

**POSC 479: WORLD POVERTY  
(CRITICAL ISSUES IN POLITICAL THOUGHT)  
SPRING 2018**

**Professor Jinhee Lee Choung**

Wednesday/Friday 10:00 – 11:20 a.m., VKC 207

Office Hours (VKC 231C): Wed/Fri 11:20 – 11:50 a.m.; Fri 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.; or by appointment

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This course provides an introduction to world poverty by addressing three main questions:

1. *What do we know about the causes of extreme poverty, particularly the approximately one billion people living on less than one dollar a day?*
2. *How should we go about fighting poverty? In particular, how do governments address poverty already, and what else should they do?*
3. *What roles and responsibilities do private and international actors have in mitigating poverty?*

In the first part of the course, we will begin with conceptual issues. What do we mean by poverty, inequality and vulnerability? How do we measure them? Who are the world's poor: where do they live, and what do they do? Is world poverty increasing or decreasing? In the next part, we explore some of the main causes of global poverty, including geography, colonialism, civil war, corruption, and globalization. Having identified some of the key causes, we will explore what is being done to fight poverty and, in particular, what we expect the international community and governments to do and whether those expectations are politically feasible. The course will conclude with a discussion of some of the ethical issues surrounding world poverty: What, if anything, do we owe the poor of other countries and why?

The course is designed for students to achieve the following objectives:

1. Develop an understanding of the causes and solutions to the problems of global poverty.
2. Establish an analytical framework with which to assess the validity of various theories, perspectives and facts.
3. Improve written and oral communication skills.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

Attendance is mandatory, and students are required to complete all assignments on time and take the exam when it is scheduled. A make-up exam or extension will be given only under strict and verified circumstances (*e.g.*, a medical emergency or a required participation in a USC-sponsored activity). I reserve the right to decide on the validity of all excuses.

1. **Class participation & attendance (20%).** Class lectures are designed to analyze and synthesize the readings rather than summarize them, so students are expected to attend lectures having read the assigned materials. You should expect to be called on to answer questions and are encouraged to ask questions and actively contribute to class discussions

and debates. You will be evaluated on the attendance (absences and tardiness) and the quality and frequency of your contributions. Missing more than 5 lectures (unexcused) or persistent tardiness will result in a deduction in your final course grade.

**Electronic devices.** Laptops, e-readers, tablets, cell phones, pagers, and the like must be turned off during class except with special permission from your instructor. Studies have shown that using these devices in class leads to lower comprehension and reduced productivity. In fact, students who take notes using longhand retain and process information much better. Anyone found to be in violation of this policy will be asked to leave the classroom immediately.<sup>1</sup>

2. **Class presentation (10%).** Prepare a slide presentation on the main subject matter of one selected class.
3. **Two in-class midterms (20% each):** The first exam is on Wednesday, February 28, and the second one is on Wednesday, April 18. The exams will cover both the assigned readings and lectures, and will consist of short essay responses.
4. **Research (position) paper (30%): 10-12 pages (2,500 to 3,000 words), due by 12 PM NOON on Monday, May 7, 2018.**
  - a. You are to write a research (position) paper on the most pressing poverty issue of your choosing (famine, civil war, corruption, quality of education, health, etc.). Make a case (*i.e.*, take a ‘position’ and develop a thesis) as to why that particular issue is one of the (if not THE) most important and urgent problems for the world’s poorest. Support your argument with logic and evidence.
  - b. What or who is causing and/or exacerbating the problem? What efforts, if any, have been made to address the problem and how successful have they been? What do you think needs to be done to solve the problem?
  - c. An “A” paper will have coherent organization, critical and logical analysis, lucid writing, and specific and relevant references to the supporting texts.
  - d. Late papers will be penalized half of a letter grade for every 12 hour-period after the due date/time.
  - e. The paper must be submitted through *turnitin.com* on the course blackboard page.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to do their own work; this holds, especially so, for the writing assignments you have for the class. All assignments are expected to reflect the student’s careful research, original thinking, and writing. Citations must be provided for the ideas, content, or other materials that originate from other authors. Studying together is welcome; working together on writing assignments is not. Cheating will not be tolerated, and those who do will receive a failing grade on

