Syllabus for ECON 230: The Economics of Poverty in the U.S.
Professors Nicole Simpson and Mike Fitzgerald
Colgate University
Spring 2025

Contact Information
Simpson: 227 Persson, nsimpson@colgate.edu
Fitzgerald: 225 Person, mafitzgerald@colgate.edu

Class and Lab Meetings
210 Persson; class T/Th 9:55-11:10am; labs T 11:15am-12:45pm

Office Hours
- Simpson: W 1:15-2:30pm
- Fitzgerald: T 8:30-9:30am & 1:20-2:30pm
- Joint: Th 1:30-3pm
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Course Materials
- Various policy reports and news articles posted on Moodle.
- The Maid on Netflix, https://www.netflix.com/title/81166770

Course Description
This course will discuss issues surrounding poverty with a particular emphasis on the central New York region. Students will first analyze how poverty is measured, which includes studying unemployment, the minimum wage, income inequality, and economic immobility using economic theory and data analysis. Students will next study various anti-poverty programs in the U.S. such as traditional welfare, the Earned Income Credit, food stamps and Medicaid. The course will include a significant community-based research component, in which students will be required to complete at least 10 hours of field work at a local non-profit organization. In addition, various class site visits will be an integral part of the class. Graded work will include: short papers, exams, and a significant group project. The prerequisites include ECON 151. Seniors will be allowed to register only with the permission of the instructor.

Course Objectives
This course examines the problem of poverty in the United States focusing on these questions: (1) What is poverty (2) How is it measured? (3) Who are the poor? (4) What are the causes of poverty? (5) Who should help the poor? (6) What policies are used to fight poverty? (7) How effective are these anti-poverty policies? (8) What more needs to be done?
- Students will think critically about each of these questions, and learn to analyze them from an economic perspective.
- Students are required to attend classes and participate in at least 10 hours of on-site community-based research at a local non-profit organization with a group of 3-4 students.
- Students will participate in all site visits associated with the class (which will normally be during normal class hours).
- Students must be able to work with community partners, to be responsible for their actions, and to represent Colgate well.

- Students will participate in class on a regular basis.

Class Schedule
Classes will normally meet from Tuesdays and Thursday at 9:55-11:10am. We will have lab most Tuesdays from 11:20am-12:50pm. At the start of the semester, those labs will meet in 210 Persson. Starting in early February, class and lab time on Tuesdays will likely be spent on site visits.

Week 1: Class on Tuesday and Thursday; lab meetings in classroom
Week 2: Class on Tuesday and Thursday; lab meetings in classroom
Week 3-7 (Feb 4 – March 4): Tuesdays on-site field work; Thursdays class
Week 8: Midterm
Week 9: Spring Break
Week 10-14 (March 25-May 1): Tuesdays class visits/group presentations; Thursdays class; occasional lab meetings in classroom
Week 15: Class on Tuesday and Thursday
Week 16: Final exam: Tuesday, May 6, 9:00–11:00 a.m.

Mini-presentation
Each student will be assigned to a group and will present a topic to the class. Groups will sign up for a day over the course of the semester. Mini-presentations should take approximately 15 minutes and cover the key content from the relevant readings. Students will share their powerpoint presentation with Prof Simpson before class, and she will post it on Moodle. Be creative and have some fun with it!

On-Site Community-Based Learning Group Project
You will be assigned into small groups and each group will be assigned a local nonprofit organization to work with. You will be required to work on-site for at least 10 hours during the semester with your group. The on-site component will be during class periods on Tuesdays and will extend into the free period on Tuesdays. The nonprofit organization and we will develop a research project to work on during this period. The project will be academic in nature, and will require you to use the concepts we learn in class. Each group will have to prepare a final group project, which will consist of a written report and an oral presentation on-site. Both parts will be evaluated by both me and the nonprofit organization you work with.
The nonprofit organizations include:

- Chenango County Department of Social Services
- Community Action Partnership of Madison County
- Hamilton Food Cupboard
- Roots and Wings of Chenango County
- CazCares

Exams
There will be one midterm exam that will be taken in class on **Thursday, March 13th**. The final exam will be Tuesday, May 6, 9:00–11:00 a.m. in 210 Persson. Make-ups are only allowed for extreme situations, and must be taken **before** the scheduled exam. You will have a time limit of 75 minutes for the midterm and 2 hours for the final exam. You are responsible for material

covered in class lecture, class discussion, in-class exercises, problem sets and assigned readings; exam questions may arise from any of these sources.

