

# Syllabus: PPPA 6081 | Poverty & Social Policy | Spring 2023

## Course Information

The George Washington University | Trachtenberg School of Public Policy & Public Administration

Course: PPPA 6081 – Poverty & Social Policy

Credit hours: 3

Semester: Spring 2023

Meeting day and time: Thursdays, 6:10 – 8pm ET

Location: Monroe Hall, 2115 G Street NW, Room B-32 (basement)

## Instructor

Professor Erica Walls (formerly Broadus), PhD

[ebroadus@gwu.edu](mailto:ebroadus@gwu.edu)

Office location: Phillips Hall – Sociology Department, 801 22nd Street NW, Suite 409, Room F

## Office hours

- Tuesday or Thursday: 2:30 - 4:00pm ET, in-person or Zoom.
- Schedule an appointment: <https://calendly.com/erica-walls/office-hours>
- Please schedule an appointment at least one hour prior to meeting time.

## Course Description

The U.S. is among the richest nations in the world. And yet, millions of Americans struggle to obtain basic necessities, including affordable housing, adequate/nutritious food, quality education, well-paying jobs, and access to healthcare. These critical social issues bring many questions to mind:

*What causes people to be poor in the U.S.? Who is most impacted? Why? How?  
What is/has been the U.S. government's response to poverty? What are alternative solutions?  
What can we do about it?*

If these questions interest you, then you are in the right place. In PPPA 6081: Poverty & Social Policy, we will explore these matters – and more – in three sections. First, we will unpack “poverty” to understand its measurement, causes, and effects from multiple perspectives. Next, we will examine social welfare policies and programs following major economic downturns. In our final discussions, we will consider methods to confront poverty through governmental and community support. Throughout the semester, we will evaluate the pros and cons of social policy interventions; and learn about the lived experiences of people who navigate complexities of social welfare programs. Ultimately, students will demonstrate semester-long learning by researching, analyzing, writing, and presenting about a social policy/program/proposal to help citizens overcome poverty and achieve/sustain self-sufficiency.

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Several teaching methods will be used to enhance your knowledge and keep learning fresh and interesting: lectures, student-led discussions, in-class activities, take-home assignments and quizzes, news stories, videos, guest speakers, and more.

**Prof. Walls believes that education should be practical, personal, and purposeful. So, please think of this course as more than just a grade on your transcript. It's an opportunity for academic, personal, and professional growth.** That said, some weeks will require you to complete *several* pages of reading. If you are passionate about helping people to overcome poverty and improve their lives, then you will likely enjoy the readings/resources and learn a lot from this course.

### As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and explain characteristics, theoretical causes, and effects of poverty in the U.S.
- Distinguish and assess several methods to measure poverty
- Examine the history, design, implementation, and limitations of U.S. social welfare policies/programs.
- Recognize the impact American social welfare policies/programs have on people's lives.
- Evaluate the logic, strengths, and weaknesses of social welfare policies/programs/proposals.
- Analyze and critically debate solutions to poverty.
- Write and present clearly, concisely, and professionally.

### Required books and additional resources

- Rank, M. R. (2020). *Confronting poverty: Economic hardship in the United States*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Rothstein, R. (2017). *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America*. Liveright Publishing.
- Campbell, A. L. (2014). *Trapped in America's Safety Net: One Family's Struggle*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lewis, N. L. (2021). *Pregnant Girl: A Story of Teen Motherhood, College, and Creating a Better Future for Young Families*. Beacon Press.
- On Blackboard (BB): Additional readings and resources, such as governmental reports, websites, news articles, videos, etc., are provided on BB, under the Readings and Resources link. If/when new items are added, you will be notified at least one week before each class.

### Class recordings and in-class instruction

Classes will be recorded via Zoom so that students can review or catch up if they're absent. You can access class recordings on BB: Class Recordings (link); Cloud Recordings (tab). Recordings are for members of this class *only*. Under no circumstances may you share recordings, in whole or in part, with anyone outside this course. Violation of this policy is a violation of the GWU Student Code of Conduct and can result in failure of the course.

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As stated below, this course is offered in person. Prof. Walls has been advised to share the following statement with students who desire remote learning: “You should direct students who request remote learning to the CCAS Dean’s Office. Undergraduate students should contact the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies at [ccasugdean@email.gwu.edu](mailto:ccasugdean@email.gwu.edu); graduate students should contact graduate student services at [ccasgradserv@gwu.edu](mailto:ccasgradserv@gwu.edu)” (CCAS email on Aug 23, 2022).

