrete measurement.

From there, we move on to examining three options for measuring poverty in the United States.[2] First, Fisher (1992) introduces the construction and history of Orshansky's poverty line (the OPM). The construction of the poverty line is relatively straightforward. However, there are serious limitations to this measure, including its failure to account for non-cash income and place-variant housing costs. Fox's (2019) brief on the supplemental poverty measure explains the ways the SPM resolves those problems and compares historical poverty trends and 2018 poverty rates as measured by the OPM and SPM. Students will see that the SPM actually records slightly higher poverty rates than the OPM. Finally, Meyer and Sullivan (2003) introduce the concept of consumption-based measures of poverty. This measure is intended to correct for underrerpoting of income (including illicit income) and to serve as a more direct measure of material well-being. In class, we will discuss what poverty concepts each of these measures taps into (basic needs versus well-being, objective versus subjective experiences) and the strengths and weaknesses of each. I particularly want to push students to consider whether or not the consumption approach is a valid measure of material well-being given Shaefer and Rivera's (2018) findings that the consumption poverty measure has a *negative* correlation with measures of material hardship.

[2] This course is oriented towards poverty in the American context. However, the recommended Atkinson (2020) reading offers additional insight into issues of measuring poverty across multiple nations. We will briefly discuss some of these challenges in lecture.

Week 1: The Scope of Poverty in America

Topic Two: Trends in American Poverty

Assigned Readings:

General Trends:

Semega, Jessica, Melissa Kollar, Emily A. Shrider, and John Creamer. 2020. "Poverty in the United States" and "Additional Information on Income and Poverty." In: Income and Poverty in the United States: 2019. P60-270. US Census Bureau.

Creamer, John. 2020. "Poverty Rates for Blacks and Hispanics Reached Historic Lows in 2019." The United States Census Bureau. Retrieved December 9, 2020 (https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/09/poverty-rates-for-blacks-and-hispanics-reached-historic-lows-in-2019.html).

Gould, Elise, and Hilary Wething. 2012. "U.S. Poverty Rates Higher, Safety Net Weaker than in Peer Countries." Report Number 339. Economic Policy Institute.

Deep and Extreme Poverty:

Fox, Liana, Christopher Wimer, Irwin Garfinkel, Neeraj Kaushal, JaeHyun Nam, and Jane Waldfogel. 2015. "Trends in Deep Poverty from 1968 to 2011: The Influence of Family Structure, Employment Patterns, and the Safety Net." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1(1):14–34.

Shaefer, H. Luke, and Kathryn Edin. 2013. "Rising Extreme Poverty in the United States and the Response of Federal Means-Tested Transfer Programs." *Social Service Review* 87(2):250–68.

Recommended Readings:

Shaefer, Luke, Pinghui Wu, and Kathryn Edin. 2016. Can Poverty in America Be Compared to Conditions in the World's Poorest Countries? National Poverty Center Working Paper Series. #16-07. National Poverty Center.

Alston, Philip. 2017. Statement on Visit to the USA. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner.

Brady, David, and Zachary Parolin. 2020. "The Levels and Trends in Deep and Extreme Poverty in the United States, 1993–2016." *Demography*.

Sullivan, James X. 2020. "A Cautionary Tale of Using Data From the Tail." *Demography*.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify key trends in American poverty over the last ~60 years.

2. Compare US poverty rates to those of other nations.
3. Describe the extent of *deep* poverty in the United States.
4. Discuss patterns in poverty rate across various demographic groups.

Readings:

Next we turn to the topic of trends in American poverty. Semega et al. (2020) offer some of the most up-to-date data on American poverty in their official Census Bureau report. The breakdown of 2018 US poverty rates demonstrates some important empirical realities of poverty. Poverty rates are higher among black and Hispanic people, women, children, non-citizens, non-workers, people with disabilities, and people without high school diplomas. They also graph trends in poverty since 1959 and note that the 2019 poverty rate is the lowest since estimates were first published in 1959. The reading lacks poverty trends by demographic categories other than age, but the brief Creamer (2020) reading corrects this flaw. Creamer (2020) shows racial trends in poverty over time, arguing that there has been a decrease in the over-representation of Black and Hispanic Americans in poverty. In fact, the 2019 poverty rate for both groups was at a historic low. However, the data makes it clear that there is still serious racial inequality in poverty rates. Further, the Gould and Wething (2012) report clearly demonstrates that the US lags behind other developed countries in terms of poverty- especially child poverty. In lecture we will look at OECD data and findings from Shaefer, Wu, and Edin (2016) that place US poverty rates and the living conditions of the US poor alongside other developed and underdeveloped nations.

After examining trends in and current data on US poverty rates, we look at the issue of deep and extreme poverty. Fox et al. (2015) use the SPM and a historical SPM time series to analyze trends in deep poverty by demographic group form 1968-2011. They find that the deep poverty rate (the proportion of people living at 50% of the poverty line or less) has been remarkably stable over the time period. However, this stability masks key subgroup trends: single-parent households represent an increasing share of deep poverty (at least until 1977), the risk of deep poverty has increased for families without a working adult, and deep poverty has decreased for black Americans while remaining stable for white Americans. Understanding these historical trends (and especially the trends for families without a working adult) will be important for contextualizing our discussions of welfare policy later in the semester.

Finally, we look at an even more serious poverty problem: extreme poverty, defined by Shaefer and Edin (2013) as less than $2 cash income per person, per day. Shaefer and Edin find that 1.65 million households were experiencing extreme poverty in mid-2011 and that extreme poverty has increased sharply since the 1996 welfare reform (a topic we will discuss further later in the semester). In lecture I will touch on the debate over the magnitude of extreme poverty in America (Brady and Parolin 2020; Sullivan 2020), but this article should make it clear to students that extreme poverty is a reality and likely a growing problem in America.

Week 2: Cultural and Structure: Cultural Perspectives

Topic One: Origins and Evolution of the Culture of Poverty Perspective

Assigned Readings:

Lewis, Oscar. 1966. "The Culture of Poverty." *Scientific American* 215(4):19–25.

Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. 1965. The Negro Family: The Case for National Action. United States Department of Labor.

Massey, Douglas S., and Robert J. Sampson. 2009. "Moynihan Redux: Legacies and Lessons." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 621(1):6–27.

Streib, Jessi, SaunJuhi Verma, Whitney Welsh, and Linda M. Burton. 2016. "Life, Death, and Resurrections: The Culture of Poverty Perspective." Pp. 247-269. In: *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*. Oxford University Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Define culture of poverty theory.
2. Highlight the structural components of foundational works in the culture of poverty perspective.
3. Describe the reinterpretation and de-structuralizing of those works and the policy aims those reinterpretations support.

Readings:

This week we aim to tackle the culture of poverty perspective. In addition to introducing students to the concept of the culture of poverty, I aim to emphasize the fact that foundational works in the perspective were actually surprisingly structural. Culture of poverty theorists, however, emphasized the cultural aspect of those works and ultimately produced an essentializing theory.

We begin with Lewis' (1966) article, the original source of the concept of the culture of poverty. Lewis argues that certain characteristics of people in poverty (or, specifically, or poor residents in Mexican and Puerto Rican slums) reflect a cultural adaptation to the structural conditions that produce enduring poverty. These characteristics include attitudes like hostility towards dominant institutions, high gregariousness, undervaluing of childhood, weak ego structure and confused sexual identification, and feelings of fatalism, dependence, and helplessness (Lewis 1966:23). Lewis makes it clear that he believes these subcultural characteristics are the product of oppressive structural conditions but argues that the nature of poor people's adaptations to their situation may prevent them from escaping poverty. Thus we have an argument that is both structural and cultural, but that places strong emphasis on the harm supposed characteristics of the poor can do.

Moynihan's (1965) report is even more explicitly structural. he argues that the history and economic conditions of Black Americans has led to the Black family becoming caught up in a

"tangle of pathology" that reproduces poverty and limits children's success. Like Lewis (1966), the various pathologies of the Black family that Moynihan identifies are rooted in structural circumstances. In fact, Moynihan is much more explicit than Lewis about emphasizing the ways historical events and trajectories shaped contemporary Black families. As with Lewis' work, however, adherents to the culture of poverty perspective focused not on the structural causes of Black circumstances but on the idea that there is something inherently different or 'pathological' about poor Black families.

The next two readings track the development of the culture of poverty perspective from two different angles. The first angle is political. Massey and Sampson (2009) emphasize the fact that Moynihan considered himself a liberal with a commitment to social equality. Nonetheless, his report was generally demonized by liberal political figures for pathologizing Black families and embraced by conservative political figures as a reason to pursue individualist solutions to poverty. They then go on to outline key changes in American poverty and policy since 1965, including the effects of mass incarceration on Black men and families and the growing Hispanic population. The second angle is academic. Streib et al. (2016) offer a brief summary of the historical development of the culture of poverty perspective that is similar to Massey and Sampson's (2009), but then turn their attention to methodological issues in culture of poverty research. These issues include missing or false comparison groups, one-sided research agendas, and biased interpretations of research findings. Thus, both works offer insight into the development of the culture of poverty perspective into an individualized theory of poverty-as-pathological, but Streib et al. (2016) lay the groundwork for an assessment of the validity of that theory. We will continue with such assessment in the second half of the week.

Week 2: Cultural and Structure: Cultural Perspectives

Topic Two: Evaluating the Culture of Poverty Perspective

Assigned Readings:

Edin, Kathryn J., and Luke H. Shaefer. 2015. "Perilous Work" Pp. 35-63. In: *$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Mariner Books.

Edin, Kathryn, and Maria Kefalas. 2005. "What Marriage Means" and "Labor of Love." Pp. 104-167. In: *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

DeLuca, Stefanie, Susan Clampet-Lindquist, and Kathryn Edin. 2016. "'In and Out Before You Know It': The Educational and Occupational Traps of Expedited Adulthood." Pp. 146-181. In: *Coming of Age in the Other America*. Russel Sage Foundation.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Evaluate the validity of culture of poverty assumptions about attitudes towards:
    a. work
    b. the family
    c. mainstream institutions
2. Discuss the factors that prevent people in poverty from achieving mainstream goals despite sharing mainstream values.