Short Papers

There will be three short writing assignments due. Details of each assignment will be given in class and posted on Moodle.

Paper #1: What does it mean to be in poverty?

Paper #2: Reflection on the causes of poverty.

Paper #3: Analyze the effectiveness of one anti-poverty policy/program.

Graded Work

Grading will consist of the following components:	%	Points
Midterm Exam	20	100
Short Papers (3)	20	100
Mini Presentation, Assignments, Class Attendance & Discussion	10	50
Group Project - Presentation and Written Report	30	150
Final Exam	20	100
	100%	500 points

The standard bell curve will be used in determining your final grades: 90% A, 80% B, 68% C, 55% D, and below 55% F. Also, plus and minuses will be assigned accordingly.

If you are having any problems in the course, or are encountering personal problems that may affect your grade, please come to see me. Also, if you have any special requirements that need to be accommodated in terms of seating or test-taking, ***you must see Prof Simpson before the midterm exam****.*

Attendance, Class Participation, and Effort

Regular attendance is crucial for succeeding in this course, and we will be taking attendance. For each site visit missed, your final grade will be reduced by 1 percentage point. You must also regularly participate in class, which requires that you come to class prepared each week.

Topics and Important Deadlines

This is a tentative outline of the course topics:

Week 1: Measuring poverty

Week 2: Labor force, unemployment and the minimum wage, UI

Week 3: Covid Recession and poverty
Short Paper #1 due (Thursday

Week 4: Food insecurity/SNAP/National School Lunch Program

Week 5: Healthcare/Medicaid/Medicare

Week 6: Housing/HEAP

Week 7: Traditional Welfare/TANF
Required lecture, Diane Schanzenbach, Thursday March 6th 4:15-5:30pm
Short Paper #2 due (Thursday March 6th)

Week 8: **Midterm Exam (Thursday March 13th)**

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10: Education/Early Head Start/UPK
Week 11: **Group Presentations (tentatively April 1 & 3)**
Draft of Written Component of Group Project due (Tuesday, April 1st)
Week 12: EITC/CTC
Final Written Component of Group Project due (Thursday, April 10th)
Week 13: UBI/ Guaranteed Income
Week 14: **Short Paper #3 due (Thursday, April 24th)**
Week 15: Wrap Up
Final Exam: Tuesday, May 6, 9:00–11:00 a.m

Generative AI Policy
Generative AI refers to artificial intelligence technologies, such as ChatGPT, that can draw on a large amount of training data to create new written, visual, or audio content. These technologies can be very useful in other academic and work contexts, but they will not be very helpful in this class because of the specificity of content and skills that we seek to develop in this class. Because of these reasons, you may not use AI tools in this course. Using such tools for any purposes, or attempting to pass off AI-generated work as your own, will violate Colgate's academic integrity policy.

If you're unsure about whether or not a specific tool makes use of AI or is permitted for use on assignments in this course, please contact me.

Accommodations
In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Colgate University is committed to ensuring comprehensive educational access and adjustments for all registered students seeking access to meet course requirements and fully participate in all University programs and activities. Students with documented disabilities/conditions are encouraged to request these services by registering with the Office of Student Disability Services. For information related to these services or to schedule an appointment, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (ods@colgate.edu).

Academic adjustments are provided via the student's Academic Adjustment Plan and must be renewed each and every semester through the Office of Disability Services using the Accommodate system. Once renewed, it is the student's sole responsibility to provide their Academic Adjustment Plan to their faculty members. Faculty members must be provided a minimum of one business week (or five business days) to review and implement the student's Academic Adjustment Plan. If the student fails to provide faculty with a minimum of five business days notice before their intended use of adjustments, faculty may not have the ability to provide said adjustments.

For information related to these services, policies/procedures, and/or to schedule an appointment, please contact the Office of Disability Services using the information provided below.

- Evelyn Lester, Director, Office of Disability Services, elester@colgate.edu
- Renée Chapin, Coordinator Office of Disability Services, rchapin@colgate.edu
  Lathrop Hall, 101A

Student Support
If you are struggling and need help with identifying and managing factors that may interfere with your learning you should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. You can also reach out to the Center for Learning, Teaching, and Research (cltr@colgate.edu). The CLTR has staff available to work with students on developing strategies and study skills to enhance learning. Their services are available free of charge to all students.