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<sup>1</sup> Studies have shown that “computers and other digital devices increase the [temptation and likelihood of multitasking](#), leading to lower comprehension and reduced productivity” (Katrina Schwartz, “Taking Notes: Is The Pen Still Mightier Than the Keyboard?”, [ww2.kqed.org](#)); that students who take notes using longhand retain and process information much better ([Psychological Science](#), June 2014: 1159-1168); and students who media multitask during class may also impede the learning of their classmates ([Computers & Education, Volume 62](#), March 2013: 24–31).

the assignment or the exam and/or for the entire course. Please check <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS> for the University guidelines on academic integrity. If you have any questions about this, please see me or contact the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (SJACS). You may also learn more and take a tutorial found at [http://www.usc.edu/libraries/about/reference/tutorials/academic\\_integrity/index.php](http://www.usc.edu/libraries/about/reference/tutorials/academic_integrity/index.php).

### **Roving Reference: Ask-A-Librarian Research Assistance**

[http://www.usc.edu/libraries/services/ask\\_a\\_librarian/askme/](http://www.usc.edu/libraries/services/ask_a_librarian/askme/)

“This in-person service brings a reference professional to you at the point of need for one-on-one consultations. Librarians maintain consultation/office hours at the Writing Center Conference room, situated in the Language Lab. Students visiting the Writing Center for help with the mechanics of writing their papers can simultaneously get assistance from reference librarians on finding and citing their sources, as well as researching on a topic.”

### **Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper**

<http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=83009&sid=615849>

**Disability:** Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible, preferably within the first two weeks. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. (213) 740-0776.

### **Student Counseling Services**

Provides free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. (213) 740-7711 (on call 24/7) (<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>)

### **Student Support & Advocacy**

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues (*e.g.*, personal, financial, academic) adversely affecting their success as a student. (213) 821-4710 (<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>)

### **Other notes:**

1. Communication is best done face-to-face during office hours or after class. I encourage you to come with any questions, musings, or concerns you might have. When office visits are not possible, email me. I cannot guarantee, however, an immediate response. Allow at least 24 hours of turn-around time.
2. Lecture slides, study guides, and announcements will be posted on the course page on Blackboard (<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>). Please check Blackboard or your USC-registered email regularly for class announcements.
3. Photography, taping, and recording of lectures are not allowed. Notes and lecture slides of this class may not be exchanged or distributed for any commercial purpose, for compensation, or for any purpose other than your personal study.

4. As the semester progresses, there may arise a need to make adjustments to the reading assignments and schedule. I will do my best to offer advance notice and minimize conflict.

**Readings:** This is a challenging course. Given the breadth of topics that a “survey course” such as this must cover, there is a relatively heavy reading load. On average, students will be expected to read about forty pages (one to two articles or chapters) for each class. The following books are required for purchase. Additional required readings are downloadable from the library electronic reserves system (ARES: <https://usc.ares.atlas-sys.com/>). The few readings that may be unavailable through USC libraries will be posted on Blackboard.

1. Cosgrove, Serena & Benjamin Curtis (2017). *Understanding Global Poverty: Causes, Capabilities, and Human Development*. Routledge.
2. Banerjee, Abhijit V. & Esther Duflo (2011). *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*. Public Affairs.
3. Collier, Paul (2007). *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Falling and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford University Press.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

### I. INTRODUCTION

**Class 1 (1/10): Course overview**

**Class 2 (1/12): Introduction: what is the issue?**

- *Bottom Billion*, Chapter 1.
- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 1.

**Class 3 (1/17): Building a framework for understanding poverty**

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 1.

**Class 4 (1/19): Measuring poverty**

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 3.

**Class 5 (1/24): Vulnerability and risk**

- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 6.
- Collins, Daryl, Jonathan Morduch, Stuart Rutherford, and Orlanda Ruthven (2009). Chapter 2: “The Daily Grind” in *Portfolios of the Poor: How the World’s Poor Live on \$2 a Day*. Princeton University Press: 28-64.