### Course Policies

- Indoor mask wearing is required according to DC law and/or GW policy.
- Students will attend class in person. Virtual attendance (via Zoom or BB) is not offered or permitted. Classes will begin promptly at 6:10pm ET.
- We will have guest speakers this semester. If some cannot attend in person, we will join them on Zoom to allow the speaker to see and engage with everyone. In that case, all students' cameras must be on to demonstrate respect for the speaker and their time.
- All assignments/papers are to be uploaded to BB as a Word document or PDF, unless Prof. Walls specifies otherwise.
- Late work will not be accepted without prior approval from the instructor.
- Please bring laptops and tablets. You may use them to take notes and to conduct in-class research/activities *only*.
- Plagiarism (taking credit for another’s work) and cheating are not permitted and may result in a failing grade. Students should seek the instructor’s guidance if unsure how to properly cite or quote another’s work.

### To do well in this course:

- Complete the reading and homework before each class. This will help to facilitate in-depth discussions during class time.
- Attend class as scheduled, arrive on time, participate in discussions, and actively engage with the instructor and classmates.
- Allow the course material to inform your opinions. You are welcome to agree or disagree with the instructor, classmates, and the material, but arguments must be based on information that is factual/academically sound.
- If you are absent, watch the video recording (BB: Class recordings/Cloud recordings) and the Powerpoint slides (BB: Class powerpoints). If you have additional questions, contact Prof. Walls.
- Keep up with deadlines to ensure work is completed and submitted on time.
- Coordinate and cooperate with your group members.

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- Check your email daily. Prof. Walls will post reminders and pertinent information to BB’s Announcements, and forward you those messages via email.
- Make a conscious effort to be mindful of others’ differences and refrain from comments and actions that may be offensive.
- Remain civil, respectful, and open to others’ thoughts and ideas if/when you do not agree.

### Prof. Walls commits to:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Respond to students’ emails within one business day.
- Provide feedback and grades (to assignments/presentations) within 2 weeks of deadline.
- Use the gradebook in BB so students are aware of their progress throughout the semester.
- Maintain an environment to discover, analyze, learn, and ask questions.
- Help you grow as scholars and professionals.

### Schedule of Classes, Readings, and Deadlines.

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Complete reading before class
1	Jan 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Review syllabus and books</li> <li>• Discuss reading</li> <li>• Students select book discussion assignment/week</li> </ul>	Reading on BB, Week 1 “Readings & Resources” folder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Nature of Social Policy,” chapter 2 of <i>Social Policy and Social Change</i> by Jillian A. Jimenez (2015).</li> </ul>
<b>Section 1: U.S. poverty</b>			
2	Jan 26	<b>Nature, extent, and characteristics of poverty</b>	Readings in Rank (2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 1: Defining and measuring</li> <li>• Chapter 2: Patterns and dynamics</li> <li>• Chapter 3: The face of poverty</li> </ul> Read resources in Week 2 folder on BB (see Readings and Resources link)

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Week	Date	Topic(s)	Complete reading before class
3	Feb 2	<b>Reasons for poverty</b>	Readings in Rank (2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 4: Individual- and cultural-level explanations</li> <li>Chapter 5: Structural-level explanations</li> <li>Chapter 6: Putting it together – structural vulnerability</li> </ul> Read resources in Week 3 folder on BB (see Readings and Resources link)
4	Feb 9	<b>Effects and consequences of poverty</b>	Readings in Rank (2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chapter 7: Individuals and families</li> <li>Chapter 8: Communities</li> <li>Chapter 9: The Nation</li> </ul> Read resources in Week 4 folder on BB (see Readings and Resources link)
<b>Group 1's book analysis paper due Wed, Feb 15 at 11:59pm ET. Upload to BB.</b>			
5	Feb 16	<b>Group 1 will lead discussion of <i>The Color of Law</i></b>	Read entire book: <i>The Color of Law</i> by Rothstein (2017)
		<b>Section 1 review</b>	
<b>Quiz 1: covers weeks 1-5. Available on BB Fri, Feb 17 at 6pm ET to Tues, Feb 21 at 11:59pm ET.</b>			
<b>Section 2: U.S. social welfare policies/programs</b>			
6	Feb 23	<b>U.S. social welfare policy, including: Early America, The Great Depression, and The Great Society</b>	Read the resources in Week 6 folder on BB (see Readings and Resources link)
7	Mar 2	<b>Welfare Reform, including gender and race dynamics</b>	Read the resources in Week 7 folder on BB (see Readings and Resources link)
8	Mar 9	<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century issues, including The Great Recession, Covid-19 Pandemic, and current topics</b>	Read the resources in Week 8 folder on BB (see Readings and Resources link)
9	Mar 16	<b>Spring break – no class</b>	n/a
<b>Group 2's book analysis paper due Wed, Mar 22 at 11:59pm ET. Upload to BB.</b>			
10	Mar 23	<b>Group 2 will lead discussion of <i>Trapped in America's Safety Net</i></b>	Read entire book: <i>Trapped in America's Safety Net</i> by Campbell (2014)
		<b>Section 2 review</b>	
		<b>Discuss final group paper and presentation; form</b>	