Readings:

The selected readings for this class meeting can all be read as answers to one question: have the poor rejected mainstream culture in favor of a (mal)adaptive subculture of poverty? The answer is a complicated no. Edin and Shaefer (2015) start us with the topic of work, and emphasize in their chapter that people living in extreme poverty generally see themselves as and aspire to be workers. They may be forced to take on extremely perilous work, but they are willing to take that risk because they believe work is the best way to provide for a family- even when work fails to lift that family out of poverty. Work provides people in poverty with a sense of pride and a stabilizing force in otherwise chaotic and stressful lives.

We then turn to family and marriage. Edin and Kefalas (2005) find that unmarried single mothers living in poverty actually hold a deep reverence for the institution of marriage. They expect marital relationships to be built on trust with someone who has high levels of personal and emotional maturity. Their economic and relational expectations are high, but marriage remains a goal for many. They also take pride in being good mothers, though their definitions of successful motherhood may differ from mainstream definitions. For poor single mothers, successful mothering looks like 'being there' for their children, even if their children end up in trouble. In fact, part of good mothering is supporting their children through difficulties like teen pregnancy or drug use.

Finally, we explore work and education. DeLuca et al. (2016) find that poor youth inn Baltimore value the idea of finding a real, paying, stable job. Some enter the workforce right out of high school. Others place a high value on education. Both groups face challenges in pursuing their goals. For the workers, jobs can be hard to find. Those seeking education, meanwhile, run the risk of being exploited and victimized by for-profit schools or failing being forced to commit to a trade they later realize isn't a sustainable or desirable career path. Nonetheless, even youth still trying to figure out what they want to do know they want to do *something*.

Each of these readings demonstrates that people living in poverty find real meaning in mainstream institutions and see much the same value in work, motherhood, and education that middle- and upper-class Americans do. Poverty changes some attitudes, to be sure. Poor single mothers don't see children's troubles as signs of failed parenting, but rather see being there for their children during those troubles as a sign of successful motherhood. Fundamentally, however, these readings cast doubt on the culture of poverty perspective by clearly demonstrating that poor Americans in fact value work, family, and education. They have not substituted mainstream norms for alternative, self-destructive norms. Yet as these readings also demonstrate, people living in poverty may be structurally blocked from attaining mainstream versions of success by structural factors like the instability and danger of low-wage work, the lack of economically marriageable men, or the pressures of for-profit trade schools. These readings thus lay a foundation for the next week's topic: structural perspectives on poverty.

Week 3: Culture and Structure: The Concentration of Poverty

Topic One: Early Perspectives

Assigned Readings:

Wilson, William J. 1987. "Social Change and Social Dislocations in the Inner City." Pp. 20-62. In: *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. The University of Chicago Press.

Massey, Douglas S., and Nancy Denton. 1993. "The Creation of Underclass Communities." Pp. 115-147. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Harvard University Press.

Recommended Readings:

Sampson, Robert J. 2012. "Neighborhood Effects: The Evolution of an Idea." Pp. 31-49. In: *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. University of Chicago Press.

Wilson, William J. 1987. Chapters 3 and 4. Pp. 63-108. In: *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. The University of Chicago Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify macro-level structural causes of poverty.
2. Discuss the positive feedback loop that neighborhood effects can create.
3. Understand the role cultural adaptations played in early theories of the concentration of poverty.

Readings:

This week's readings focus on the (re)production of poverty. Most current research that seriously considers the generation and transmission of poverty is focused on the concept of neighborhood effects- that is, it is oriented towards place and the way place reproduces poverty. During lecture, we will briefly discuss the history of ecological approaches to disadvantage and inequality as laid out by Sampson (2012). Sampson traces the evolution of the neighborhood effects perspective from its origins in theories of human ecology and the Chicago School to its modern forms. However, the Sampson reading is not required due to the length of other readings required later in the week.

Earlier research, such as the writings assigned for the first half of the week, locates the origin of inequality in macro-level economic trends and racial division. We begin with Wilson's (1987) seminal work on the structural origins of Black inner-city disadvantage. Wilson (1987) argues that individual or racial pathology and contemporary discrimination are insufficient explanations of Black disadvantage. Instead, he argues, the in-migration of Black Americans to urban centers was met with racial barriers that produced Black enclaves in the inner city. This migration also

skewed age profile of the black population towards youth. This trend combined with labor market changes that excluded young, unskilled black laborers from employment. During these economic changes, Black middle- and upper-class families left the inner city. When they did so, they removed both a resource base that could sustain neighborhood economies and a source of mainstream role models for Black youth. The result was a positive feedback loop that reinforced and concentrated disadvantage in the Black inner city.

Massey and Denton (1993) also focus on Black inner-city poverty. They argue, however, that the concentration of poverty and disadvantage in the Black inner city is not a consequence of the out-migration of the Black middle- and -upper class. Instead, it is the product of segregation. Their argument is best summarized in their own words:

> "In a racially segregated city, any increase in black poverty created by an economic downturn is necessarily confined to a small number of geographically isolated and racially homogenous neighborhoods. During times of recession, therefore, viable and economically stable black neighborhoods are rapidly transformed into areas of intense socioeconomic deprivation. Joblessness, welfare dependency, and single parenthood become the norm, and crime and disorder are inextricably woven into the fabric of daily life. The coincidence of rising poverty and high levels of segregation guarantees that blacks will be exposed to a social and economic environment that is far harsher than anything experienced by any other racial or ethnic group" (118).

There is a cultural note to each of these perspectives. In Wilson's (1987) case, the loss of upper- and middle-class role models leaves Black youth without anyone to teach them the value of work and other middle- or upper-class norms. Massey and Denton (1993), on the other hand, assume much more explicitly that a result of the concentrated disadvantage in the Black inner city is the adoption of oppositional subcultures that provide youth with attainable goals and norms and reject the goals and norms of the middle- and upper-class.[3] Yet each of these works represents a fundamental shift from the culture of poverty perspective in that they re-orient the study of poverty towards the unequal spatial concentration of poverty and its structural causes.

[3] As discussed in the previous week, the notion that the poor create adaptive, oppositional subcultures is not empirically supported. Similar arguments have been raised in criminology, and researchers have generally concluded in both this field and that that the oppositional subculture concept is an overstatement of the cultural toolkit some people in poverty may or may not adopt.

Week 3: Culture and Structure: The Concentration of Poverty

Topic Two: Contemporary Perspectives

Assigned Readings:

Sampson, Robert J. 2012. "Legacies of Inequality." Pp. 97-120. In: *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. University of Chicago Press.

Sharkey, Patrick. 2013. "A Forty-Year Detour on the Path toward Racial Equality," and "Neighborhoods and the Transmission of Racial Inequality." Pp. 47-116. In: *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality*. The University of Chicago Press.

DeLuca, Stefanie, Susan Clampet-Lindquist, and Kathryn Edin. 2016. "'It's Kind of Like Crabs in a Bucket': How Family and Neighborhood Disadvantage Hinder the Transition to Adulthood." Pp. 119-145. In: *Coming of Age in the Other America*. Russel Sage Foundation.

Recommended Readings:

Sharkey, Patrick. 2013. "The Inheritance of the Ghetto." Pp. 24-26. In: *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality*. The University of Chicago Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Discuss the contemporary focus on neighborhoods in the production and reproduction of poverty.
2. Identify the mechanisms through which neighborhoods reproduce poverty.

Readings:

As we turn to more contemporary perspectives on the unequal distribution and concentration of poverty, we shift our focus to the staying power of neighborhood poverty and the mechanisms through which neighborhood poverty produces and reproduces disadvantage. We start with Sampson's (2012) analysis of enduring neighborhood poverty in Chicago. He shows that segregation and poverty in Chicago are mapped onto one another and enduring. In other words, neighborhood social disadvantage is *durable.* In both Chicago and the US, percent black in 1990 and 2000 are correlated at above 0.95, and one of the best predictors of a place's current poverty is its past poverty. These findings lay the groundwork for Sharkey's (2013) argument about the poverty of place. Sharkey himself analyzes the durability of ghetto poverty in the recommended reading. His major theoretical contribution, however, is a shift away from human capital perspectives on the reproduction of poverty. Wilson (1987) and Massey and Denton (1993) argue that poverty is *created* by structural conditions but at least in part reproduced through cultural or human capital mechanisms. Sharkey, meanwhile, argues that African Americans are not trapped by their individual or cultural characteristics. Instead, *places* and poverty are passed down across

generations because of structural conditions that reinforce income- and race-based segregation. The reproduction of poverty is thus structural. In the first assigned chapter he specifically identifies three mechanisms in this process: failure to complete progress towards civil rights, diverse mechanisms used to maintain racial inequality/segregation, the structure and restructuring of urban labor markets, and destructive governmental responses to economic dislocation. Each of these serves to lock children into neighborhoods that can limit their adult economic attainment.

The effect of place on attainment is outlined in both the second Sharkey (2013) selection and the chapter from DeLuca et al. (2016). Sharkey (2013) takes a quantitative approach. He finds that neighborhood poverty is an important, if partial, explanation of the black-white mobility gap. The neighborhood effect appears to operate through educational and employment pathways. DeLuca et al. (2016), meanwhile, explore the effect of neighborhood disadvantage on youth attainment through qualitative interviews with young people in Baltimore. They find that the disadvantages faced by youths' families and the traumas associated with life in disadvantaged neighborhoods create immense pressure for young people to 'escape' and begin independent lives. This pressure prompts them to take expedited paths to adulthood like forgoing college in favor of taking an immediate low-wage job. These readings complement each other in their analyses of the mechanisms through which neighborhoods limit upward mobility, and should make visible to students the theoretical shift from cultural reproduction of poverty (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987) to structural mechanisms.

Week 4: Qualitative Research on Life in Poverty

Topic One: Survival Strategies

Assigned Readings:

Edin, Kathryn, and Laura Lein. 1997. "Survival Strategies." Pp. 143-191. In: *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work*. Russel Sage Foundation.

Seefeldt, Kristin S., and Heather Sandstrom. 2015. "When There Is No Welfare: The Income Packaging Strategies of Mothers Without Earnings or Cash Assistance Following an Economic Downturn." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 139–58. doi: 10.7758/rsf.2015.1.1.08.

Edin, Kathryn J., and Luke H. Shaefer. 2015. "By Any Means Necessary." Pp. 93-128. In: *$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America.* Mariner Books.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify some of the key survival strategies for people in poverty.
2. Discuss the potential drawbacks to and dangers of those strategies.

Readings:

This week's readings will expose students to detailed qualitative descriptions of life in poverty. More specifically, they will expose students to the steps people in poverty must take to survive and the consequences that poverty and poverty survival can have for people who employ various survival strategies.