## II. THE GENERAL “CAUSES” OF GLOBAL POVERTY

### **Class 6 (1/26): Geography & history**

- Marshall, Tim (2015). Chapter 5: “Africa” (p. 109-132) & Chapter 6: “The Middle East” (p. 133-167) in *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About the World*. Scribner.

### **Class 7 (1/31): Colonialism & poverty**

- Frieden, Jeffrey (2006). Chapter 4: “Failures of Development” in *Global Capitalism*. Norton: 80-104.
- Engerman, Stanley & Kenneth Sokoloff (2005). Chapter 3: “Colonialism, Inequality, and Long-Run Paths of Development” in *Understanding Poverty*. Oxford University Press: 37-61.

### **Class 8 (2/2): Natural resources & conflicts**

- *Bottom Billion*, Chapters 2 & 3.

### **Class 9 (2/7): Conflicts & poverty**

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 8.
- Fisher, Max (SEPT. 18, 2016). “Straightforward Answers to Basic Questions About Syria’s War” in The New York Times.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/19/world/middleeast/syria-civil-war-bashar-al-assad-refugees-islamic-state.html? r=0>

### **Class 10 (2/9): Geographical & spatial poverty**

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 5.
- *Bottom Billion*, Chapter 4.

### **Class 11 (2/14): Bad governance & corruption**

- *Bottom Billion*, Chapter 5.
- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 7.

### **Class 12 (2/16): The global economy and the poor**

- *Bottom Billion*, Chapter 6.
- Frieden, Jeffrey (2006). Chapter 19: “Countries Fall Behind” in *Global Capitalism*. Norton: 435-456.

### **Class 13 (2/21): Geography vs. Institutions**

- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, & James Robinson (2005). Chapter 2: “Understanding Prosperity and Poverty: Geography, Institutions, and the Reversal of Fortune” in *Understanding Poverty*. Oxford University Press: 19-35.

### **Class 14 (2/23): Midterm examination review**

### **Class 15 (2/28): Midterm examination #1**

### III. HOW SHOULD WE GO ABOUT FIGHTING POVERTY?

**Class 16 (3/2): Guest lecture: Professor James Lo on “Experiments in Development”**

**Class 17 (3/7): Development & foreign aid**

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 2.
- *Bottom Billion*, Chapter 7.

**Class 18 (3/9): Trade policy**

- *Bottom Billion*, Chapter 10.

**SPRING BREAK: 3/11 - 3/18**

**Class 19 (3/21): Targeted interventions**

- Ravallion, Martin (2016). Chapter 10: “Targeted Interventions” in *The Economics of Poverty*. Oxford University Press: 547-591.

**Class 20 (3/23): Agriculture, food, & poverty**

- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 2.
- Eswaran, Mukesh & Ashok Kotwal (2005). Chapter 8: “The Role of Agriculture in Development” in *Understanding Poverty*. Oxford University Press: 111-123. (Blackboard)

**Class 21 (3/28): Health**

- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 3.
- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 4.

**Class 22 (3/30): Education**

- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 4.
- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 9.

**Class 23 (4/4): Gender & fertility**

- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 5.
- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 6.

**Class 24 (4/6): Expanding the financial market for the poor: credit**

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 11.
- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 7.

**Class 25 (4/11): Expanding the financial market for the poor: savings**

- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 8.
- Collins, Daryl, Jonathan Morduch, Stuart Rutherford, and Orlanda Ruthven (2009). Chapter 6: “Rethinking Microfinance: The Grameen II Diaries” in *Portfolios of the Poor: How the World’s Poor Live on \$2 a Day*. Princeton University Press: 154-173.

**Class 26 (4/13): Midterm examination review**

**Class 27 (4/18): Midterm examination #2**

**Class 28 (4/20): Policies & Politics**

- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 10.

**Class 29 (4/25): Ethics and action**

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 12.

**Class 30 (4/27): Wrap-up & course review**

**\* Monday, May 7, 2018: Due by 12 PM NOON - Research paper (30%)**