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Week	Date	Topic(s)	Complete reading before class
		groups and begin drafting proposal	
Quiz 2: covers weeks 6-10. Available on BB Fri, Mar 24 at 6pm ET to Tues, Mar 28 at 11:59pm ET.			
<b>Section 3: Proposed solutions to poverty</b>			
Final group project <u>proposals</u> due by Wed, Mar 29 at 11:59pm ET. One person from each group upload to BB.			
11	Mar 30	Addressing and alleviating poverty – part 1	Readings in Rank (2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rank, chapter 10: Strengthening the social safety net</li> <li>• Rank, chapter 11: Increasing access to key public goods and services</li> <li>• Rank, chapter 12: Supporting all families</li> </ul> Read resources in Week 11 folder on BB (see Readings and Resources link)
		Using a logic model to evaluate the logic, strengths, and weaknesses of social policies/programs/proposals	
		Your group will receive feedback to final project proposal	
12	Apr 6	Addressing and alleviating poverty – part 2	Readings in Rank (2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rank, chapter 13: Employment and universal basic income policies</li> <li>• Rank, chapter 14: Organizing for social change</li> <li>• Rank, chapter 15: Confronting poverty</li> </ul> Read resources in Week 12 folder on BB (see Readings and Resources link)
		Group work time	
Group 3's book analysis paper due Wed, Apr 12 at 11:59pm ET. Upload to BB.			
13	Apr 13	Group 3 will lead discussion of <i>Pregnant Girl</i>	Read entire book: <i>Pregnant Girl</i> by Lewis (2021)
		Group work time	
14	Apr 20	Final presentations	Due in class: Half of groups will present final project.  Other groups will offer feedback to the presenting groups based on semester-long learning.
15	Apr 27	Final presentations	Due in class: Half of groups will present final project.  Other groups will offer feedback to the presenting groups based on semester-long learning.
16	May 11	No class (finals week)	Final group paper due. One person from each group, upload to BB by 11:59pm ET.

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### Assignments and Grades

	Description	Points	% of Grade
1.	<p><b>Class participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation includes completing in-class learning activities, contributing your thoughts and ideas – <i>informed by course reading/learning or relevant experiences</i>, and listening to/respecting others’ right to be heard.</li> <li>Lived experiences are highly valued, as they relate to the course’s topics. This helps to enrich the readings and our time together.</li> </ul>	100	10%
2.	<p><b>Book analysis paper</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone will read 3 books (plus Rank); each relates to one section of our course.</li> <li>Each student will select one of the books to analyze and write a short paper that addresses issues/material covered in class.</li> <li>Details will be provided/discussed in class.</li> </ul>	200	20%
3.	<p><b>Book discussion leader</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each student will lead class discussion on one of the 3 books.</li> <li>Details will be provided/discussed in class.</li> </ul>	100	10%
4.	<p><b>2 quizzes (150 pts each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two take-home quizzes will be conducted on BB to test your knowledge of course material.</li> <li>Students will have 45 minutes (unless pre-approved for more time) to complete each quiz.</li> <li>Format: T/F, multiple choice, matching, or similar (no essays). Notes are permitted.</li> <li>Schedule is listed above.</li> </ul>	300	30%
5.	<p><b>Final group paper – proposed solution to poverty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will work in small groups to analyze and assess a social policy/program/proposal that confronts poverty.</li> <li>Students will submit a proposal for instructor’s review/approval.</li> <li>Students will complete a final paper.</li> <li>Details will be provided/discussed in class.</li> </ul>	200	20%
6.	<p><b>Final group presentation – proposed solution to poverty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Groups will present their solution to poverty.</li> <li>Email slides to instructor at beginning of class.</li> <li>Details will be provided/discussed in class.</li> </ul>	100	10%
	Total	1,000	100%