We begin with Edin and Lein's (1997) classical work on poverty survival. Edin and Lein offer us insight into poverty survival *before* the 1996 welfare reform, and we will recall the ways their findings do (or do not) differ from later findings when we discuss the American welfare system and the 1996 welfare reform later in the semester. Edin and Lein identify three categories of survival strategy: network-based, job-based, and agency-based. Each of these takes various forms, but the authors are careful to note that single mothers' strategy choices are constrained by circumstance- a woman who does not have a stable network to draw on can hardly employ network-based survival strategies, and a mother who wants to get a formal or informal job may need a network to provide childcare while she works.

In lecture, I will briefly outline the key changes to American welfare implemented in 1996. This discussion will be brief but detailed enough to set the stage for Seefeldt and Sandstrom's (2015) update to Edin and Lein's (1997) work. Seefeldt and Sandstrom's study examines the survival strategies of single mothers in a world where cash assistance is limited-to-nonexistent for the nonworking poor. They find that nonworking mothers who do not receive cash welfare survive by packaging income from a variety of sources. Sources of extra income include public assistance programs, but also include practices identified by Edin and Lein (1997) like reliance

on informal child support. In addition to income packaging, mothers may find people in their social networks who are willing to pay their bills or move in with others (‘doubling up’). The authors point out, however, that none of these survival strategies are necessarily reliable.

Finally, Edin and Shaefer (2015) add to Seefeldt and Sanstrom’s (2015) work by introducing some more diverse modern survival strategies. In their chapter, people living in poverty sell plasma, utilize public space and private charities, trade food stamps for cash, make money scrapping, or trade sex for favors. The authors emphasize the labor that goes into these survival strategies, framing them as work even though the people practicing them aren’t formally employed.

Each of these readings will demonstrate to students the variety of survival strategies that people engage in to survive poverty. The overarching lessons that go along with this specific learning are twofold. First, each of these readings highlights the labor and sacrifice that goes into surviving poverty. Poverty is not passive in this research. Instead, life in poverty is a life of labor and careful accounting. Second, these readings all emphasize the *necessity* of poverty survival strategies. When people sell food stamps, they are not looking for a quick extra buck. They’re trying to keep the lights on. When women lean on their kin networks for childcare, it isn’t for a little freedom. It’s to free them up to work. Emphasizing the difficulty and necessity of these survival strategies is an essential part of trying to get students to think about poverty in new, and perhaps more empathetic, ways.

Week 4: Qualitative Research on Life in Poverty

Topic Two: Challenges and Consequences

Assigned Readings:

Edin, Kathryn J., and Luke H. Shaefer. 2015. "A Room of One's Own." Pp. 65-92. In: *$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America.* Mariner Books.

Desmond, Matthew. 2016. "Rat Hole" and "Disposable Ties." Pp. 64-79; 158-166. In: *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Crown Publishers.

Desmond, Matthew. 2012. "Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor." American Journal of Sociology 117(5):1295–1335.

Recommended Readings:

Desmond, Matthew. 2016. "Order Some Carryout." Pp. 111-133. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Crown Publishers.

Edin, Kathryn J., and Luke H. Shaefer. 2015. "Perilous Work" Pp. 35-63. In: *$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Mariner Books.

DeLuca, Stefanie, Susan Clampet-Lindquist, and Kathryn Edin. 2016. "'In and Out Before You Know It': The Educational and Occupational Traps of Expedited Adulthood." Pp. 146-181. In: *Coming of Age in the Other America*. Russel Sage Foundation.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify some key consequences of surviving life in poverty, including consequences for health, debt, and interpersonal relationships.
2. Discuss the macro-level implications of poverty survival strategies and their consequences.

Readings:

The readings assigned for the first half of this week emphasized the difficulty and necessity of various poverty survival strategies. The remaining readings were selected to highlight the costs of life in poverty and of the necessary survival strategies the poor rely on. Each of these readings focuses primarily on the issue of housing, but in lecture and class discussion we will also explore the potential criminal justice consequences of survival strategies like selling food stamps. These criminal justice themes will be discussed in more detail in Week Eight.

We begin with a chapter from Edin and Shaefer (2015) that covers the survival strategy of 'doubling up.' This strategy comes with considerable costs. As Edin and Shaefer (2015) explain, doubling-up can put vulnerable people at risk for sexual, emotional, or physical violence. Children are particularly at-risk, and experiences abuse or trauma in childhood (also called

adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs) can have lifelong consequences for children's physical and mental well-being.

Double-up can also have serious interpersonal and community-level consequences. Desmond's (2016) research on eviction shows the challenges faced by poor renters and identifies eviction as a genuine American crisis. In the first selection, which does not focus directly on doubling-up, we see the vulnerability of poor renters. They are forced to accept substandard, unhealthy housing and have little power to force their landlords to make repairs. The moment they fall behind on rent, they lose their ability to exercise their full rights as tenants and may be evicted at any time. Adding the survival strategy of doubling-up to this instability is dangerous. In the second selection, Desmond (2016) describes 'disposable ties'- relationships quickly formed for mutual poverty survival (in this case, doubling-up) that often come to explosive and disastrous ends. Disposable ties are an alternative to kin-based network support. Unfortunately, they have serious consequences for individuals and communities. Desmond (2012) expands on the concept of disposable ties and shows that their disastrous ends can foster mistrust throughout the broader community.

Students likely understand already that poverty has a direct effect on the poor. In previous weeks we have explored, for example, the effect of neighborhood poverty on children's educational outcomes or pursuit of adulthood. These readings, however, demonstrate that the necessary strategies people employ to survive poverty have serious consequences for mental and physical well-being, interpersonal relationships, and community social networks. In class, we will also discuss a few additional examples not covered in these readings. We will recall DeLuca et al.'s (2016) discussion of education and Edin and Shaefer's (2015) chapter on low-wage work to discuss the ways surviving poverty can lead to student debt or dangerous work and physical harm. We will also discuss another section of Desmond's (2016) work on eviction (recommended but not required) where he describes the way evicted people run the risk of losing their possessions if they cannot pay for storage. By the end of this week, my goal is that students will understand the dangers and harms of life in poverty. This understanding will motivate the next section of the course, where we will focus on welfare and poverty 'solutions.'

Week 5: Introduction to the (American) Welfare State

Topic One: Theorizing the Welfare State

Assigned Readings:

Historical and Conceptual:

Garland, David. 2016. Pp. 13-58. In: *The Welfare State: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford University Press.*

Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 1990. "The Three Political Economies of the Welfare-State." Pp. 9-34. In: *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton University Press.

Critical Perspectives:

Soss, Joe, Richard C. Fording, and Sanford F. Schram. 2011. "Servicing and Subsidizing Markets." Pp. 193-199. In: *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race*. University of Chicago Press.

Orloff, Ann. 1996. "Gender in the Welfare State." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22(1):51–78.

Recommended Readings:

Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 1990. "De-Commodification in Social Policy." Pp. 35-54. In: *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton University Press

Piven, Frances Fox, and Richard A. Cloward. 1993. "Relief, Labor, and Civil Disorder: An Overview." Pp. 3-41. In: *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*. Vintage Books.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify the major functions of welfare states.
2. Discuss the variable relationship between welfare states and labor markets.
3. Compare and contrast Esping-Anderson's three welfare state ideal types.

Readings:

These readings are meant to introduce students to welfare states as a 'big idea.' Garland's (2016) chapters provide an important starting point by historicizing welfare (generally- the history of welfare in America specifically will be covered in future readings) and outlining in broad strokes the historical shifts in capitalism and industry that led to the need for governmental welfare programs. The last assigned chapter in his work outlines the five institutional sectors of what he calls the Welfare State 1.0: social insurance, publicly funded social services, social work and personal social services, and economic governance. This reading thus serves two purposes: it outlines the problems of capitalism that welfare states were developed to address and introduces the broad functions of the welfare state.

Esping-Anderson's (1990) work takes us deeper into understanding the functions and functioning of welfare states. He begins by introducing two key concepts: the welfare state as de-commodifying and the welfare state as stratifying. These are concepts we will address further in the final two readings. Before that, however, Esping-Anderson's (1990) three-part typology of welfare states offers a useful 'in-action' example of how and why welfare states de-commodify and/or stratify. Liberal welfare states actually re-commodify workers by encouraging market solutions to welfare problems and stratify though the application of intense stigma to the welfare system. In corporatists states, stratification occurs due to the attachment of welfare entitlements to class and tatus. Finally, in social democratic regimes de-commodification is sought through universal welfare programs.

The final two works pick up on the themes of decommodification and stratification. The selection from Soss, Fording, and Schram (2011) demonstrates the way American welfare systems operate in service to labor markets by attempting to discipline welfare recipients into becoming workers. Orloff (1996), on the other hand, picks up the theme of stratification by applying a critical feminist lens to welfare state theory. She points out that while early research on gender and the welfare state focused exclusively on the ways welfare states reproduced gender hierarchies and/or ameliorated gender inequality, historical and comparative research show that women have been active agents in the creation of welfare policies later deemed patriarchal and that major theories of the welfare state (including Esping-Anderson 1990) are highly gender-blind. Together, these two readings should help introduce students to tensions in welfare theory surrounding labor market functioning and implications for gender relations.

There are two major gaps in the readings for this week. First, the readings were specifically selected to require little knowledge of the history of welfare in the United States. Second, none of these readings directly address the issue of race. I acknowledge that these gaps make the week's readings theoretically incomplete. It is impossible to fully appreciate the intermingling of welfare and labor markets in the United States without understanding the racialized history of American welfare, and especially the deliberate designing of early welfare policies to exclude Black Americans and maintain a cheap Black labor supply in the South (Katznelson 2005). However, I left these gaps open for two reasons. First, adequately covering those topics this week would have created an unreasonable amount of reading for an undergraduate course. Second, both topics will be covered in either the second half of this week or in Weeks Six and Eight. I therefore view these first readings as a means of creating a basic theoretical scaffolding which we will build on and complicate through ongoing discussion.

Week 5: Introduction to the (American) Welfare State

Topic Two: A Partial History of the American Welfare State

Assigned Readings:

Katz, Michael B. 1996. "Reorganizing the Nation," "The War on Poverty and the Expansion of Social Welfare," and "The War on Welfare." Pp. 213-299. In: *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*. Basic Books.

