

**POSC 479: CRITICAL ISSUES IN POLITICAL THOUGHT**  
**WORLD POVERTY**  
**SPRING 2022**

**Professor Jinhee Lee Choung**

Friday 2:00 – 4:50 pm

Office Hours: After class & 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 nine hundred million people living on less than two dollars a day?*
2. *How should we go about fighting poverty? In particular, how do governments address poverty 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, observations, and data.
3. Improve written and oral communication skills.

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**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

**Grading (Letter grades on a 4.0 scale)**

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 official University activities). I reserve the right to decide on the validity of all excuses.

1. **Attendance, Participation & Engagement (15%).** 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. You are allowed one “free miss,” and missing more than three lectures (unexcused) will result in a deduction in your final course grade.

**COVID-19 Accommodations.** If you are symptomatic and unable to attend class, email me and we will arrange for commensurate make-up work consisting of writing a reading analysis and reviewing of lecture notes (and videos when available).

2. **Analysis of Reading Assignments (6 write-ups, 20%).** Choose three (3) “modules” from Part 1 & 2, and three from part 3 of the course and write up a single-spaced, one-page summary of 1) author(s)’ main arguments or findings; 2) supporting logic and evidence; and 3) your assessment and analysis of the pieces. Post it on the designated thread on Blackboard.
3. **Midterm examination (in-class, open book, 2-pages single-spaced; 20%).** On March 4 (Class #8) we will have in-class (online, zoom), open book examination based on the content of the readings, lectures, and class discussions. You are allowed to access and cite ONLY the assigned materials, lecture slides, and your personal notes from this class. Be sure to type your essay afresh and do not copy/paste. When finished, upload the file to the designated Turnitin.com link on Blackboard.
4. **Group Presentation (15%).** Prepare a slide presentation (50-60 minutes long, about 3 students per group) on a major, poverty-focused topic (e.g., crises, institutions, organizations, leaders) and its significance.
5. **Final Paper (30%), 8-10 pages (2,000 to 2,500 words), due by 2 PM on Monday, May 9, 2022.**
  - a. You are to write a project proposal in an effort to solve a pressing poverty issue of your choosing (famine, civil war, corruption, quality of education, health, etc.).
  - b. Make a case 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. What or who is causing and/or exacerbating the problem?
  - c. What efforts, if any, have been made to address the problem and how successful have they been? What do you think still needs to be done to solve the problem, and how will your particular project contribute to the larger objectives?
  - d. An “A” paper will have coherent organization, critical and logical analysis, lucid writing, and specific and relevant references to the supporting texts.
  - e. The paper must be submitted through *turnitin.com* on the course blackboard page. Late papers will be penalized half of a letter grade for every 12 hour-period after the due date/time.

### **Netiquette Rules for Class**

Treat Blackboard and Zoom as you would any other interaction with me in a physical classroom. The online format does not lessen my expectations of what constitutes meaningful engagement and participation, appropriate communication, and commitment to this class. Show respect to all and reflect kindness and concern for your colleagues. Please address me as “Professor Choung,” and let others know how you would like to be addressed and address others as they would like to be addressed. Use professional language and avoid using social media language and characters.

- **Electronic Devices.** Any devices, apps, websites or programs not in use for classwork must be turned off during class. I recommend taking notes using longhand as studies have shown that writing notes by hand help you retain and process information much better.
- **Camera Policy.** Given that class dynamics are substantially compromised without the ability to see the people in class, it is my policy that students have their cameras on during synchronous online sessions. You are free to use virtual backgrounds (which will eliminate most privacy concerns) and earphones or headsets to improve audio quality. If you have a need for accommodations on this point, please contact me directly.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to do their own work; this holds, in particular, 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. Moreover, essays, research papers, and other type of work written for this course may not be submitted for another course (and vice versa). Cheating will not be tolerated, and those who do will receive a failing grade on the assignment or the exam and/or for the entire course. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

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

<https://libraries.usc.edu/ask-a-librarian>

“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.”

### **Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (<https://osas.usc.edu>).

### **Student Counseling Services**

Student Counseling Services provides free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. The phone number is (213) 740-7711. <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/>

## 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 & recordings, study guides, and announcements will be posted on Blackboard. Please check Blackboard or your USC-registered email regularly for class announcements.
3. Photography, taping, and recording of lectures are not allowed. Notes, lecture slides & recordings of this class may not be exchanged or distributed for any commercial purpose, for compensation, or for any purpose other than your personal study.