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Final course grades will be based on the following percentages:

94-100	A	87-89	B+	80-83	B-	74-76	C	60-63	D+	60-63	D-
90-93	A-	84-86	B	77-79	C+	70-73	C-	64-66	D	59 or less	F

### Average minimum amount of out-of-class or independent learning expected per week:

In a 15-week semester, including exam week, students are expected to spend a minimum of 100 minutes of out-of-class work for every 50 minutes of direct instruction, for a minimum total of 2.5 hours a week. A 3-credit course should include 2.5 hours of direct instruction and a minimum of 5 hours of independent learning or 7.5 hours per week. More information about GW's credit hour policy can be found at: [provost.gwu.edu/policies-forms](http://provost.gwu.edu/policies-forms) (webpage); or [provost.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Resources/Assignment-Credit-Hours-7-2016.pdf](http://provost.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Resources/Assignment-Credit-Hours-7-2016.pdf) (form)

### University policies

#### Academic Integrity Code

Academic integrity is an essential part of the educational process, and all members of the GW community take these matters very seriously. As the instructor of record for this course, my role is to provide clear expectations and uphold them in all assessments. Violations of academic integrity occur when students fail to cite research sources properly, engage in unauthorized collaboration, falsify data, and otherwise violate the [Code of Academic Integrity](#). If you have any questions about whether or not particular academic practices or resources are permitted, you should ask me for clarification. If you are reported for an academic integrity violation, you should contact the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) to learn more about your rights and options in the process. Consequences can range from failure of assignment to expulsion from the university and may include a transcript notation. For more information, please refer to the SRR website (<https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/academic-integrity>), email [rights@gwu.edu](mailto:rights@gwu.edu), or call 202-994-6757.

#### University policy on observance of religious holidays

Students must notify faculty during the first week of the semester in which they are enrolled in the course, or as early as possible, but no later than three weeks prior to the absence, of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. If the holiday falls within the first three weeks of class, the student must inform faculty in the first week of the semester. For details and policy, see "Religious Holidays" at [provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines](http://provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines).

#### Use of Electronic Course Materials and Class Recordings

Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials, including recorded class sessions, for



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private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials and recorded class sessions should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Please contact the instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials and/or recorded class sessions. Please contact Disability Support Services at [disabilitysupport.gwu.edu](https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu) if you have questions or need assistance in accessing electronic course materials.

### **Academic support**

#### **Writing Center**

GW's Writing Center cultivates confident writers in the University community by facilitating collaborative, critical, and inclusive conversations at all stages of the writing process. Working alongside peer mentors, writers develop strategies to write independently in academic and public settings. Appointments can be booked online at [gwu.mywconline](https://gwu.mywconline).

#### **Academic Commons**

Academic Commons provides tutoring and other academic support resources to students in many courses. Students can schedule virtual one-on-one appointments or attend virtual drop-in sessions. Students may schedule an appointment, review the tutoring schedule, access other academic support resources, or obtain assistance at [academiccommons.gwu.edu](https://academiccommons.gwu.edu).

### **Support for students outside the classroom**

#### **Disability Support Services (DSS) 202-994-8250**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services at [disabilitysupport.gwu.edu](https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu) to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations..

#### **Counseling and Psychological Services 202-994-5300**

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. [healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services](https://healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services).

### **Safety and Security**

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- Monitor [GW Alerts](#) and [Campus Advisories](#) to [Stay Informed](#) before and during an emergency event or situation
- In an emergency: call GWPD/EMeRG 202-994-6111 or 911
- For situation-specific actions: refer to GW's [Emergency Response Handbook](#) and [Emergency Operations Plan](#)
- In the event of an armed intruder: Run. Hide. Fight.