Edin, Kathryn J., and Luke H. Shaefer. 2015. "Welfare is Dead." Pp. 1-34. In: *$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Mariner Books.

Recommended Readings:

Katz, Michael B. 1996. *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*. Basic Books.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Outline the history of American poverty, beginning with the New Deal and continuing to the 1996 welfare reforms.
2. Identify some of the policies implemented in the New Deal, the Great Society, and the 1996 welfare reform.
3. Identify some of the specific historical contexts that drove the New Deal, the Great Society, and welfare reform.

Readings:

The history of American welfare could be an entire 12-week course on its own. In this course, I aim to give students a broad overview of the history of American welfare and to devote most of our attention to the way race, gender, and immigration shaped American welfare in ways that reproduced racial, gender, and class inequality. Because of this, I have limited our readings on the broad history of American welfare to the time period from the New Deal to the 1996 welfare reforms.

We start with the New Deal for two reasons. First, the New Deal represented the advent of widespread centralized federal welfare in America.[4] Second, as Katz (1996) argues, the New Deal served as a sort of template for later federal welfare programs. The first assigned chapter covers the origins of the New Deal in the inability of state and local welfare systems to meet skyrocketing needs during the Great Depression. The federal government responded with work relief and Social Security, both of which Katz (1995) discusses in detail.

[4] Scholars like Skopcol (1995) consider post-Civil War era mothers' and widows' pensions to be the true origin of federal welfare in America. I agree that this is a key historical starting point, but consider the New Deal a more consequential origin because it served as a stronger template for later programs.

From there we move forward to the Great Society and War on Poverty. Here, Katz (1996) pays special attention the Civil Rights movement and concerns about delinquency and poverty in inner cities as social causes of the War on Poverty. Here, however, he is somewhat more conservative in his analyses than authors we will read next week. For Katz, the Civil Rights movements and fears about delinquency were reflective of real poverty problems that needed solving. While this may be true, other authors argue that both Kennedy's New Deal and Johnson's Great Society served as much about managing poor Americans and radical Black political mobilization as they did to addressing the needs of Black Americans (Hinton 2016; Piven and Cloward 1993; Quadagno 1994).

Finally, we look at the war on welfare that culminated in welfare reform in 1996. After a brief but clear discussion of the effects of 1970s de-industrialization on American poverty rates, Katz (1996) argues that racism alone does not explain anti-welfare sentiment. Instead, he argues, the 1970s oil crisis generated an economic crisis and scarcity mindset that turned the American electorate against welfare. Edin and Shaefer (2015) offer an extremely useful history of the culmination of the war on welfare: the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA). We rely on Edin and Shaefer's (2015) chapter here for three reasons. First, they do a better job than Katz (1996) of outlining the empirical contexts and academic debates that contributed to welfare reform. Second, their brief history also emphasizes the political decision-making that shaped the final reforms in ways that differed from academics' recommendations. Finally, they have the benefit of access to research on the consequences of welfare reform. They summarize some of these consequences at the end of their chapter, and we will read more about the effects of PRWORA later in the course.

Week 6: Tensions in American Welfare

Topic One: Welfare, Race, and Immigration

Assigned Readings:

Gordon, Linda. 1995. "State Caretakers: Maternalism, Mothers' Pensions, and the Family Wage." Pp. 16-36. In: *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare 1890-1935*. The Free Press.

Katznelson, Ira. 2005. "Welfare in Black and White." Pp. 25-52. In: *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Quadagno, Jill. 1994. "Fostering Political Participation." Pp. 117-134. In: *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*. Oxford University Press.

Fox, Cybelle. 2012. "Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State." Pp. 1-17. In: *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State from the Progressive Era to the New Deal*. Princeton University Press.

Recommended Readings:

Fox, Cybelle. 2012. "Three Worlds of Race, Labor, and Politics" and "Three Worlds of Relief." Pp. 18-79. In: *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State from the Progressive Era to the New Deal*. Princeton University Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify the causes and mechanisms of Black exclusion from early American welfare programs.
2. Compare and contrast the ways welfare policy has historically included, excluded, and affected European immigrants, Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, and Black Americans.
3. Analyze the relationships between late twentieth-century Black politics and American welfare policy.

Readings:

Later this week we will take a look at the concept of 'deservingness' and Americans' beliefs about welfare and welfare recipients. Before that, however, we will ground ourselves in the way race and race relations shaped and have been shaped by American welfare policy. The readings for the first class meeting of the week are organized in roughly chronological order. We begin with Gordon's (1995) chapter on maternalism and welfare for single mothers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The key takeaway from this chapter for this week will be Gordon's (1995) discussion of immigrant mothers. Despite the liberalism of the time's social reformers, aid to single mothers was supervisory and disciplinary. The social workers administering aid subjected

mothers to strict, external moral standards. For immigrant mothers (specifically European immigrants), these standards were specifically designed to assimilate aid recipients into the American way of life.

From there we turn to Katznelson's (2005) analysis of race and the New Deal. This analysis is useful for two reasons. First, Katznelson (2005) details some of the specific policy choices that were used to exclude Black workers from New Deal benefits (such as excluding farmworkers from social security eligibility and local implementation of federal welfare). Second, he highlights the political contexts that motivated those exclusions. In order to maintain a coalition in federal government, Democrats had to work with Southern legislators who had a vested economic interest in maintaining the unequal racial order of the South.

Quadagno (1994) picks up where Katznelson (2005) left off by detailing the politics of race in two later welfare moments. First, she describes the way community action programs implemented during Johnson's War on Poverty actually helped extend political rights to and created opportunities for mobilization among Black Americans. At the same time, however, these community action programs were easily co-opted. In some cases they were used to promote Black moderates at the expense of more radical Black activists. Local government officials also pushed back against, and ultimately weakened, community action programs that weakened their own personal political power. Throughout this chapter, Quadagno (1994) also demonstrates how the culture of poverty perspective infiltrated community action work in ways that were ultimately detrimental to the poor.

Finally, Fox (2012) weaves together several themes already discussed. Her introduction summarizes the literature on welfare's weaponization against European immigrants and Black Americans. She builds on this foundation by turning new attention to Mexican immigrants in the Southwest. Ultimately, she adds to our understanding of the race-welfare relationship by arguing that Black Americans, European immigrants, and Mexican Americans/Mexican immigrants experience three different worlds of welfare both due to their geographic locations and their differing places in the American racial order.

Week 6: Tensions in American Welfare

Topic Two: Deservingness Debates

Assigned Readings:

Deservingness and Welfare Policy:

Moffitt, Robert A. 2015. "The Deserving Poor, the Family, and the U.S. Welfare System." *Demography* 52(3):729–49.

Steensland, Brian. 2006. "Cultural Categories and the American Welfare State: The Case of Guaranteed Income Policy." *American Journal of Sociology* 111(5):1273–1326.

Race and Deservingness:

Gilens, Martin. 1999. "Racial Attitudes, the Undeserving Poor, and Opposition to Welfare." Pp. 60-79. In: *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. The University of Chicago Press.

Kelly, Maura. 2010. "Regulating the Reproduction and Mothering of Poor Women: The Controlling Image of the Welfare Mother." *The Journal of Poverty* 14(1):76–96.

Recommended Readings:

Katz, Michael B. 1996. "Pauperism and Relief Before the Poorhouse." Pp. 13-22. In: *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*. Basic Books.

Katz, Michael B. 1989. "From the Undeserving Poor to the Culture of Poverty." Pp. 9-35. *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare*. Oxford University Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Compare and contrast cultural categories of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor.
2. Describe the impact of concepts of deservingness on American welfare policy.
3. Analyze the relationship between concepts of deservingness and race.

Readings:

By this point in the course, students have likely already noticed themes of deservingness reappearing throughout the readings. They should have some understanding that the extent to which the poor are seen as deserving welfare has historically been tied up in questions about their morality, proper behavior, and willingness to work. Students who would like a clearer discussion of these themes may turn to the recommended Katz (1989; 1996) readings, but these themes will also be summarized in lecture.

The goal of the assigned readings this week is to outline the ways notions of deservingness shape welfare policy and are shaped by race. We begin with an empirical reading that demonstrates how changes in welfare spending have historically mapped onto cultural categories of deservingness. Moffitt (2015) argues that, contrary to popular perception, American welfare spending has grown overall since the 1970s. However, spending has been redistributed away from the non-elderly and non-disable to the elderly and disabled, from the poorest families to less-poor, and from single-parent families to two-parent families. Steensland (2006) then offers us a look at *how* cultural categories of deservingness produced these policy outcomes through schematic, discursive, and institutional mechanisms. Thus, the second reading gives us the causal linkages between cultural expectations and policy decisions.

The remaining two readings turn our attention the role of race in notions of deservingness. We start with Gilens (1999), who argues that Americans generally support the *idea* of welfare. They believe the needy should receive aid. However, actual opinions about welfare policy are shaped by individual perceptions of Black Americans such that those who believe Black Americans are lazy (or adhere to other, similar stereotypes) are less likely to favor increases in welfare and more likely to favor welfare cuts. Elsewhere in the book (unassigned), he argues that the media has played a key role in producing this outcome by racializing images of poverty. The second reading builds on this general idea of media influence using the specific sociological concept of "controlling images" (Collins 1990). The authors argue that controlling images of Black mothers as 'welfare mothers' or 'welfare queens' played a central role in the debates over welfare reform between 1992 and 2007. These stereotypes were deployed in support of restrictive welfare policies, and as such had a direct impact on both policy change and the subsequent life experiences of poor Black mothers. Together, these two readings outline for students the ways racial politics have historically intersected with cultural concepts of deservingness to disadvantage poor Black Americans.

Week 7: Contemporary American Welfare

Topic One: Contemporary Programs

Assigned Readings:

Reviews of Welfare Post-PRWORA:

Tach, Laura, and Kathryn Edin. 2017. "The Social Safety Net After Welfare Reform: Recent Developments and Consequences for Household Dynamics." *Annual Review of Sociology* 43(1):541–561.

Contemporary Programs:

Halpern-Meekin, Sarah, Kathryn Edin, Laura Tach, and Jennifer Sykes. 2015. "Family Budgets: Staying in the Black, Slipping into the Red." Pp. 23-58. In: *It's Not Like I'm Poor: How Working Families Make Ends Meet in a Post-Welfare World*. University of California Press.

Ratcliffe, Caroline, Signe-Mary McKernan, and Sisi Zhang. 2011. "How Much Does the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Reduce Food Insecurity?" *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 93(4):1082–98.