**Readings:** On average, students will be expected to read about forty pages (two articles or chapters) for each class. We will read mostly from the following books—among which the first one is required for purchase and the other two are available online through the library electronic reserves system (ARES). 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. (Print only)
  2. Banerjee, Abhijit V. & Esther Duflo (2011). *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*. Public Affairs. (Online or print)
  3. Collier, Paul (2007). *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Falling and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford University Press. (Online or print)
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## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### Class 1 (1/14): Course Overview

- [Watch: Hear Our Voices: The Poor on Poverty \(World Bank\)](#)

#### Class 2 (1/21): Understanding the Lives of the Poor

##### A. Measuring Poverty

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapters 1 & 3.
- Goldbaum, Christina (August 6, 2021). “[No Work, No Food: Pandemic Deepens Global Hunger](#)” in *The New York Times*.

## **B. 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.

### **Class 3 (1/28): History of Poverty**

#### **A. Geography vs. Institutions**

- [Watch: Poor Us: An Animated History of Poverty | WHY POVERTY? \(58 minutes\)](#)
- 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.

#### **B. Colonialism & Poverty**

- Frieden, Jeffry (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 4 (2/4): Binding Connections & Responsibilities**

#### **A. Development & Foreign Aid**

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 2.
- *Bottom Billion*, Chapter 7.
- Singer, Peter. December 17, 2006. “What Should a Billionaire Give – and What Should You?” *The New York Times Magazine*. (Blackboard)

#### **B. Group Presentation Planning & Workday**

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

### **Class 5 (2/11): Natural Endowments**

#### **A. Geographical & Spatial Poverty**

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

#### **B. Natural Resources**

- *Bottom Billion*, Chapters 2 & 3.
- [BBC News. October 9, 2013. “DR Congo: Cursed by its natural wealth”](#)

## Class 6 (2/18): Governance Failures

### A. Bad Governments & Corruption

- Handelman, Howard & Rex Brynen (2019). Chapter 4: “Corruption as an Obstacle to Development” in *Challenges of the Developing World* (9<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Rowman & Littlefield: 112-131.
- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 7.
- Optional: *Bottom Billion*, Chapter 5.

### B. Armed Conflicts & Poverty

- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 8.
- [BBC News. June 19, 2020. “Yemen crisis: Why is there a war?”](#)

## Class 7 (2/25): Global Capitalism

### A. Capitalism & Trade Policy

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

### B. Neocolonialism

- [Watch: Stealing Africa | WHY POVERTY? \(58 minutes\)](#)
- Maathai, Wangari (2009). Chapter 5: “Deficits: Indebtedness and Unfair Trade” in *The Challenge for Africa*. Random House: 83-110.

## Class 8 (3/4): Midterm examination (online; 20%)

## Class 9 (3/11): Group Presentations

## Happy Spring Recess!

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

## Class 10 (3/25): Raising Capacity

### A. Thinking Big and Thinking Small

- Karlan, Dean & Jacob Appel (2012). Chapter 1: “Introduction: The Monks and the Fish” in *More Than Good Intentions: Improving the Ways the World's Poor Borrow, Save, Farm, Learn, and Stay Healthy*. Dutton: 1-22.

### B. Targeted Interventions

- Ravallion, Martin (2016). Chapter 10: “Targeted Interventions” in *The Economics of Poverty*. Oxford University Press: 547-580\* (skip the “Boxes”).

### **Class 11 (4/1): Keys to Poverty Alleviation - Part 1**

#### **A. 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.

#### **B. Health**

- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 3.
- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 4.
- Mandavilli, Apoorva (Sept. 7, 2021). “[The Pandemic Has Set Back the Fight Against H.I.V., TB and Malaria](#)” in *The New York Times*.

### **Class 12 (4/8): Keys to Poverty Alleviation - Part 2**

#### **A. Education**

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

#### **B. Expanding the Financial Markets**

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

### **Class 13 (4/15): Women & Poverty**

#### **A. Inequality, Fertility & Empowerment**

- *Poor Economics*, Chapter 5.
- *Understanding Global Poverty*, Chapter 6.
- Gupta, Alisha & Fatima Faizi (Oct 1, 2020). “[Data Shows Fewer Afghan Women Than Men Get Covid. That’s Bad News](#)” in *The New York Times*.

#### **B. Guest lecture: Rachel L. Wolff, Country Director for CARE in Nepal (3:45-4:50)**

### **Class 14 (4/22): Group Presentations**

### **Class 15 (4/29): Group Presentations**

- ❖ **Monday, May 9, 2022: Final Paper (30%) due by 2 pm via *turnitin.com* on Blackboard.**