Turner, Lesley J., Sheldon Danziger, and Kristin S. Seefeldt. 2006. "Failing the Transition from Welfare to Work: Women Chronically Disconnected from Employment and Cash Welfare*." *Social Science Quarterly* 87(2):227–49.

Recommended Readings:

Moffitt, Robert A. 2016a. *Economics of Means-Tested Transfer Programs in the United States*. Vol. 2. University of Chicago Press.

Moffitt, Robert A., ed. 2016b. *Economics of Means-Tested Transfer Programs in the United States*. Vol. 1. University of Chicago Press.

Sykes, Jennifer, Katrin Križ, Kathryn Edin, and Sarah Halpern-Meekin. 2015. "Dignity and Dreams: What the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Means to Low-Income Families." *American Sociological Review* 80(2):243–67.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify and describe some of the most important contemporary federal welfare programs.
2. Describe the impact of three welfare programs (EITC, SNAP, and TANF) on the lives of people in poverty.

Readings:

This week we will discuss important contemporary American welfare programs. We begin with a useful review by Tach and Edin (2017) that describes the shape and impacts of major means-tested welfare programs since PRWORA. From there, we read one empirical article about each of three major programs: EITC, SNAP, and TANF. I selected these three because they are all contemporary variations on historical forms of welfare we've already read about: workfare and direct assistance. Each reading was specifically selected to further describe the direct impact of a given program on the lives of the poor. Mendenhall et al. (2012) describe both the earmarking and meaning of EITC benefits. They find that families often readjust their original spending plans and fail to save as much of the benefit as they expected, but that the benefit nonetheless drives accumulation goals. Ratcliffe et al. (2011) employs an instrumental variables approach to estimate the causal effect of SNAP receipt on household food insecurity. SNAP reduces the likelihood of food insecurity by 30% and reduces the likelihood of extreme food insecurity by 20%. Finally, Turner et al. (2006) look at disconnection from cash welfare (TANF). While many women left the welfare rolls following PROWRA, the authors find that a substantial number of women did not leave welfare for work. Instead, they became what the authors call 'chronically disconnected,' or living without cash welfare or work income.

While the three welfare programs covered in the assigned readings represent an important chunk of the American social safety net, the readings omit other significant programs like Social Security and disability (SSI/SSDI), health insurance (CHIP, Medicare, Medicaid) and unemployment insurance (UI). Requiring students to read about every significant welfare program would make the reading assignments for this week unreasonably long. I will therefore describe these other programs and their scope in lecture, drawing largely on the historical and descriptive work included in Moffit's (2016a; 2016b) edited volumes for the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Week 7: Contemporary American Welfare Programs

Topic Two: Beyond Federal Programs

Assigned Readings:

Submerged Welfare Policy:

Howard, Christopher. 1993. "The Hidden Side of the American Welfare State." *Political Science Quarterly* 108(3):403–36.

Non-Governmental Service Provision:

Siliunas, Andreja, Mario L. Small, and Joseph Wallerstein. 2019. "We Can Help, but There's a Catch: Nonprofit Organizations and Access to Government-Funded Resources among the Poor." *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* 8(1):109–28.

Hackworth, Jason. 2012. "Practicing Religious Neoliberalism." Pp. 86-113.*Faith Based: Religious Neoliberalism and the Politics of Welfare in the United States*. The University of Georgia Press.

Program Implementation:

Lipsky, Michael. 2010. "The Critical Role of Street-Level Bureaucrats" and "Street-Level Bureaucrats as Policy Makers." Pp. 3-26. In: *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Recommended Readings:

Soss, Joe, Richard C. Fording, and Sanford F. Schram. 2011. *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race*. University of Chicago Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify the non-programmatic ways federal policy promotes social safety net programs.
2. Analyze the ways frontline welfare workers shape safety net policy.
3. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of privatized social service provision.

Readings:

Research on American welfare programs often assumes a perfect translation of policy into implementation. This is usually a necessary and not-unreasonable assumption. In the second half of this week, however, we will explore some alternative perspectives on the American welfare state: submerged welfare policy, the power of street-level bureaucrats, and private service provision. The first reading outlines the hidden side of the American welfare state. While there has been substantial research on the 'submerged state' since Howard's (1993) article (see, for example, Mettler 2011), this article clearly lays out some of the hidden sides of the American

social safety net. These include subsidizing employer provisions for workers and nonprofit work. The subsidization of charity in particular lays the groundwork for the readings that follow.

The next two readings describe non-profit, private service provision by non-profits generally and faith-based organizations (FBOs) specifically. The first reading describes the complex contexts in which nonprofit service providers operate. Because of the regulations that come with government funding, nonprofits may need to adopt reject clients they would prefer to aid, select among clients based on likelihood of successful outcomes, ignore certain relevant problems in clients' lives, or undermine client progress for the sake of funding (Siliunas et al. 2019). The government-nonprofit relationship also shapes the clients' experiences. Hackworth (2012), meanwhile, focuses specifically on FBOs. Based on surveys of FBOs in three major cities, he argues that while FBOs do not often discriminate on the basis of faith or impost religious requirements on clients, they tend to perceive poverty as the result of individual and spiritual failings and to design their services accordingly.

The final reading then outlines an aspect of social safety net services that shapes clients' interactions with both governmental and private programs. Lipsky (2010) argues that street-level bureaucrats (SLBs), frontline service providers who interact with the public and exercise discretion in their work. As the key nexus of citizen interaction with social safety net programs, SLBs stand to shape citizens' experiences with welfare systems in profound ways and serve as policy makers by controlling the on-the-ground implementation of safety net programs. The recommended reading places this power over policy implementation in the context of the neoliberalization of welfare provision (Soss et al. 2011), but our in-class discussions will focus primarily on ways that SLBs can affect the lives of the clients they interact with and how those interactions produce policy and perceptions of policy in aggregate.

Week 8: Poverty, Welfare, and Criminal Justice

Topic One: Poverty and Criminal Justice

Assigned Readings:

Agnew, R. 2015. "Strain Theories." In: *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, G. Ritzer (Ed.).

Sampson, Robert J. 2012. "The Theory of Collective Efficacy." Pp. 149-178 *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect.* University of Chicago Press.

Reiman, Jeffrey. 2007. "…And the Poor Get Prison." Pp. 111-157. *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*. 8th ed. Pearson.

Recommended Readings:

Agnew, Robert. 1992. "Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency." *Criminology* 30(1):47–88.

Agnew, Robert. 1999. "A General Strain Theory of Community Differences in Crime Rates." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 36(2):123–55.

Cloward, Richard A. 1959. "Illegitimate Means, Anomie, and Deviant Behavior." *American Sociological Review* 24(2):164–76. doi: 10.2307/2089427.

Cloward, Richard A., and Lloyd E. Ohlin. 1960. *Delinquency and Opportunity*. New York: The Free Press.

Merton, Robert K. 1938. "Social Structure and Anomie." *American Sociological Review* 3(5):672–82.

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science* 277(5328):918–24.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Describe some criminological theories of poverty and crime.
2. Compare and contrast strain and social control theories about poverty and crime.
3. Describe the way class affects experiences with the criminal justice system.

Readings:

The readings for the first half of this week are light. They are primarily meant to provide a foundation for the next set of readings, which will engage more deeply with structural issues of poverty, welfare, criminal justice, and race. First, however, students should have a basic understanding of the relationship between poverty and criminal justice. The first reading

introduces students to strain theories of crime. Because this is not a criminology course, the reading is extremely brief. It does, however, summarize various key developments in strain theory, including the Mertonian perspective and Agnew's (1992) general strain theory. As such, it is sufficient for suggesting to students that poverty can push people into criminal activity.

The second reading describes the ways poverty also *enables* criminal activity by reducing social control. Sampson (2012) outlines the theory of collective efficacy, describing the ways that perceived violence and social disorder reduce trust in neighbors and willingness to intervene to potential criminal activity. Thus, poverty and its associated disordering of public life serves to reduce the social control neighborhood residents can enact in their own spaces. This enables criminal activity. By focusing on the social control side of crime, this reading offers students an alternative perspective on the relationship between poverty and crime. In addition to directly causing criminal activity, poverty reduces the ability of communities to *prevent* crime.

The final reading offers a third look at poverty and crime by shifting our focus to the criminal justice system. Reiman's (2007) chapter details the disadvantages that poverty carries in the criminal justice system by describing class inequality in outcomes at every step of the criminal justice process. There is a serious limitation to this chapter, however. Reiman (2007) argues in the assigned chapter that racial disparities in criminal justice are the result of class inequality rather than the intersection of racial and class inequality. The readings assigned for the second half of this week should help dismiss that argument, but it will be important to emphasize the realities of intersecting racial and class-based privilege in the criminal justice system during class.

Week 8: Poverty, Welfare, and Criminal Justice

Topic Two: Welfare and Criminal Justice

Assigned Readings:

Wacquant, Loic. 2009. "Social Insecurity and the Punitive Upsurge." Pp. 1-40. In: *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Duke University Press

Hinton, Elizabeth. 2016. "Introduction: Origins of Mass Incarceration" and "The War on Black Poverty." Pp. 1-62. In: *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*. Harvard University Press.

Gustafson, Kaaryn. 2009. "The Criminalization of Poverty." *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 99(3):643–716.[5]

Recommended Readings:

Wacquant, Loic. 2009. "The Criminalization of Poverty in the Post-Civil Rights Era" and "Welfare 'Reform' as Poor Discipline and Statecraft." Pp. 41-112. In: *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Duke University Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Analyze the logics underlying mass incarceration and welfare (post-PRWORA).
2. Describe the connections between welfare and criminal justice policy in the New Deal and the War on Poverty.
3. Identify some of the ways welfare systems make people in poverty vulnerable to the criminal justice system.

Readings:

With a baseline understanding of the relationships between poverty and crime, we turn next to an analysis of the institutions of welfare and criminal justice. As in the first half of the week, each of the readings assigned for the second class meeting offer a slightly different look at the topic at hand. We begin with Wacquant (2009), who argues that mass incarceration and modern disciplinary welfare systems are both means of managing social insecurity produced by deindustrialization and international labor market shifts. Rather than solve the labor market problems at the heart of social unrest, he argues, mass incarceration and disciplinary welfare systems are implemented to manage and quiet the unrest itself. Thus, both systems share a similar underlying purpose and logic.

[5] The page count on this reading is inflated by the footnote citation style used in law journals. The readings for this week are approximately equivalent to other weeks in the course.

The next reading builds on Wacquant's (2009) foundation. Hinton (2016) demonstrates that federal anti-crime policy has historically been intertwined with social safety net policy. The connection began with Kennedy's New Deal, which attacked poverty in order to manage Black inner-city unrest. The New Deal was thus simultaneously an antipoverty program and an anti-delinquency program. It created a supervisory and service provision infrastructure that shaped the subsequent implementation of Great Society programs. Johnson's Great Society antipoverty policies were also passed at the same time as federal laws issuing new assistance to law enforcement. Again, the intention of these policies was to manage the Black inner city. Hinton's (2016) argument, then, is that mass incarceration and welfare share more than a common underlying logic (Wacquant 2009). They were closely linked even in some of their earliest historical forms.

Welfare and criminal justice systems are also tightly linked today. In the final reading, Gustafson (2009) argues that modern American welfare systems help criminalize by generating controlling images (Collins 1990) of welfare recipients as fraudsters, by serving as a tool of the criminal justice system, and by assigning welfare recipients second-class status in courts. The second of these mechanisms is perhaps the most striking. Gustafson claims that series of sting operations developed by the Office of the Inspector General, Operation Talon, used SNAP offices to arrest SNAP recipients with outstanding arrest warrants by calling them to the office "to resolve a problem with their benefits or receive some kind of bonus" (Gustafson 2009:670). While sting operations like these are generally not seen in welfare offices today, there are government records that indicate they have been used for stings in the past.

Taken together, these readings will help students understand that criminal justice and welfare policy are closely related to each other. From one theoretical perspective, both are used to regulate social unrest produced by labor market conditions (Wacquant 2009; see also Piven and Cloward 1993). Regardless of whether or not we accept this as the goal of both systems, analyses of welfare policy past and present clearly demonstrate an interrelationship between welfare and criminal justice institutions.

Week 9: Introduction to Rural Poverty

Topic One: Defining and Describing Rural Poverty

Assigned Readings:

Johnson, Kenneth M. 2017. "Where Is Rural America and Who Lives There?" Pp. 3–27. In: *Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick. Columbia University Press.

Lichter, Daniel T., and Kai A. Schafft. 2016. "People and Places Left Behind: Rural Poverty in the New Century." Pp. 317–40. In: *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*, edited by D. Brady and L. M. Burton. Oxford University Press.

Weber, Bruce, and Kathleen Miller. 2017. "Poverty in Rural America Then and Now." Pp. 28–63. In: *Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick. Columbia University Press.

Recommended Readings:

Defining Rurality:

Falk, William W., and Thomas K. Pinhey. 1978. "Making Sense of the Concept Rural and Doing Rural Sociology: An Interpretive Perspective." *Rural Sociology* 43(4):547–58.

Halfacree, Keith. 2006. "Rural Space: Constructing a Three-Fold Architecture." Pp. 44–62. In: *The Handbook of Rural Studies*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Lichter, Daniel T., and David L. Brown. 2011. "Rural America in an Urban Society: Changing Spatial and Social Boundaries." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37(1):565–92.

Additional Readings on Rural Poverty:

Thiede, Brian, Hyojung Kim, and Matthew Valasik. 2018. "The Spatial Concentration of America's Rural Poor Population: A Postrecession Update." Rural Sociology 83(1):109–44. doi: 10.1111/ruso.12166.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Describe the scope of rural poverty, particularly in comparison to urban poverty.
2. Describe historical trends in rural poverty, particularly relative to urban poverty.
3. Analyze the heterogeneity of rural poverty with regards to demographics, geographies, and over-time trends.

Readings:

This week we turn to rural poverty. While there are fruitful discussions left to be had about defining the concept of rurality itself, I have chosen to omit those debates from this class because the class is targeted towards undergraduates and our time is better spent engaging with more established knowledge. We thus begin with a series of readings that describe rural America and the state of poverty in rural places. We start with Johnson's (2017) chapter, which offers a brief demographic description of rural America. Without engaging with the topic of poverty, Johnson (2017) identifies several key trends in rural America. First, he emphasizes that rural America is diverse both in ethnic and economic terms. Second, he offers an analysis of the issue of out-migration, pointing out that levels of outmigration vary by economic base. He then describes the aging and increasing diversity of rural America. Each of these trends will be relevant throughout our study of rural poverty.

We then turn to the topic of poverty with Lichter and Schafft's (2016) chapter. Lichter and Schafft (2016) offer an extremely broad review of the literature on rural poverty. They identify and briefly discuss some key dimensions of American rural poverty, including its spatial concentration and persistence over time, but also add insight from research on rural poverty in Europe and the global South. I assign this work to provide a sort of introduction to the scope of rural poverty research. It also serves as a sort of introduction to the next assigned reading. While Lichter and Schafft (2016) offer a useful discussion of rural material hardship generally, Weber and Miller (2017) drill into the present and historical realities of rural poverty rates. They begin by examining the geography and intensity of rural poverty in the past, then look at how rural poverty has changed over time. Students should take away three key points from this reading. First, rural poverty is generally higher than urban poverty.[6] Second, the gap between rural poverty and urban poverty has closed considerably, mostly due to a sharp decline in rural poverty in the 1960s. Third, concentrated poverty has actually increased in rural America. In class, we will identify some key pockets of rural poverty and use data from the Understanding Communities of Deep Disadvantage project to explore how concentrated poverty in those places correlates with other measures of disadvantage.

[6] Urban poverty is sometimes higher than rural poverty if we use the SPM rather than the OPM, but I agree with Lichter and Schafft's (2016) point that the SPM excludes some key dimensions of rural hardship that would render rural poverty higher. These include cost of employment and cost of transportation.

Week 9: Introduction to Rural Poverty

Topic Two: Theorizing and Historicizing Rural Poverty

Assigned Readings:

Tickamyer, Ann R., and Emily J. Wornell. 2017. "How to Explain Poverty?" Pp. 84–114. In: *Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick. Columbia University Press.

Thiede, Brian, and Tim Slack. 2017. "The Old Versus the New Economies and Their Impacts." Pp. 231–56. In: *Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick. Columbia University Press.

Albrecht, Don E., Carol M. Albrecht, and Stan L. Albrecht. 2000. "Poverty in Nonmetropolitan America: Impacts of Industrial, Employment, and Family Structure Variables." *Rural Sociology* 65(1):87–103.

Tickamyer, Ann R., and Cynthia M. Duncan. 1990. "Poverty and Opportunity Structure in Rural America." *Annual Review of Sociology* 16(1):67–86.

Recommended Readings:

Walls, David S. 1978. "Internal colony or internal periphery? A critique of current models and an alternative formulation." *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*, 319-49.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Evaluate the applicability of culture of poverty and concentration of poverty theories to rural places.
2. Explain additional theories of rural poverty, including the internal colony perspective.
3. Describe the impact of changing economic structures on rural poverty, with a focus on the shift from industrial to service economies.

Readings:

For this class meeting our focus will be on applying theories of poverty covered previously in the course to rural America. We will also explore some of the additional theories of poverty put forth to explain rural poverty specifically. We begin with Tickamyer and Wornell's (2017) chapter because they open with a review of culture-of-poverty and structural poverty theories- theories we covered previously in the course. After explaining some of the reasons the culture of poverty perspective fails to explain rural poverty and reifies stereotypes of rural people, they turn to some interesting structural explanations of poverty in rural places: 'left behind' economic development, resource exploitation, and the shift to service sector economies. They then offer a brief exploration of how gender and race shape rural poverty, with an attendant discussion of how intersecting disadvantaged identities shape experiences of rural poverty.

The remaining readings were selected to build on some of the rural-specific theories of poverty introduced by Tickamyer and Wornell (2017). We start this section with Thiede and Slack's (2017) chapter on old and new economies. He describes the ways that the trend towards industrialization destabilized farm and resource extraction employment in rural places, and explains that this fundamentally changed the employment structure of rural America. This shift produced severe underemployment, and the new service economy wasn't able to absorb workers in rural places as much as it could in urban places. Albrecht et al. (2000) offers a more focused analysis of these realities, and puts them in conversation with Wilson's (1987) arguments about the impacts of shifts to the service sector on inner-city poverty. They argue that the shift to the service sector economy ultimately disrupts rural families and produces compounding disadvantages.

We end with the Tickamyer and Duncan (1990) piece because it serves to historicize additional dimensions of rural poverty linked to the destabilizing power of economic shifts. Unlike the other readings, Tickamyer and Duncan (1990) examine the ways the economic structure of rural places were tied to, shaped, and shaped by political policy and structure. The structure of rural economies *prior* to the service sector shift was dominated by economic elites who employed local laborers in agriculture and resource extraction. Because the shift to the service sector was the result of mechanization in those industries rather than a collapse of those industries, the elites were shielded from the harms of the shift while laborers suffered. Thus, rural poverty is linked to past and present stratification and economic opportunity structures that involve political power and social status as well as employment opportunity. While the other readings focused primarily on employment, this reading should sensitize students to broader, systemic issues of inequality tied to unemployment.

Week 10: The Diversity of Rural Poverty

Topic One: Race, Gender, and Immigration

Assigned Readings:

Smith, Kristin. 2017. "Changing Gender Roles and Rural Poverty." Pp. 117–40. In: *Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick. Columbia University Press.

Monnat, Shannon M., and Raeven Faye Chandler. 2017. "Immigration Trends and Immigrant Poverty in Rural America." Pp. 168–201. In: *Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick. Columbia University Press.

Harvey, Mark H. 2017. "Racial Inequalities and Poverty in Rural America." Pp. 141–67. In: *Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick. Columbia University Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Analyze the relationship between rural poverty and gender, focusing specifically on:
    a. the gendered impacts of poverty
    b. the impacts of poverty on gender and gender relations
2. Describe trends in immigration to rural America and immigrant poverty in rural receiving counties.
3. Analyze the effect of historical white domination of civic, political, and economic institutions on contemporary minority poverty in rural places.

Readings:

While the previously assigned readings on rural poverty have generally acknowledged the diversity of rural poverty, I consider it essential that students leave the course with a de-mythologized idea of rural America. Rural America is not white, agricultural small towns, and the crisis of rural American poverty is more than men losing coal and factory work. This week we will review readings that emphasize the gendered and racial diversity of American poverty, then turn to readings that emphasize the reality of multiple rural Americas. The three readings assigned for our first class each touch on a different aspect of demographic diversity.

Smith (2017) outlines the way changes in rural employment and poverty levels have been deeply gendered. Students should approach this reading keeping in mind the gendered division of labor across the industrial/service economies. Industrial and resource extraction jobs, the kinds of jobs lost in rural places, were predominantly male fields. Service sector jobs, meanwhile, are predominantly female. The loss of traditional industrial or resource extraction labor thus hit men hardest. The number of male breadwinners declined, forcing more women to take on jobs and balance work with unpaid family labor. At the same time, we see a rise of single parent female-headed households in rural places. On top of single mothers having to balance care and work,

they are highly at risk for poverty. Men suffer from more than just unemployment as well. Smith (2017) points out that masculinity norms in many rural places were traditionally tied to certain kinds of labor. The loss of those employment opportunities thus means a challenge to men's masculinity.

The next reading calls students' attention towards the role of rural American counties as new receiving destinations for immigrants. Monnat and Chandler (2017) describe the complex and heterogenous trends in immigration to rural America. They then turn to the issue of immigrant poverty. One of the most useful parts of their chapter for students will be the discussion of how citizenship affects poverty rates. Citizens, unlike noncitizens, have access to a host of safety net programs that may make a substantial difference in material hardship. Overall, the picture of immigrant wellbeing in rural America is one of vulnerability, though the authors do note that some research indicates upward mobility among the children of immigrants.

Finally, Harvey (2017) explicitly theorizes racism in rural American poverty by examining the ways racial domination is woven through the economic, political, and civic structures of rural America. This reading is particularly useful because it goes beyond the traditional focus on anti-Black racism by looking at racism and poverty in the Deep South, the southern border, and tribal lands. Harvey (2017) traces the form of racial domination from the era of explicit racism to the 'colorblind; modern era, arguing that historical establishment of white political and economic elites allows white domination to continue today. This focus on the historical establishment of power should help students understand racial inequality in rural American poverty as something more than the result of contemporary racism in rural America.

Week 10: The Diversity of Rural Poverty

Topic Two: Diverse Geographies

Assigned Readings:

Tribal Lands:

Snipp, C. Matthew. 1986. "The Changing Political and Economic Status of the American Indians: From Captive Nations to Internal Colonies." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 45(2):145–57.

Pickering, Kathleen. 2000. "Alternative Economic Strategies in Low-Income Rural Communities: TANF, Labor Migration, and the Case of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation*." *Rural Sociology* 65(1):148–67.

Appalachia:

Walls, David S. 1976. "Central Appalachia: A Peripheral Region within an Advanced Capitalist Society." *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 4(2):232–47.

Billings, Dwight D., and Kathleen M. Blee. 2000. "From Marginality to Integration." Pp. 243–80. In: *The Road to Poverty: The Making of Wealth and Hardship in Appalachia*. Cambridge University Press.

The Rural South:

Tomaskovic-Devey, Donald, and Vincent J. Roscigno. 1996. "Racial Economic Subordination and White Gain in the U.S. South." *American Sociological Review* 61(4):565–89.

de Jong, Greta. 2005. "Staying in Place: Black Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, and the War on Poverty in the Rural South." *The Journal of African American History* 90(4):387–409.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify geographic diversity in rural America by describing key pockets of rural poverty.
2. Describe the scope and demographics of poverty in Appalachia, the Deep South, and tribal lands.
3. Compare and contrast the causes of persistent rural poverty in each of these three places.

Readings:

In addition to being fundamentally gendered and racialized, rural American poverty is deeply geographic. There is no singular rural America that is poor. Instead, there are many pockets of poverty in rural places with distinctive histories and developmental trajectories. For the second half of this week, students will read about poverty in three different places: tribal lands, central Appalachia, the Deep South.

First we explore the issue of poverty on tribal lands. We start with Snipp's (1986) article, which historicizes contemporary Native poverty by emphasizing its origins in the brutal oppression of Native nations by the American government. He then develops the concept of internal colonies to describe the status of Native American reservations. Internal colonies are spaces dominated by external forces such that resources flow (almost) exclusively from the colony to the dominant nation. It is a specifically racialized concept, used to explain the plight of Black Americans and Native nations. Thus, Snipp (1986) effectively contextualizes our next reading by explaining the history and persistence of Native poverty. Pickering (2000), meanwhile, offers insight into survival strategies on tribal lands. She describes the economic flexibility that Lakota households adopt, which is partially embedded in cultural traditions like foraging, beadwork, and star quilts. She also emphasizes the issue of underemployment on reservations. There are simply no jobs to be had. (Here students should remember that resources flow out of, not into, internal colonies). This, she argues, makes work-based social safety nets virtually useless on tribal lands because those safety nets fail to account for alternative economic survival strategies and an absence of available work.

Next we look to central Appalachia. Both readings assigned here are meant to help students better understand theories of poverty that center material exploitation. The emphasis on resource extraction for external use throughout the history of Appalachia makes it a useful case for exploring the material exploitation. Walls (1976) provides the theoretical framework for these readings by applying several variations on the internal colony concept to Appalachia. He finds that the internal colony perspective generally breaks down because the idea of the internal colony was developed to describe circumstances that involve extensive racial oppression and exploitation. He thus reconceptualizes Appalachia as not an internal colony but a materially exploited peripheral region dominated by elites with ties to other regions and lived in by exploited laborers relatively isolated from other regions. In doing so, he provides a useful lens through which students can read the Billings and Blee (2000) chapter. Focusing specifically on Clay County, Billings and Blee (2000) traced the economic development of central Appalachia from the earliest days of land acquisition and salt mining to its integration with external economies at the start of the 1900s. This history emphasizes the dominance of a small class of land-owning elites who benefitted from relationships with the national and international economies in ways local laborers did not, and thus serves as a sort of example-in-action of the material exploitation Walls (1976) theorizes.

Finally we turn to the topic of Black poverty in the Deep South. While white poverty in the south is indisputably worthy of attention, research on race relations and Black poverty makes up the far larger portion of the literature on southern poverty. Here we start with Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscigno's (1996) analysis of race relations and economic subordination in the south. They find that the strength of traditional elites, the size of the local Black population (and subsequent Black-white competition for jobs), and the economic base of the local economy all shape whether or not working-class whites benefit from Black oppression or faced increased poverty alongside Black Americans. The key point that students should take away from this reading is that Black poverty in the south is the result of elite's consistent reinforcement of the racial caste-class system. At the same time, however, students should also understand that white dominance

in the south is not uniform. The position of working-class whites in the south is complicated by various social factors. This reading should thus serve to complicate students' understandings of race relations in rural southern poverty. With that in mind, we then turn to de Jong (2005), who describes the way that the War on Poverty became a site of civil rights conflict as Black activists who aimed to enable Black Americans to remain in the south tried to coopt antipoverty programs for economic and political empowerment against the will of white supremacists. This reading will re-center issues of racial conflict in the south and demonstrate the way that poverty and antipoverty work were bound up in the Civil Rights movement.

Week 11: Surviving Rural Poverty

Topic One: The Safety Net in Rural Places

Assigned Readings:

Warlick, Jennifer. 2017. "The Safety Net in Rural America." Pp. 389–416. In*: Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick.. Columbia University Press.

Pickering, Kathleen. 2000. "Alternative Economic Activities." Pp. 44–61. In: *Lakota Culture, World Economy*. University of Nebraska Press.

Edin, Kathryn J., and Luke H. Shaefer. 2015. "A World Apart." Pp. 129-156. In: *$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Mariner Books.

Green, Gary P. 2017. "The Opportunities and Limits of Economic Growth." Pp. 416-438. In: *Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick. Columbia University Press.

Recommended Readings:

Pickering, Kathleen, Mark H. Harvey, Gene F. Summers, and David Mushinski. 2006. *Welfare Reform in Persistent Rural Poverty: Dreams, Disenchantments, and Diversity*. Pennsylvania State University Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify the limitations of existing social safety net programs in rural areas.
2. Describe the impact of existing social safety net programs on rural people.
3. Discuss possible opportunities for addressing poverty in rural America.

Readings:

The next topic we will cover is surviving poverty in rural America. A significant amount of research on the safety net in rural America was produced following the 1996 welfare reform (Pickering et al. 2006), I have tried to choose readings that offer a slightly more contemporary look at poverty survival in rural America (with the exception of Pickering 2000, discussed below).

We start with Warlick's (2017) chapter, which outlines the limitations of American welfare programs in rural places. Warlick (2017) finds that existing safety net programs (especially Social Security) *do* lift a substantial number of rural and urban Americans out of poverty. In fact, her data suggests that existing welfare programs may be more likely to lift rural residents out of poverty than urban residents. This finding is attributable in part to the aging of rural America. As in urban America, however, she finds that TANF has little to no impact on poverty. For rural places, she ties this to the problems of employment. Where there are no jobs, women can't get TANF. Where there are jobs, there ae often other infrastructure problems, like lack of childcare

or transportation, that inhibit employment. As students read this chapter, they should keep in mind that while the social safety net may be more effective in rural places, rural poverty is still higher than urban poverty and remains a problem in need of a solution.

The next two readings describe some of the individual solutions people living in rural places have adopted to survive poverty. Pickering's (2000) chapter is somewhat out of date but offers a unique look at microeconomic survival strategies on a Lakota reservation. Some survival strategies adopted by her participants are culturally specific, such as the selling of sweetgrass braids, but the *idea* of microeconomic labor in the form of shadow economy labor extends beyond the reservation. We see it at play in the Mississippi Delta (Edin and Shaefer 2015), where Martha Johnson sells candy and Dixie-cup popsicle sticks out of her kitchen. This reading also demonstrates to students some of the unique risk factors of rural poverty, as we follow Delta residents' challenges in accessing transportation and read descriptions of the pollution and attendant illnesses that afflict the area. While Edin and Shaefer's (2015) work is not specifically oriented towards rural survival strategies, when read in conjunction with Pickering's (2000) ethnographic work it suggests the importance of informal economies (and, as we shall see in the second half of the week, community networks) in poor rural places.

The final reading addresses a common form of antipoverty policy in rural places: economic growth. Green (2017) argues that the ability of economic improvement programs to fight poverty is limited by many factors, including implementation that reflects individualistic beliefs about unemployment. He concludes that community-based economic improvement plans are unlikely to solve the problems of poverty in rural America, but that they might be effective in engaging the poor in their own advocacy.

Week 11: Surviving Rural Poverty

Topic Two: Communities and (Social) Capital

Assigned Readings:

Duncan, Cynthia M. 2014. "Gray Mountain: Equality and Civic Involvement in Northern New England." Pp. 188–232. In: *Worlds Apart: Poverty and Politics in Rural America*. Yale University Press.

Sherman, Jennifer. 2017. "Rural Poverty and Symbolic Capital: A Tale of Two Valleys." Pp. 205-230. In: *Rural Poverty in the United States*, edited by A. R. Tickamyer, J. Sherman, and J. Warlick. Columbia University Press.

Sherman, Jennifer. 2006. "Coping with Rural Poverty: Economic Survival and Moral Capital in Rural America." *Social Forces* 85(2):891–913. doi: 10.1353/sof.2007.0026.

Miller, Emily. 2019. "Hometown Heroes Hold Up Social Safety Net in Rural Kentucky." Poverty Solutions. Retrieved (https://poverty.umich.edu/news-events/news/rural-resilience-hometown-heroes-hold-up-social-safety-net-in-rural-kentucky/).

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Explain the role that social capital plays in poverty survival in rural communities.
2. Discuss some of the potential drawbacks of social capital-based survival strategies.
3. Analyze the structural factors that affect the building and efficacy of social capital.

Readings:

The rural poverty research has paid more (and more recent) theoretical attention to network-based survival strategies than urban poverty research. For this class, we explore some of the ways that social capital plays a role in poverty survival in rural America. We begin with a kind of demonstration of the power of community networks and social capital. Duncan (2014) outlines the history of Gray Mountain, a mill town in Northern New England. From the early 1900s, the town has a long history of civic organizations and voluntary associations. Unlike the other communities described in Duncan's (2014) book, the town has a broad horizontal network of connections people can draw on for both individual help and collective action. Thus, we see in Gray Mountain the importance of communities and social capita. [7]

Sherman (2017) offers a more theoretically elaborate analysis of the kind of phenomenon Duncan (2014) described. She connects the network importance Duncan (2014) identified to the concepts of social and symbolic capital to argue that adherence to certain behavioral and moral norms can make or break a poor rural family by determining their access to network-based aid. The other piece by Sherman (2006) expands on this idea by focusing specifically on moral

[7] When teaching this book, it will be important to point out the limitations of Duncan's work. She has a tendency to accept hearsay as evidence and rumor as reality. This is most prominent in the Appalachia chapter.

capital as a necessity for poverty survival. Here, Sherman (2006) argues that the poor often select survival strategies that are *socially* rational rather than *economically* rationale in order to preserve moral capital that can be traded for community support and job opportunities. In both readings, students should pay attention to the structural determinants of capital importance. Sherman (2017) points out that where there is no employment and where everyone is poor, some forms of capital may lose power because there is no way to 'spend' them.

The final reading offers a look at the limitations of social capital survival strategies. Drawing on ethnographic and interviewing research in Kentucky, Miller (2019) points out that local rural safety nets are often shored up by 'hometown heroes'- individual community leaders working tirelessly to provide for various needs. However, she also argues that these hometown heroes have limited capacity for long-term and big picture planning. An overreliance on local community leaders thus creates a fragile social safety net.

Week 12: Rural Reactions to Poverty Problems

Topic One: Intersecting Threats

Assigned Readings:

Carr, Patrick J., and Maria J. Kefalas. 2009. "Introduction." Pp. 1–26. In: Hollowing Out the Middle: *The Rural Brain Drain and What it Means for America*. Beacon Press.

Thiede, Brian, David L. Brown, Scott R. Sanders, Nina Glasgow, and Laszlo J. Kulcsar. 2017. "A Demographic Deficit? Local Population Aging and Access to Services in Rural America, 1990–2010." *Rural Sociology* 82(1):44–74.

Farber, Naomi, and Julie E. Miller-Cribbs. 2014. "Violence in the Lives of Rural, Southern, and Poor White Women." *Violence Against Women* 20(5):517–38.

Lambert, David, John A. Gale, and David Hartley. 2008. "Substance Abuse by Youth and Young Adults in Rural America." *The Journal of Rural Health* 24(3):221–28.

Recommended Readings:

DeKeseredy, Walter S., Martin D. Schwartz, Danielle Fagen, and Mandy Hall. 2006. "Separation/Divorce Sexual Assault: The Contribution of Male Support." *Feminist Criminology* 1(3):228–50.

Quinones, Sam. 2014. *Dreamland: The Story of America's New Opiate Epidemic*. Bloomsbury Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Identify key non-poverty threats faced by rural areas.
2. Discuss the implications of these threats intersecting with rural poverty.

Readings:

This week, we turn to a topic that has garnered increasing attention since the 2016 election of Donald Trump: the rural-urban political divide in America. I have two goals for this week. First, I want students to be able to understand rural politics as a response to the genuine and perceived threats rural communities face. At the same time, however, my second goal is to try and avoid the genre of research on rural politics that exoticizes or infantilizes rural voters. To achieve both these goals, I start with some readings that outline some of the additional threats rural places face. Each reading covers a different topic, and this is by no means an exhaustive list. We start with two demographic issues: the brain drain and the aging of rural America. Carr and Kefalas' (2009) book introduction outlines the trend towards youth out-migration that affects a substantial portion of America. Forecasting their later analyses, they also describe several kinds of youths who remain in or leave (and sometimes return to) their home communities. The picture they paint is one of a fraught decision-making process that makes salient the economic limitations

rural communities operate under. In the second reading, Thiede and colleagues (2017) address the implications of the aging of rural America (which we read about in Week 9). They find that counties with higher median ages the presence of service-providing establishments. This suggests that the aging of a rural county may inhibit that county's economic growth. Taken together, these readings tell a concerning story: young people are leaving rural America, and the elderly are remaining. The remain of the elderly, however, could be a factor inhibiting the economic growth that could entice youth to stay.

Next we look at issues of violence and drugs. Women in rural places face higher levels of domestic violence, which may be in part enabled by the same community bonds that can provide opportunities for poverty survival (DeKeseredy et al. 2006). Farber and Miller-Cribbs (2014) focus on the impact of domestic violence on women's life courses. They find that victimization inhibits women's accumulation of economic, human, and social capital, which can trap them in vulnerable positions. When it comes to drugs, rural people are also at risk. Lambert, Gale, and Hartley (2008) find that rural youth are more likely youth use alcohol and methamphetamine than urban youth *and* that rural youth are more likely to engage in associated risky behaviors like driving while high. This reading scratches the surface of a deep-seated and historically-shaped problem with drugs in rural places, which we will review in class with help from Quinones' (2014) work on the opioid crisis. From these two readings, students should take away two key points. First, there are people in rural America who are deeply vulnerable and at-risk. Second, violence and drug use are realities that contradict stereotypical notions of an idyllic rural America.

Week 12: Rural Reactions to Poverty Problems

Topic Two: Threat Responses and Defensive Politics

Assigned Readings:

Kelly, Paige, and Linda Lobao. 2019. "The Social Bases of Rural-Urban Political Divides: Social Status, Work, and Sociocultural Beliefs." *Rural Sociology* 84(4):669–705.

Wuthnow, Robert. 2019. "Present Dangers." Pp. 44–79. In: *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Small-Town America.* Princeton University Press.

Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012. "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *The American Political Science Review* 106(3):517–32.

Silva, Jennifer M. 2019. "Introduction." Pp. 1–18. In: *We're Still Here: Pain and Politics in the Heart of America*. Oxford University Press.

Recommended Readings:

Wuthnow, Robert. 2019. *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Small-Town America*. Princeton University Press.

Rationale:

Goals:

1. Describe the threats that some rural Americans see their communities facing (whether or not you agree that those threats are real and present).
2. Analyze how structural conditions shape rural American politics.
3. Analyze how perceived threat and self-concept shape rural American politics.

Readings:

In our last class we will tackle the issue of rural politics head on. This is a tricky area to teach responsibly. The shock of the 2016 election of Donald Trump sparked a wave of research that essentially boils down to asking: "what's wrong with these people?" Some research in this area is condescending and dismissive and accuses rural people of naively voting against their own interests out of sheer racism or toxic masculinity. Some of it reads like early Appalachian travelogues that exoticize rural people only to conclude, 'shockingly,' that rural people are much the same as urban people and their voting patterns are 'surprisingly' intelligible. I have tried to avoid this research. Instead, I have tried to select readings that give voice to the real fears of rural communities and translates those fears into political action.

We start with a top-down approach to the rural-urban political divide. Kelly and Lobao (2019) use GSS data to analyze rural and urban correlates of presidential voting choices and conclude that rural-urban voting differences are fully explained by rural-urban differences in sociocultural status, employment levels, and moral values and beliefs. The statistical analysis in this piece is

rigorous, but in stopping at statistical correlation it leaves students without an understanding of the actual processes through which rural voting patterns emerge and largely ignores the notion that rural places have their own truly discrete sense of community. Ultimately, I assign this reading primarily because it stands in sharp contrast to the more grounded research that follows.

Next, we turn to Wuthnow's (2019) chapter on the 'present dangers' faced by rural communities. While Wuthnow (2019) was among the scholars writing in direct response to Trump's election, his conclusions are based on extensive research in small-town America. He identifies many threats that small-town Americans feel their communities faced, including drugs, immigration and cultural threats, and the brain drain. In many ways, this reading summarizes some of the topics covered in the previous class meeting.

The remaining readings explore how this sense of community vulnerability may be translated into political behavior. While Walsh (2012) unfortunately starts with the question of why people vote against their own interests, her qualitative research ultimately suggests that voters in rural places share a rural consciousness (in the vein of Marx's class consciousness). Those who share in rural consciousness attribute rural deprivation to governance by urban political elites, and thus consider it in their best interests to vote against those elites and in favor of small government. While the scope of Walsh's (2012) article is somewhat limited, it convincingly makes the argument that rural people *are* voting in their own interests. Those interests are just not what researchers assume. Silva (2019) expands on this notion by describing the way rural Americans live and feel the decline of rural America. In doing so, she argues that rural Americans bridge their painful personal experiences and self-narratives with their political identities in ways that make their suffering feel useful and honorable. This interplay between individual experience and political action is one of the best analyses of rural American politics currently available. My hope is that students will take away from it an empathetic understanding of the reasons rural Americans vote the way they do, and that it might spark discussions about how broad-based antipoverty action in rural America could change the nation's political landscape.

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